

**AOP-DIVERSITY MANAGER
ANNUAL REPORT
2013-14**



**Brant Family and
Children's Services**
Since 1894

BRANT FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES MISSION STATEMENT

The well-being and safety of children and youth is our primary focus.

10 YEAR VISION

All children, youth and families are valued.

Together, with our entire community, we share the responsibility of nurturing, protecting, educating and guiding all children, youth and their families.

Families possess the wisdom, abilities and resources to build a successful family plan. We support their journey toward self-determination, safety and care.

Children and youth have a voice and are involved in decision-making; we ensure they have the necessary resources to be well supported for success.

Mutual trust and understanding is built through listening and communicating with respect and compassion.

Hope replaces fear and families are open to receive help early.

PREAMBLE

This report reflects the work that the agency and in particular the AOP Manager has undertaken in 2013 and 2014.

With the focus on Transformation Agenda, the agency started its formalized focus on AOP with the formation of the Diversity-AOP Committee in 2007. In 2011, four years later, the AOP Manager position was created by the agency, at the endorsement of the Board of Directors to provide support and leadership to the organization and staff in our collective AO journey.

The position of the AOP Manager was announced in the agency on May 6th, 2011 and officially began on October 1st, 2011. The time between the announcement and commencement of the position was spent organizationally restructuring the Supervised Access Program to facilitate the Resource Development Unit (RDU) Manager (this writer) to take on the role of the AO Manager on a half-time basis. The AOP Manager became a half-time position balanced with the needs of managing RDU (consisting of the Kinship Care, Alternate Care, Volunteer Services and Transportation programs).

In April 2013, the AOP Manager became a half-time position with the Special Projects-Training Manager position. This annual report will therefore highlight the work of the AOP Manager according to the 2011 work plan, which has also been adapted to the changes of the organization and service needs. The work plan is structured around bringing to life five philosophical AOP statements that have been informed by and are reflective of the agency's vision and philosophy.

FIVE PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENTS GUIDING AO-DIVERSITY WORK AT BRANT FACS

I. Brant Family and Children's Services endorses anti-oppressive practice both at practice, organizational and systemic levels.

II. Brant Family and Children's Services supports a learning environment for all members of the organization.

III. Brant Family and Children's Services is committed to working with all families in order to support safe and nurturing environments for all children.

IV. Brant Family and Children's Services recognizes and values the diversity of families.

V. Brant Family and Children's Services works collaboratively with community partners to serve families.

AO IN ACTION

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT I: *Brant Family and Children’s Services endorses anti-oppressive practice both at practice, organizational and systemic levels.*

GOAL	ONGOING TASKS	STEPS TAKEN IN 2013-14
<p>To work in collaboration with other provincial child welfare AOP initiatives to enhance the quality of service delivered to families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency representative at the Provincial Anti-Oppression Roundtable. • Share information from the roundtable with the rest of the agency. • Liaise with and learn from other agencies on their “AO journey”, in order to assist our agency’s journey. • Provincial CAS representative for Secretariat’s LGBTQ committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued member of the AO Roundtable Collaborated with OACAS to create a webinar on anti-oppressive practice and child welfare for the province. • Continue to share information from the AOR through Diversity-AOP Committee. Minutes from the D-AOP Committee are available to all staff through the intranet. Information is also shared at the Leadership Team Meetings.
<p>Coordinate the agency’s Diversity-AOP initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Diversity-AO Committee meetings • Collaboratively identify, lead, coordinate and advertise the agency’s diversity and AO initiatives • Bring forward items for discussion from staff • Maintain the yearly budget for the AOP committee. • Be the liaison between the community, agency and Committee. • Provide the agency’s Board of Directors with regular reports on the work of this position, the Committee and the agency (as it pertains to AO). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All tasks outlined in previous column are completed on an ongoing basis. • Report will be provided to the Board of Directors in 2015

Brant FACS has continued to be a member of the Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable. This committee allows this reader to be connected with what is happening with AO

initiatives across the province and to share and receive resources. Through this table, this writer collaborated with OACAS to create and deliver a webinar on understanding anti-oppressive practice within a child welfare context. This webinar was delivered on November 28th 2014 and was widely accessed throughout the province by over 100 participants. The overall feedback and evaluation from the participants was positive and also highlighted that this was the first time that both this writer and OACAS had provided training on this topic via webinar format.

From a provincial perspective, this writer also represents Brant FACS and the CAS sector at the Secretariat's LGBTQ planning table. This Ministry committee is charged with developing supports for the field as it pertains to the LGBTQ community. This writer is one of 3 provincial CAS representatives at the committee which contains representatives from the children's mental health sector, EGALE, foster parents' association, First Nations agencies, counselling agencies etc.

From an internal organizational perspective, this writer also continues to be a member and chair of the agency's Diversity-AOP Committee. In addition to completing all the tasks and responsibilities associated with the chair role, this writer in consultation with the D-AOP Committee spearheads the creation and coordination of smaller task-focused working sub-committees. In the past year, the following committee work has occurred:

Voices of Families and Youth (VOFY) Subcommittee - focused on looking at ways of working with families to bring their voices forward at different levels of our agency's work.

Alongside the work of the VOFY subcommittee, the agency was in the process of completing its Strategic Planning Process at the beginning of 2013 and this subcommittee worked closely with the QA Manager to plan out the next steps based on the feedback received. This committee began to meet on a regular monthly basis again in 2013 and has representation from across the agency including front-line staff and managers. The subcommittee worked at conceptualizing a clear goal and purpose to the subcommittee and to the nature of the involvement that we were requesting of families and youth. This statement was created in consultation with the larger committee.

Purpose of inviting parents and youth to join the Voices of Families and Youth committee

The committee greatly respects the wisdom and voice of families and youth and those who come forward to be a part of the committee with us should feel free to share their voice without fear of repercussion.

Families and youth will be invited to join the committee to help inform the following:

Service and program development - such as helping inform the agency's revamped Mentoring Program, youth programs etc

Advocacy initiatives both within the agency and with the community

Creation of systems to further support families during their involvement with us - for example, the development of a clients rights pamphlet, etc

Leasing with the larger public

Other initiatives that arise out of the work of the committee and agency

The committee will not be a place to discuss individual case management issues or to circumvent any of the already existing policies and procedures that are in place. Therefore, if an adult or youth would like to discuss their personal issues with the work of the agency, they will be redirected to the appropriate channels.

This writer sought the input of the Service Manager teams through their Directors of Service to help inform the statement as well as to answer any questions or receive feedback. The subcommittee received the feedback and incorporated it into their subsequent planning.

In May and June of 2014, this writer and the Quality Assurance Manager met with parents and youth from different geographical areas to share what the agency is working on in response to their feedback from the 2013 strategic planning process. During these meetings, we also asked for their feedback on the development of specific agency programs that they had requested such as the staff Mentoring Program.

In 2014, this writer also began to work with QA Manager and two youth leads on the Listen to Me Project. This video project began with the youth leads who wanted to share the experiences of youth with CAS and school staff in the hopes of developing a better understanding for the lives and situations they experience. This project involved hosting 2 full days of filming and activities for the youth which will result in a series of video training modules being developed. The team is currently still in the process of developing the videos and training modules.

In 2015, this writer will continue to work with our QA Manager on moving forward with the suggestions that we have received from parents, children and youth on developing more inclusive and equitable service.

LGBTQ Subcommittee - focused on services and support being designed by the agency for LGBTQ families and youth.

The larger subcommittee does not meet anymore, but the staff involved with the George St. Youth for PEACE group and this writer meets on an as-needed basis to discuss programming and needs of the youth attending the monthly group. Throughout this period, this writer has also continued to offer the OACAS Out and Proud training to all our staff and resource parents to help deepen their understanding of LGBTQ issues.

iii. Toys and Supplies Subcommittee - focused on researching the kinds of toys and other materials that we require as an organization to be more reflective and inclusive of all the families we serve.

For this recording period, staff has brought forward books and supplies for consideration by the D-AOP Committee to purchase for the agency. The D-AOP Committee has an annual budget of \$5000 which can be used to purchase supplies for the agency to become more inclusive. We have purchased 10 "It Takes a Village" posters (which come with a poem) that will be plaqued and placed throughout the agency. This agency also purchased a number of books or resource material on different topics for the agency.

For this recording period, the committee also supported the Pink Shirt Campaign run by the Brantford Boys and Girls Club. This campaign is an anti-bullying initiative and this writer worked in collaboration with staff to host an internal event at the Mary Klas visit room in Slovak Village on Pink Shirt Day (February 26th 2014). During this event, we had cloth squares where staff could share a saying/drawing representing what "Respect" meant to them. All these singular pieces of cloth were then stitched together to create an agency quilt, which will be hung in one of our agency's building. In addition to this event, the committee purchased pink shirts for staff who wanted to support the event by wearing the shirt on the day.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT II: *Brant Family and Children's Services supports a learning environment for all members of the organization.*

GOAL	TASKS	STEPS TAKEN IN 2013-14
<p>To support the agency's staff, resource parents and volunteers learning and understanding of AOP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend unit meetings to discuss areas where I can assist teams with their learning and AO practice • Offer consultation support to Leaders Group and staff as a whole. • Standing agenda item at Leadership Team • Use the technology in place to enhance dialogue – posting articles/discussion points on the intranet. • Maintain and encourage use of AOP library • Meet with all new workers and orient them to the AO philosophy of the agency, the work that the Committee does, the library etc • Member of the Agency Development Committee • Work with agency staff on examining systems in place (or that need to be developed) for staff to bring forward AO issues. • Support training. • Organize and co-facilitate the agency's AO-D discussion groups. • Work in collaboration with staff on developing an updated Mentorship Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered this consultation support on an ongoing basis. In 2013-14, this writer continued to meet with staff on an as needed basis both individually as well as in a group format. I have assisted with providing resources and offering support and suggestions on diversity or AO related issues. • Continue to encourage the use of the agency's resources such as the library, both in traditional form as well as the digital library on the Global agency computer drive. • Meet with new staff and students on a regular basis to orient them to AO work within the agency. • Sitting member of the Agency Development Committee. • Support and seek out training opportunities that align with the agency's vision, mission and direction. • Offer AO-D monthly discussion groups for 9 out of the 12 months on a variety of topics brought forward by staff. • Worked with a cross section of 15 employees to create an updated Mentorship Program that will be

GOAL	TASKS	STEPS TAKEN IN 2013-14
		available to all new staff as well as seasoned staff seeking to develop their skills and knowledge.

This writer has used a variety of opportunities to help support AO opportunities for discussion and learning. This year has been one of change for the D-AOP Committee table. The committee was formed in 2007 and since that time, it has evolved as the membership has evolved. The committee structure had to be changed in order to align and support the current work and needs of the organization. Rather than being a monthly group that consisted of time for process oriented discussions and task-focused decision-making duties, the committee’s mandate refocused to one of an advisory board. From the fall of 2013 till the spring of 2014, the larger D-AOP Committee met on a quarterly basis and were tasked with the role of providing support and guidance to the AO Manager and the agency’s staff on initiatives that the agency is participating in. During this time, a separate AO-D monthly discussion group was created where staff can come out and talk about different issues that pertain to power, privilege, equity, anti-oppression and how it pertains to practice and service delivery. Below are the topics covered in the different discussion groups?

- Poverty, Classism and “Bridges out of poverty” training
- How racist are you?
- Child welfare and the medical model – when do we intervene?
- Social Location and Service Delivery
- Listen to Me Project
- Learning from our FGDM experiences.
- ReMoved
- #whydidistay
- Transgender parents
- Tolerance vs. Understanding
- Pink Feather Promise
- Unpacking Mental Health
- Helplessly Hopeful
- The health effects of childhood trauma on the body

In September of 214, the committee decided to meet monthly again to keep momentum of the work within the agency moving in a timely manner. Therefore both the committee meetings and the discussion groups occur on a monthly basis.

In the past year, this writer has continued to provide consultation and support to staff both on an individual as well as a team basis. During this recording, this writer has met with a cross section of staff (approximately 15) who have requested meetings to discuss various issues pertaining to AO and diversity both organizationally and in practice. This number does not reflect ad-hoc conversations or consults which this writer also provides on a daily basis. Through these meetings, this writer assesses if she can assist in any manner appropriate to her AOP Manager role, or otherwise assists by offering the staff person with other avenues or resources they can pursue.

Another component of embedding AO into practice and into the field of child welfare is to share our agency's practice and AO work with students. This writer continues to meet with the agency's placement students from different universities or colleges on a regular basis.

This writer has also provided information and support to the Leadership Team by having AO-Diversity as a standing item on the Leadership Team Meetings. This agenda item is a standing one as it embeds it into the expectation of the meetings and that a focus on AO practice is not to be an add-on but interwoven into the fabric of all layers of the agency.

This writer is also a standing member of the Agency Development Committee. Being a part provides this writer with a "pulse" of the agency as the committee is made up of a representative of each team. This committee provides this writer with an important "barometer" on where staff are at and how we can support one another on our collective AO journey, as well as provide important insights into the pressure points of the agency.

During this recording period, this writer has also worked with a cross-section of staff on developing an updated Mentorship Program. The development of the program took over a year to complete as it had to go through various steps with the committee as well as with the management group to ensure that it met the needs of the agency as well as aligned with the services and overall philosophy of the agency. This writer will manage the program and will provide the necessary training for the new mentors, matching of the mentors and mentees, supporting all the team members etc. The program was launched in February 2015 and this writer looks forward to helping the program unfold within the agency as this program has been repeatedly suggested by staff through the years and was also a clear recommendation from parents and youth during the strategic planning process.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT III: *Brant Family and Children's Services is committed to working with all families in order to ensure safe and nurturing environments for all children.*

GOAL	TASKS	STEPS TAKEN IN 2013-14
Engage in dialoguing with families on how our agency improves our services through collaboration and transparency.	<p>Used initiatives that the agency was embarking on to engage with the voices of families and youth.</p> <p>Continue to utilize the current mechanisms in place to assist with this (for example the Community Chats held by CDU etc).</p>	Worked with youth to develop the agency's new logo. Parents were invited to be a part of the process as well however the two representatives were not able to participate. The voices of families, children, youth and community service providers were engaged with and heard through the consultation process of our logo development. The creation of the logo was an entirely collaborative process aimed at incorporating the voices of families, children and youth into the agency's symbol and representation to the community. The new logo is not only reflective of our agency's mission and vision, but it also includes and represents the diversity of the communities that we serve.

During this recording period, this writer was charged with developing a new agency logo on the agreement of the Board of Directors. This writer canvassed families and youth to be a part of the design committee for the new logo as the agency wanted it to be an inclusive process. We started the work of designing the logo but examining our new vision and mission statement and where we wanted to be in the future. From that came the ideas for the agency's new design. This committee worked tirelessly over a period of six months to create the logo and to solicit as much feedback as possible from the community on the agency's new logo design. From this writer's perspective, even though the committee work was long and sometimes challenging, the process of sharing ownership over the design and final logo with the youth and the community was worth it and felt reflective of our agency's AO philosophy of inclusion and equity.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT IV: *Brant Family and Children’s Services recognizes and values the diversity of families*

GOAL	TASKS	STEPS TAKEN IN 2013-14
Collaborate with the community on diversity initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to increase visibility at cultural events to reduce the fears associated with CAS • Provide support on occasion to partner agencies on developing materials that are accessible to diverse families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in collaboration with the Muslim community in Brantford. • Raised the LGBTQ Pride flag as a sign of support and advocacy for LGBT youth and families.

In the fall of 2014, our agency embarked on a new collaboration with the Muslim community through the Brantford Mosque. This writer and the Imam at Mosque have dialogued a number of times about collaborating with the intent of sharing our supports and services with the Muslim community as well as deepening our worker’s understanding of issues pertaining to Muslim families. We attended a training “Culturally Integrative Family Response in Child Welfare” together to learn from another agency’s (London CAS) journey on collaborating with the Muslim community to see what lessons they learned. From that training, we proceeded to plan our next steps together and developed a letter of understanding between the two groups. The letter is currently in draft stage waiting to be signed by a board member from the Mosque. The Board of Directors at the Mosque has recently changed and therefore it will take some time to orient and share the information with the members on the collaborative steps taken thus far. The next steps in the spring of 2015 are to develop a training strategy within the agency for staff and an outreach strategy for our staff to engage with the community at the mosque.

An additional layer of support, outreach and advocacy that this agency continues to provide is through it’s involvement on various community tables and presence at various cultural events. For example, for the period that this report covers, our agency has participated in a number of community initiatives and cultural events to support and engage with different groups. For example, we have participated in the annual Mental Health Awareness Week, Pink Shirt Day, Brantford Pride, community barbecues and summer carnivals.

In addition to participating at events and on committees, Brant FACS offers staff opportunities for learning about different groups and ways to enhance service to diverse groups and communities. For example, in the past year, in the dual role of AOP and Training Manager, this writer worked in collaboration with agency’s training department to offer training/workshops on topics such as:

- Working with people with hearing issues.
- Working with differently-abled adults and children.
- Issues facing immigrant women in Brantford
- Family violence and honour killings.
- Understanding different mental health issues.
- Issues related to poverty and homelessness.
- Issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Issues related to First Nations communities.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT V: *Brant Family and Children’s Services works collaboratively with community partners to serve families.*

GOAL	TASKS	STEPS TAKEN IN 2013-14
Engage the community in dialoguing on AOP and how to improve our practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the committee and agency engage the community in the formation of a service providers' advisory committee. • Enhance our profile regarding AOP work in the community so that service providers know what to expect from our service. • Assist other agencies with their AO journey through sharing of resources, education, support, etc. • Create a community AO table/committee. • Liaise with other agencies on what we need to know on engagement with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance agency’s AO profile throughout involvement in various agency meetings etc. our profile regarding AOP work in the community so that service providers know what to expect from our service. • Provided consultation support to other agencies regarding AO and diversity. • Provided presentations throughout the community on AOP and our agency.

In the past year, this writer has worked with staff from different agencies through participation on different community committees, attendance at different training events as well as different community meetings. This writer has offered support to other agencies that are embarking on their AO journey both within the Brant community as well as throughout the Ontario child welfare community, such as Durham CAS. This writer has received various calls/emails from different child welfare agencies seeking support and whenever possible, this writer attempts to assist with information, resources and linkages to other individuals/agencies etc.

In the past year, this writer has highlighted the agency’s AO work at different forums at the surrounding universities which provide Brant FACS with future employees. For example in this recording period, this writer presented:

- “Anti-Oppressive Practice” for Contemporary Studies student at Wilfrid Laurier Brant
- “Working with Women and Children in Child Welfare” for Social Work students at Wilfrid Laurier Brant
- “Our Way - The Journey Continue. Brant FACS and Anti-Oppressive Practice: Brant FACS AO Journey” for Social Work students at McMaster University
- “Self-Care in Child Welfare” for Social Work students at Wilfrid Laurier Brantford

The hoped for outcome with these university presentations is to gain future social work employees who are informed about our agency’s philosophy, model and practice.

Lastly, during this recording period, this writer has also taken over charge of the agency’s external website and its redesign as well as setting up an agency Facebook page and Youtube pages. The use of social media is very pertinent to the field in today’s age and in a move to offer

families many ways to access information about our services, the agency has tried to utilize these different forms of social media.

This writer has also taken the lead with coordinating the agency's Child Abuse Prevention Month campaign every October which aims to share information about our services but also to highlight that child protection and well being belongs to the entire community. This involves liaising with the media, services providers and staff to raise the awareness of child welfare throughout the community.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE AND CLOSING REMARKS

2015 starts the fourth year of the AO Manager role and it continues to be one of learning, growth, reflection and challenge. This role and the work that it oversees continue to evolve as the agency, families and communities continue to change. In the upcoming year, in addition to the regular responsibilities of this role, this writer will continue to work alongside the Executive Director and QA Manager on projects and initiatives towards deepening our practice towards respectful, inclusive and transparent work with our community. These projects will include:

1. Completion of the Listen to Me project in collaboration with the 2 youth leads and other staff.
2. Creating new promotional material for the agency that promotes our new name and logo and aligns with our new vision and mission.
3. Further engagement with the Muslim community.
4. First year of managing the Mentorship Program.
5. Work in collaboration under the dual role of Training and AO Manager with the Director of Aboriginal Services on rolling out mandatory training utilizing the “Other Side of the Door” manual.
6. Working in collaboration with the QA Manager to create the agency’s Ethics Committee
7. Working in collaboration with staff to create agency policies and procedures on dealing with situations where employees face domestic violence in their private lives.
8. Working in collaboration with the Director of Administration and the heads of the two unions on developing a policy around workplace gossip.
9. Work in collaboration with the Communications Committee to revamp all of our flyers and promotional material to include the new name and logo and to ensure that the information is accessible and aligned with the agency’s new mission and vision statements.

Respectfully submitted,
Iona Sky
AOP Manager, February 2015