

REVISED Situation Analysis Report to



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

From



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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Board Representation	4
Activities.....	4
Observations	4
Recommendations	5
Board Cultural Competency.....	5
Activities: Board Sharing Circle	5
Observations	5
Recommendations	6
Activities: Board Cultural Competency Training	6
Observations	6
Recommendations	6
Staff Cultural Competency	6
Activities: Staff Sharing Circles.....	6
Observations	6
Recommendations	7
Activities: Staff Cultural Competency Training	7
Observations	8
Recommendations	8
Situation Analysis	8
Activities: Tours and Job Shadowing.....	8
Observations	8
Recommendations	8
Activities: Community Engagement Through Focus Groups	9
Observations	9
Recommendations	11
Activities: Community Engagement Through Surveys	11
Observations	12
Physical Quadrant	12
Emotional Quadrant.....	12
Intellectual Quadrant.....	12

Spiritual Quadrant.....	12
Recommendations	13
Enhanced Partnerships	13
Activities.....	13
Observations	13
Recommendations	13
List of Appendices	13
Recommended Implementation Plan	14
Visual of Recommendations	19
Letter from Minister	20
Staff Cultural Competency Training Responses to Evaluations	21
Observations	21

Introduction

The enhancement of Indigenous awareness and relations is a strategic directive in the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) 2020 – 2023 Strategic Plan. As a result of this directive, TBDSSAB contracted Blue Sky Strategic Group to assist with these directives in 2021. A proposal and workplan was developed in October of 2021 and the two organizations have been completing those activities since that time. This is the revised report to present to the TBDSSAB Board of Directors, staff, and Indigenous Partners.

Board Representation

Activities

- Meetings with TBDSSAB departments to fully understand Board's objectives, review of strategic plans and organizational chart
- Conducted research on what other provinces are doing concerning Indigenous representation on Social Services Boards (including working with an independent researcher)
- Developed and provided rationale for TBDSSAB review
- Requested Letters of Support from TBDSSAB Indigenous partners – provided Letter of Authorization for Blue Sky to conduct this work, provided draft template of Letter of Support
- Presented rationale to TBDSSAB Indigenous partners
- Meetings with 211 North to obtain complete listing of potential Indigenous partners in the Thunder Bay District
- Received seven Letter of Support from TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners i.e., Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Kinna-aweya, Mahmowenchike, Anishnawbe Mushkiki, Thunderbird Friendship Centre, Matawa and Native People of Thunder Bay Development Corporation
- Presentation to the TBDSSAB Board of Directors
- TBDSSAB representatives met with Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). This brief meeting is being used as an opportunity to simply identify to the Minister that the Board has identified Indigenous representation a strategic priority and will be gathering input and meeting with Indigenous led organizations and will determine a more specific request at a future meeting with the Minister (i.e., not part of a conference)
- Received a letter from the Minister included in the Appendices

Observations

- Research was conducted to determine if other provinces in the country were incorporating Indigenous representation on their boards
- This research was presented to the TBDSSAB Board of Directors as well as the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners. The TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners were invited to participate their feedback was received
- In addition, the Knowledge Keepers of the Blue Sky Strategic Group were invited to provide their input and recommendations

Recommendations

1. Through the engagement with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers of the Blue Sky Strategic Group concerning this situation, it is recommended that four Indigenous representatives sit on the TBDSSAB Board of Directors. These four representatives would be from the following traditional areas: Nishnawbe Aski Nation; Grand Council Treaty #3; Anishinabek Nation; and the Métis Nation of Ontario. It is further recommended that these representatives are recognized and respected as community champions i.e., expert in their field, Elder, young leader in the community, traditional Knowledge Keeper, lived experience, service recipient and so on, rather than a political appointment. Initiate relationship with the Grand Council Treaty #3 to make this feasible. Meet with these four political bodies (altogether if possible) to discuss how to have the four political bodies appoint these four representatives
2. Continue advocacy with Minister Fullerton of MCCSS re: DSSAB Act in 2023. When the date of the next meeting with the Minister is identified, provide update to TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners, and keep them abreast of next steps. Following the engagement with the TBDSSAB Indigenous partners, the TBDSSAB Board of Directors and the organization will advocate to have a working relationship with the policy makers i.e., Ministry of Ontario. As part of a multi-pronged approach being recommended, Indigenous representation must be part of the discussion with the Minister. Further, invite additional letters of support from TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners for meeting with Minister
3. Indigenous representation on the TBDSSAB board is only a very small first step. Further policy revisions need to be incorporated with the engagement of the Indigenous community as well as service recipients to address all the considerations required including but not limited to advocacy, strategies, and funding purposes. Position Papers could be drafted in partnership with Indigenous Partners. This is an example of a tool available to assist with the decolonization of the current policies and developing new ones <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-cultural-competency-self-assessment-checklist>
4. The TBDSSAB board and organization are advised to include a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Anti-Racism strategy within their organizational strategies

Board Cultural Competency

Activities: Board Sharing Circle

Sharing Circle conducted on May 19, 2022, for the TBDSSAB Board of Directors.

Observations

Feedback from the TBDSSAB Board of Directors concerning the Sharing Circle through an anonymous poll was positive. They thought the activity was a valuable exercise to experience; they would participate in it again if it was offered; and, they would like to see sharing circles conducted on a more regular basis (*“annually”*) (*“Every 4 years when new board terms begin”*).

Additional comments:

- *“Very satisfying and informative as I had never taken part in a sharing circle before”*

- *“Felt it was time well spent. Good team building exercise as well as a cultural experience. Great idea to have for a new Board of Directors at the beginning of their term. Facilitator assisted greatly in the activity”*

Recommendations

5. Identify a regular timeline to conduct TBDSSAB Board of Directors Sharing Circles i.e., minimum every four years (at the beginning of the new term), optimum annually

Activities: Board Cultural Competency Training

Training for the TBDSSAB Board of Directors has been deferred to February 2023, or early in the orientation process for the incoming Board (following the October elections).

Observations

- Great to see the Chair of the TBDSSAB Board attending community events such as: the anniversary celebrations of the housing buildings and participating in the cultural activities

Recommendations

6. Identify a regular timeline to provide culturally appropriate training, specifically the true oppression of the Indigenous peoples historically and currently, to the TBDSSAB Board of Directors i.e., minimum every four years (at the beginning of the new term), optimum annually
7. It is recommended that the members of the TBDSSAB board attend district community gatherings i.e., minimum bi-annually, optimum to ensure TBDSSAB board representation (rotate appointees) at all community gatherings i.e., seasonal gatherings, community gatherings. Further, the TBDSSAB board should always ensure that a representative (board or management) attend any community gathering they are being invited to

Staff Cultural Competency

Activities: Staff Sharing Circles

- looking to encourage hiring of more Indigenous staff for the benefit of the recipients – “so they can see themselves in the staff”
- Sharing Circles for the staff to assist them with a comfort level to share and self-identify. If the staff feel comfortable enough to self-identify with their service recipients, it may be reassuring to the recipients

Observations

Feedback from the TBDSSAB staff concerning the Sharing Circle through an anonymous poll was positive. They thought the activity was a valuable exercise to experience (*“I found it valuable but very fast. I would have liked to be more prepared in how a sharing circle works so I may have been able to share more”*); they would participate in it again if it was offered; and, they would like to see sharing circles conducted on a more regular basis (*“Doesn't need to be regularly, but certainly more often”*) (*“Added opportunities for staff to engage with leadership in a safe-space in ALL departments”*). Additional comments:

- *"Would be great to have guided discussion/topics to reflect upon before participating OR introduced before circle opening ceremony. Discussion was great!"*
- *"I would like to see more people get involved"*
- *"I think these Sharing Circles are a necessity. I was unsure of what to expect, but I quickly realized how important this opportunity was. Being able to hear everyone's personal experiences, and ideas on how to make our client's experiences more holistic and intentional, was irreplaceable. I felt a deep connection with those in the circle with me. It was a meaningful way to get to know coworkers that I wouldn't interact with otherwise, and knowing that the opinions held the clients and employees of TBDSSAB felt validating. I left feeling valuable, acknowledged, and connected to those around me. To Cindy, Carol, The Wellness Committee, and TBDSSAB - Miigwetch!!"*
- *"I would like to see more staff engaging in this as it is about helping and doing our best with and for our diverse clientele, each with specific needs or wants. Many suggestions are great but realistically from my Intake 'point of view' it is impossible to take clients to the side or offer tea. We get the brunt of everything down here from all sectors of dssab roles. We are skilled workers but not trained as Social Workers and we must keep the flow moving. There is a limit of what we can do and/or provide up front, nothing hot or sharp i.e.: (cannot issue scissors). It can be full house down here with urgency at every turn to address. Privacy is not the best but we ask those waiting to stand back or take a seat, so as to not crowd the one being served. Safety is also a growing concern."*
- *"I wish more time had been offered. I also thought it was going to be an opportunity to provide some feedback to the organization on how TBDSSAB could offer more inclusive practices but felt that the Child Care sector wasn't discussed/consulted as much as I would have hoped. I would definitely like to attend again. Cindy was a wonderful facilitator and I appreciated her vulnerability."*

Recommendations

8. It is important for the service recipients and community to see themselves in the TBDSSAB environment and staffing. Incorporating more Indigenous cultural activities internally will encourage Indigenous staff recruitment. Encourage more open and inclusive workplace culture to make it known that it's a safe place to disclose. Implement strategies to build up to self-disclosure forms. Identify a regular timeline to conduct Sharing Circles with the TBDSSAB staff to encourage more staff self-identification, sharing of vulnerabilities, all beneficial for service recipients i.e., minimum annually, optimum quarterly
9. Regarding TBDSSAB staff engagement, providing as many accessible options as possible for service engagement i.e., when focus groups happen, also host one online for folks that cannot attend, or provide the survey opportunities or one-on-one interviews

Activities: Staff Cultural Competency Training

- Training took place on two sessions, both in person as well as online for three hours each. The training focused on Indigenous Identity and providing Indigenous Trauma Informed Care.

Observations

- Refer to Appendices for complete summary of evaluations completed by sixteen participants
- Sampling of some comments provided
 - *“Not enough time to discuss all of the topics without having to rush.”*
 - *“More time then just the morning maybe the whole day.”*
 - *“It was great but I would have loved to be in person as opposed to online.”*
 - *“The last few topics were rushed through a bit because we were running out of time.”*
 - *“Just that it was a little too short. I felt it definitely could use a full day.”*
 - *“Might be better to give this training to all staff, not just the ones who are willing to sign up kinda thing.”*

Recommendations

10. Identify a regular timeline to provide culturally appropriate training, specifically the true oppression of the Indigenous peoples historically and currently, to the TBDSSAB staff i.e., minimum annually, optimum quarterly

Situation Analysis

Activities: Tours and Job Shadowing

- Tours of many TBDSSAB locations including headquarters, satellite offices (Geraldton, Kakabeka, Longlac, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Nipigon, Schreiber), housing locations, early Ontario Child and Family Centre, partner locations. For more details refer to chart in appendices
- Job shadowing key service providers including intake, housing, case workers, TOSW, TSW, repair person. For more details refer to chart in appendices

Observations

- Constantly impressed with level of respect, commitment, and compassion of the TBDSSAB Board of Directors, Management, and staff
- Social Navigators are providing ‘soft handoffs’ to recipients from one organization to another i.e., if the recipient doesn’t meet TBDSSAB criteria, another Social Navigator takes over from another organization
- Using the Social Services Relief Fund, the debts of many tenants/recipients being eliminated

Recommendations

11. Incorporating tradition/reconciliation into everyday TBDSSAB practice, such as, Land Acknowledgements, Opening and Closing ceremonies, regular smudging of properties (especially giving the option after a death or traumatic event), having smudging available to service recipients at Intake, etc.
12. Incorporating more traditional ceremonies in meetings, events is important. It is recommended that a dedicated Wellness Room at TBDSSAB headquarters and satellite offices be incorporated for smudging, sitting with an Elder, decompressing, having access to medicines to promote healing and wellness for service recipients and staff.

Traditional ceremonies are currently limited by the air ducts/exhaust systems, making it difficult to smudge. Will require infrastructural change in some instances

13. Elder in Residence for TBDSSAB staff and service recipients, to provide cultural and emotional support. They could utilize the Wellness Room. This is not necessarily full time and not necessarily TBDSSAB staff, could be one or multiple Knowledge Keepers from other organizations on site. This will also be a good opportunity to 'trial' whether an Indigenous Cultural Liaison position at TBDSSAB would be appropriate
14. It is important for the service recipients and community to see themselves in the TBDSSAB environment and staffing (staffing addressed in recommendation #8). Incorporate Indigenous artwork in TBDSSAB locations i.e., borrowing pieces from galleries or call outs to local artists perhaps even the service recipients. Start purchasing art as giveaways or gifts. Develop Strategy for integrating arts in facilities i.e., murals, procurement of artwork. Vendor contracts for arts activities/programming with service recipients and staff
15. Welcoming environment/first impressions to community and service recipients as soon as they walk in doors. Review dress code to ensure clients are not intimidated by business professional attire, research current best practices on making sure vulnerable people are not alienated by how they're approached i.e., suits. Clients would benefit from more client-centered, human interaction such as offering a cup of tea during intake appointments, more humanizing and welcoming. In addition, more 'time' for the recipients, especially at intake i.e., minimum two hours. Felt like it would be beneficial to have more face time to have a relationship with Caseworker and feel like a whole person. Using humour and food are human common denominators while initiating/fostering trusting working relationships. It takes time to establish a trusting working relationship. This process cannot be rushed. Further, space/toy room for recipients with younger children

Activities: Community Engagement Through Focus Groups

- Focus groups at three neutral locations in the city (Shelter House, P.A.C.E., and Salvation Army) to acquire feedback from service recipients. Participants received \$25 gift cards were provided as incentives together with cultural opening/refreshments/snacks. For more details refer to chart in appendices

Observations

- Lack of Housing Accessibility: Long wait times for housing. Unable to access a health card without an address, but can't get an address without a home address. *"I can always find food and water, but I can never find home."* Unsure of housing wait times – uncertain of how long to expect to wait for housing from initial application. Losing hope – wants a home
- Lack of Subsidized and Affordable 1-bedroom Homes: Hard to find a place with affordable rent, especially for a 1 bedroom home. They put themselves on the housing waitlist for new accommodations, but were unsure if they were on it. Limited on 1-bedroom places

- Lack of Safe, Subsidized and Affordable Housing: Did not like provided accommodations (through RGI) – drug use in the house and concerns about their own safety. Does not feel safe in their accommodations
- Lack of Mental Health Accessibility: Unable to access their mental health medication. *“Life is against me” “Can’t get my ADHD medication...medication makes me more organized.”* No follow-ups were offered or provided with mental health concerns. Unable to access mental health medication due to their family doctor being in a different town. Many participants experienced trauma or the death of a loved one while receiving services and didn’t feel TBDSSAB was able to support them fully. Some indicated they were penalized for missing appointments while grieving or worried for their safety. Others said they felt like staff made a referral and then didn’t ask them how they were doing beyond that
- Lack of Caseworker Stability: Did not like how frequently their DSSAB caseworker changed – would have liked to have the same caseworker throughout the process. *“...each time this happens my daughter shuts down every time, and she has to start over with getting comfortable again with a new person.”* Participants indicated it was difficult for them when Caseworkers changed. The lack of stability and disruptive nature of Caseworker changeover was noted to lead to long term impacts like substance use relapse and poor mental health. Lack of follow-up with accessing grief counselling through referral
- Intimidating: Had a difficult time monthly with OW and their paperwork and would withhold checks – viewed as authoritative and intimidating. *“As a residential school survival, felt like OW services were intimidating due to them being authoritative...withheld checks until all the paperwork was received...very hard as a residential school survival...some OW workers did not look friendly.”* They suggested that DSSAB should treat everybody the same. Hard to navigate in the DSSAB office due to being legally blind
- Insufficient Financial Assistance: Hard to stretch OW monthly funds. *“...rent increased every year...always falling short”*. Must rely on shelter and food banks
- Respectful and Dependable: Felt respected when using DSSAB’s services and were always great with returning phone calls. Good experience with TBDSSAB caseworkers for returning phone calls. Never felt judged by TBDSSAB, always quick to get back to you. The DSSAB workers were great at offering things that were available for the client to receive. They felt it was a respectful place with Ontario Works. Participants were generally happy with their relationships with Caseworkers. Relationships that are formed with clients are strong and respectful
- Enjoyed Community/in-person TBDSSAB Presence: Enjoyed having a TBDSSAB member come into the Salvation Army to explain and answer any questions about their services and programs. *“...explained it in layman terms...explained it simpler”*
- Lacking Explanation or Assistance for TBDSSAB Services or Programs and Waiting Lists: Wants more explanation and justification of why a certain service or program is being recommended to them. Wants more assistance of how to fill out TBDSSAB’s forms. Wants to know if you can transfer from OW to ODSP. *“...did not like that a caseworker*

said to take ODSP instead of OW because it was more money". Hard to know about what you don't know for TBDSSAB services. Lack of clarity concerning programs and waiting lists: They felt that DSSAB did not let them know what they were eligible for

Recommendations

16. Authoritative, intimidating language is a barrier to engagement. Residential school survivors indicated it was triggering to receive services from someone using technical, authoritative language—intimidating, leads to sense of powerlessness. More open communication about what services/resources are available, so clients don't feel they need to research everything themselves. Integrating a plain and welcoming language strategy (written and verbal) would be beneficial to reduce triggering (more information about triggering can be provided through the culturally appropriate training) and be more welcoming to community and service recipients
17. Regarding client engagement, providing as many accessible options as possible for service engagement i.e., when focus groups happen, also host one online for folks that cannot attend, or provide the survey opportunities or one-on-one interviews. The service recipients mentioned they like the small size of the sharing circles, felt it was easier to talk more and open up. It is recommended that focus group exercises like the Sharing Circles conducted during this situation analysis be conducted i.e., minimum annually, optimum bi-annually
18. Integrate additional wraparound services, encouraging more Indigenous service providers in TBDSSAB direct service delivery. Research service models and space sharing to see what works. What lessons can we learn from tenant resource centres and Salvation Army services (heard in focus groups) to apply to headquarters and satellite offices. Invite community Indigenous partners/organizations to share space at headquarters
19. Two common themes that are not in TBDSSAB's control, but could be potential advocacy topics:
 - Ontario Works is not enough to survive on. Many participants frequently used food banks, often traveling by foot, from program to program and spending most of their time trying to access affordable food. Research has been completed on the Universal Basic Income (UBI) and data shows it is cheaper to administer UBI rather than Ontario Works
 - Housing wait list is long. Need more 1 bedroom units. Clients feel it's not fair to be put back at the bottom of the wait list for rejecting a home for reasons such as: being solicited drugs while viewing the apartment and not wanting to live in that situation. Drug trafficking and crime are traumatizing for tenants

Activities: Community Engagement Through Surveys

- Providing cultural and Spiritual support at three community building 50th anniversary celebrations (Limbrick, Trillium and McIvor) including bringing medicines for their gardens: cedar tree (provided by TBDSSAB) and sage/sweetgrass/tobacco plants (provided by Blue Sky medicine garden). These opportunities were used to gather input from service recipients via surveys. \$10 gift cards were provided as incentives together

with cultural opening/refreshments/food/games/music. Upon request, the raw data inputted can be provided.

Observations

There was a questionnaire designed following the foundational teachings of the medicine wheel. These are the results of the questions with a few highlighted comments. Upon request, the chart with the raw data inputted can be provided.

Physical Quadrant

82.75% Yes - 13.79% No: Do you feel comfortable in TBDSSAB spaces?

79.31% Yes – 17.24% No: Are your physical needs being met through TBDSSAB?

65.52% Yes – 31.03% No: Do you feel safe where you are currently living? (Lowest score)

- *“Do not feel safe, 20 gangs from Toronto. Gangs have taken over the houses.”*
- *“Because there is no security guards that are supposed to be in the building.”*
- *“Getting rid of gangs. People that are evicted, still live here, they still cause problems.”*
- *“The inability to properly deal with problem tenants due to local laws and policies puts regular people in danger due to increased drug activity in Thunder Bay.”*

Emotional Quadrant

82.75% Yes – 13.79% No: Do you have a trusted main contact at TBDSSAB if you need help?

72.41% Yes – 24.14% No: Is it easy for you to reach out to someone at TBDSSAB when you need help or support?

82.75% Yes – 13.79% No: Do TBDSSAB staff take the time to get to know you, ask you questions, or offer emotional support?

68.97% Yes – 20.69% No: Does TBDSSAB support you with your mental health needs?

Intellectual Quadrant

75.86% Yes – 13.79% No: Are your intellectual needs being met? (life skills, training and education, etc.)

86.21% Yes – 3.45% No: Do you feel TBDSSAB staff support you to understand programs, services, and resources available to you?

72.41% Yes – 17.24% No: Do you feel TBDSSAB supports you to engage with traditional knowledge?

Spiritual Quadrant

86.21% Yes – 3.45% No: Do you have access to traditional/cultural supports or services?

89.66% Yes – 0.00% No: Do you feel safe discussing your identity with TBDSSAB staff? (Highest score)

86.21% Yes – 0.00% No: Are you being treated with dignity and respect?

- *“I love going to the garden fruit stand and my kids like the youth centre. My fan in bathroom not pulling out moisture.”*
- *“Maybe more activities for kids. Other than that my girls and I enjoy living here.”*
- *“We are lucky to have Thunder Bay Community Housing for affordable housing for families.”*
- *“I am older now but 10 to 15 years ago, it was different, very hard to get the help you or I need for me or children. I so glad things easier with growth.”*

Recommendations

20. Combining Indigenous cultural activities with the TBDSSAB building anniversary celebrations was a wonderful way to ensure a comfort level with the recipients and an excellent venue for completing surveys/questionnaires in a neutral setting. Encourage more of these types of activities and identify a timeline to conduct this type of survey on a regular basis
21. One of the topics that were highlighted was not feeling safe in their homes due to gang/drugs/drinking related activities. Perhaps through brainstorming with the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners, additional methods and strategies could be developed to collaboratively intervene

Enhanced Partnerships

Activities

- Met with various TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners
 - Through email invitation
 - Subsequent zoom meetings
 - Kept them abreast of activities and invited to participate

Observations

- Limited participation with TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners
- Lots of valuable feedback and suggestions provided
- Willing to meet and participate more but require more notice (their schedules are very tight)

Recommendations

22. Continue to provide TBDSSAB Indigenous partners with updates, inviting them to participate and provide their input. It is recommended that an invitation to an in-person town hall or action-oriented meeting be initiated once or twice a year. Present the results of this situation analysis and engage the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners in the decision-making process. At this town hall, also inquire the best way to have the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners participating
23. Integrate transparency, illustrate the good work that TBDSSAB is doing on a quarterly basis. It is just as important to acknowledge the challenges. How is this work impacting service recipients and staff? Identify the barriers and address them in collaboration with the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners

List of Appendices

1. DRAFT Implementation Plan
2. Visual of Recommendations
3. Follow up letter from the Minister
4. Staff Cultural Competency Training Responses to Evaluations

Recommended Implementation Plan

Objectives	Recommended Next Steps	Medicine Wheel Quadrant
Board Representation	1. Four Indigenous representatives to sit on the TBDSSAB board of directors from: Nishnawbe Aski Nation; Grand Council Treaty #3; Anishinabek Nation; and the Métis Nation of Ontario. These representatives are recognized and respected as community champions rather than a political appointment. Initiate relationship with Grand Council Treaty #3. Meet with these four traditional territories to discuss next steps	Physical
	2. When the date of the next meeting with the Minister is identified (ROMA January 2023), provide update to TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners. Following the Indigenous engagement, the TBDSSAB Board of Directors and the organization will advocate to have a working relationship with the policy makers i.e., Ministry of Ontario. Indigenous representation must be part of the discussion with the Minister. May be last opportunity to complete this step during the current TBDSSAB Strategic Plan 2023. Therefore, a presentation to the TBDSSAB Board of Directors as well as to the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners would need to be completed by December 2022. Invite additional letters of support from TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners	Intellectual
	3. Indigenous representation on the TBDSSAB board is only a very small first step. Further policy revisions need to be incorporated with the engagement of the Indigenous community as well as service recipients to address all the considerations required including but not limited to advocacy, strategies, and funding purposes. Position Papers could be drafted in partnership with Indigenous Partners. This is an example of a tool available to assist with the decolonization of the current policies and developing new ones https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-cultural-competency-self-assessment-checklist	Intellectual
	4. The TBDSSAB board and organization are advised to include a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Anti-Racism strategy within their organizational strategies	Intellectual

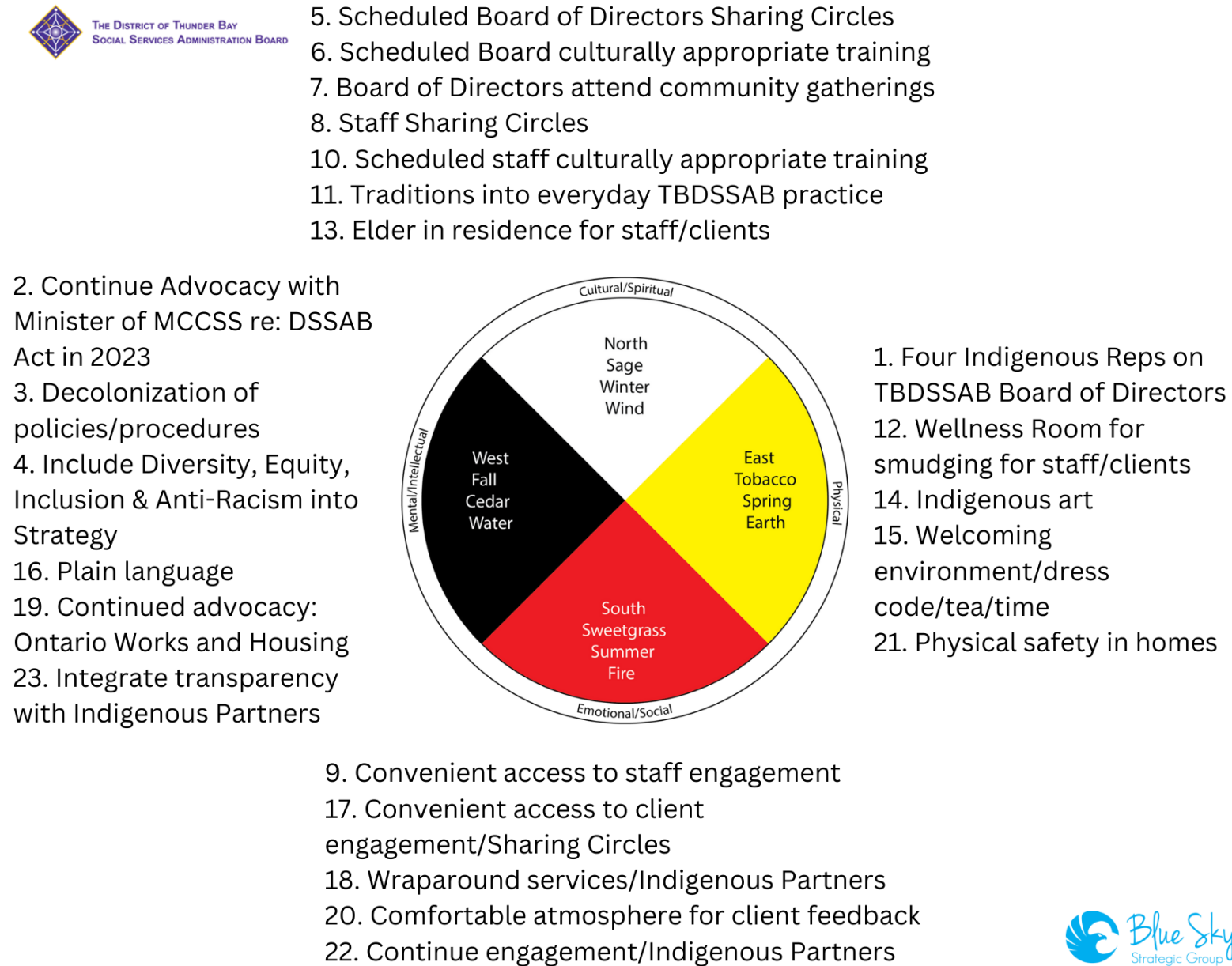
Board Cultural Competency	5. Identify regular timeline to conduct TBDSSAB Board of Directors Sharing Circles i.e., minimum every four years (at the beginning of the new term), optimum annually	Cultural
	6. Identify regular timeline to provide culturally appropriate training, specifically the true oppression of the Indigenous peoples historically and currently, to the TBDSSAB Board of Directors i.e., minimum every four years (at the beginning of the new term), optimum annually	Cultural
	7. It is recommended that the members of the TBDSSAB board attend district community gatherings i.e., minimum bi-annually, optimum to ensure TBDSSAB board representation (rotate appointees) at all community gatherings i.e., seasonal gatherings, community gatherings. Further, the TBDSSAB board should always ensure that a TBDSSAB representative (board or management) attend any community gathering they are being invited to	Cultural
Staff Cultural Competency	8. Incorporating more Indigenous cultural activities internally will encourage Indigenous staff recruitment. Encourage more open and inclusive workplace culture to make it known that it's a safe place to disclose. Implement strategies to build up to self-disclosure forms. Identify a regular timeline to conduct Sharing Circles with the TBDSSAB staff to encourage more staff self-identification, sharing of vulnerabilities, all beneficial for service recipients i.e., minimum annually, optimum quarterly	Cultural
	9. Providing as many accessible options as possible for TBDSSAB staff engagement i.e., when focus groups happen, also host one online for folks that cannot attend, or provide the survey opportunities or one-on-one interviews	Emotional
	10. Identify a regular timeline to provide culturally appropriate training, specifically the true oppression of the Indigenous peoples historically and currently, to the TBDSSAB staff i.e., minimum annually, optimum quarterly	Cultural
Situation Analysis	11. Incorporating tradition/reconciliation into everyday TBDSSAB practice, such as, Land Acknowledgements, Opening and Closing ceremonies, regular smudging of properties, having smudging available to service recipients at Intake, etc.	Cultural

	12. It is recommended that a dedicated Wellness Room at TBDSSAB headquarters and satellite offices be incorporated for smudging, sitting with an Elder, decompressing, having access to medicines to promote healing and wellness for service recipients and staff. Will require infrastructural change in some instances	Physical
	13. Elder in Residence for TBDSSAB staff and service recipients, to provide cultural and emotional support. They could utilize the Wellness Room. This is not necessarily full time and not necessarily TBDSSAB staff, could be one or multiple Knowledge Keepers from other organizations on site. This will also be a good opportunity to 'trial' whether an Indigenous Cultural Liaison position at TBDSSAB would be appropriate	Cultural
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	15. Welcoming environment/first impressions to community and service recipients as soon as they walk in doors. Review dress code to ensure clients are not intimidated by business professional attire, research current best practices on making sure vulnerable people are not alienated by how they're approached i.e., suits. Clients would benefit from more client-centered, human interaction such as offering a cup of tea during intake appointments, more humanizing and welcoming. In addition, more 'time' for the recipients, especially at intake i.e., minimum two hours. Felt like it would be beneficial to have more face time to have a relationship with Caseworker and feel like a whole person. Using humour and food are human common denominators while initiating/fostering trusting working relationships. It takes time to establish a trusting working relationship. This process cannot be rushed. Further, space/toy room for recipients with younger children	Physical

	16. Authoritative, intimidating language is a barrier to engagement. Residential school survivors indicated it was triggering to receive services from someone using technical, authoritative language—intimidating, leads to sense of powerlessness. More open communication about what services/resources are available, so clients don't feel they need to research everything themselves. Integrating a plain and welcoming language strategy (written and verbal) would be beneficial to reduce triggering and be more welcoming to community and service recipients	Intellectual
	17. Regarding client engagement, providing as many accessible options as possible for service engagement i.e., when focus groups happen, also host one online for folks that cannot attend, or provide the survey opportunities or one-on-one interviews. The service recipients mentioned they like the small size of the sharing circles, felt it was easier to talk more and open up. It is recommended that focus group exercises like the Sharing Circles conducted during this situation analysis be conducted i.e., minimum annually, optimum bi-annually	Emotional
	18. Integrate additional wraparound services, encouraging more Indigenous service providers in TBDSSAB direct service delivery. Research service models and space sharing to see what works. What lessons can we learn from tenant resource centres and Salvation Army services (heard in focus groups) to apply to headquarters and satellite offices. Invite community Indigenous partners/organizations to share space at headquarters	Emotional
	19. Two common themes that are not in TBDSSAB's control, but could be potential advocacy topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Works is not enough to survive on. Research has been completed on the Universal Basic Income (UBI) and data shows it is cheaper to administer UBI rather than Ontario Works • Housing wait list is long. Need more 1 bedroom units 	Intellectual
	20. Combining Indigenous cultural activities with the TBDSSAB building anniversary celebrations was a wonderful way to ensure a comfort level with the recipients and an excellent venue for completing surveys/questionnaires in a neutral setting. Encourage more of these types of activities and identify a timeline to conduct this type of survey on a regular basis	Emotional

	21. One of the topics that were highlighted was not feeling safe in their homes due to gang/drugs/drinking related activities. Perhaps through brainstorming with the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners, additional methods and strategies could be developed to collaboratively intervene	Physical
Enhanced Partnerships	22. Continue to provide TBDSSAB Indigenous partners with updates, inviting them to participate and provide their input. It is recommended that an invitation to an in-person town hall or action-oriented meeting be initiated once or twice a year. Present the results of this situation analysis and engage the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners in the decision-making process. At this town hall, also inquire the best way to have the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners participating	Emotional
	23. Integrate transparency, illustrate the good work that TBDSSAB is doing on a quarterly basis. It is just as important to acknowledge the challenges. How is this work impacting service recipients and staff? Identify the barriers and address them in collaboration with the TBDSSAB Indigenous Partners	Intellectual

Visual of Recommendations



Letter from Minister

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127-2022-586

February 17, 2022

Ms. Lucy Kloosterhuis
Chair
Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board
Board.Chair@tbdssab.ca

Dear Ms. Kloosterhuis:

It was a pleasure meeting with you and your delegation on January 24 at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association's annual conference. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about the great work that Thunder Bay is doing on the ground.

In particular, it was helpful to discuss the work you are doing with respect to Indigenous representation on the District Social Services Administration Board. Thank you for your commitment to advancing reconciliation in an authentic and concrete way, and I look forward to receiving your final report and reviewing your recommendations. Learning about the way that you leveraged Social Services Relief Funding and worked in partnership with First Nations to build transitional housing highlights the critical role of local leadership and innovation in making lives better for the people of Ontario.

I look forward to our continued work together as we move forward with improving services and supports for the people of Ontario. Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me and for everything that you are doing for your community and our province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Fullerton".

Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister

Staff Cultural Competency Training Responses to Evaluations

Training took place on September 21 and October 5, both in person as well as online for three hours each. The training focused on Indigenous Identity and providing Indigenous Trauma Informed Care.

Observations

- These are the responses to the questions in the TBDSSAB evaluations completed by sixteen participants.

Section 1: The Instructor

- Excellent - The instructor was knowledgeable about the subject matter.
- Excellent - The instructor was well prepared.
- Excellent - The instructor's presentation style made the topic interesting.
- Excellent - Overall, the instructor was effective.
- Excellent - I would recommend the instructor.
- Excellent - The instructor motivated, inspired and instilled knowledge.
- Excellent - The instructor effectively imparted their knowledge.
- Excellent - The instructor demonstrated trouble shooting skills and abilities.
- Sampling of some additional comments provided:
- *"Cindy is incredibly talented and spoke to us in such a way, from her life experience, that the entire room felt comfortable to have a group discussion. The course itself was more of a conversation, but it was so meaningful. I feel we all learned so much."*
- *"Not enough time to discuss all of the topics without having to rush."*

Section 1: Content and Delivery

- Above average - Topic objectives were clearly defined.
- Above average - All defined topics objectives were met.
- Excellent - Topic materials were relevant.
- Excellent - Topic materials were accurate.
- Excellent - Information was presented at an appropriate level.
- Excellent - Topic discussions and student interactions were useful and productive.
- Excellent - Overall quality and presentation of the topic.
- Sampling of some additional comments provided:
- *"I did not find the objectives clearly defined so I could not indicate that they were met. Cindy has a lot of valuable knowledge to share however and I did enjoy her teachings and found them relevant to my work. I valued the style and approach she used as well."*
- *"More time then just the morning maybe the whole day."*

Section 2

- Moderate - How would you have rated your knowledge on the training topic prior to this training?
- Moderate/High - How would you rate your knowledge now at completion of this training?
- Beneficial - How beneficial was this training to you?

- Sampling of some additional comments provided: Is there a topic or component that you would have liked to have had more time to discuss; or would have liked to have included in this training?
- *"I didn't really know what to expect and was surprised by how relaxed/easy going it was. I would be interested in seeing the PowerPoint to see what parts we didn't get to (time restraints)."*
- *"The calls to action placed upon the Canadian government; only 17 of 96 have been answered as of yet; we received a handout of what each one is, but never what calls to action. were answered/resolved."*
- Sampling of some additional comments provided: What did you like most about this training?
- *"How nonformal the conversations were; Cindy is very non-judgemental and allowed us to have honest discussions regarding the topic."*
- *"Learning about triggers for clients."*
- *"I enjoyed the sharing circle, and how the goal was that everyone be on the same level of respect and understanding when listening and sharing with each other. Cindy was also very vulnerable when sharing stories from her own life."*
- Sampling of some additional comments provided: What did you like least about the training?
- *"It was great but I would have loved to be in person as opposed to online."*
- *"The last few topics were rushed through a bit because we were running out of time."*
- Sampling of some additional comments provided: What suggestions do you have for improving this training for future sessions?
- *"Just that it was a little too short. I felt it definitely could use a full day."*
- *"Might be better to give this training to all staff, not just the ones who are willing to sign up kinda thing."*
- Sampling of some additional comments provided: Additional comments.
- *"I found Cindy's perspective very interesting in regards to trying to reduce re-traumatization and triggers. There are a lot of clients who have trauma due to different systems, especially from previous social workers. Currently we have a business casual in place for the agency; that could quite possibly contribute to a worker/client working relationship break down. I feel like the dress code policy should be looked at again and reconsidered for the sake of our clients. There still should be limitations in regards to a dress code but more casual wear will help our clients consider this is a safe space."*
- *"Cindy is a treasure. I hope she will be back for more sessions."*