



ADYC COMPLIANCE NEWSLETTER

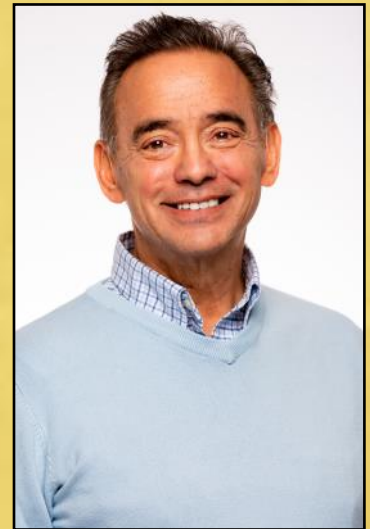
By Sadie Hart, ICWA Compliance Monitor

Q4 2020

Khunsi Onikan: Chemical Health Services for American Indian Women

Providing culturally appropriate chemical health services for American Indian families in the child welfare system is fundamental to promote healing that addresses both individual and historical trauma. These services can also provide a greater sense of safety, supporting the understanding that culture is essential to healing. We interviewed Rich Latterner, Treatment Director at the Khunsi Onikan (Grandmother's Arms) Program at the American Indian Family Center (AIFC) in St. Paul, Minnesota, to learn how this new program provides culturally appropriate outpatient recovery services to American Indian women. A member of the White Earth Nation, Rich has worked in the American Indian recovery field for the past 30 years, most recently with the White Earth Urban MAT (medication-assisted treatment) Program. He started at the American Indian Family Center in January and began the process of bringing the Khunsi Onikan Program to reality.

The American Indian Family Center provides culturally appropriate services to over 700 families each year. Latterner elaborated that *"in AIFC's vision they felt that the next service area they wanted to address was chemical health. They received guidance and direction from D. Richard Wright from the Indian Health Board. Richard and other elders guided them in laying a spiritual foundation. AIFC received a grant from DHS (Department of Human Services) to begin Khunsi Onikan."*



Rich Latterner,
Treatment Director

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He continued, *"our name Khunsi Onikan means 'Grandmother's Arms.' Grandmother's arms were always that safe place of warmth, love, and protection. We hope that Khunsi Onikan will be that place for our women. Our staff is grounded by our Elder in Residence, Nelda Goodman. Nelda provides us with wisdom and guidance. We have two experienced, culturally trained, and grounded, caring LADCs (Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors), Sharyl White Hawk and Dawn Alteri. And we have a young support staff, Caitlin Langer and Nina Vongpheth to bring their energy, computer savvy, and memory to our staff. I am not talking computer memory!"*

The program faced obstacles due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but program staff quickly came up with solutions. *"Khunsi Onikan first opened its doors for clients in May of 2020 – opened its doors figuratively speaking. We received our DHS license and shortly after that COVID struck. We were determined to provide quality American Indian culturally specific to American Indian women. We provided them with cell phones so they could join us for groups on Zoom. We delivered Indian medicines (sage, sweetgrass, cedar) to their homes so that when ceremonial things were taught, they had the elements at home."*

Khunsi Onikan (Continued from page 1)

"We knew from the beginning the group of people we were going to serve is American Indian women. Indian women need a safe place to recover and learn indigenous women's teachings. This has been a powerful dynamic from the start."

"Operating in COVID times has made us see and do treatment with a whole different mindset. We were worried about group dynamics with our women not being physically together. Our women have bonded with their counselors and with each other. During a recent graduation it was an inspiration to hear the affirmations given by the graduate to the group. The support and encouragement that the group gave to the graduate was equally moving. We will always have a Zoom group even when we can return to the center. There have been advantages to Zoom groups, such as for clients that have limited mobility, children at home, work schedules, and more."

While American Indian communities have long recognized how crucial culture is in healing, Khunsi Onikan continues to face barriers to providing these services. Latterner indicated that *"there are other service providers and county workers that have not gained confidence in culturally specific programs. We run structured, evidence based, personalized programs. Clients return to life knowing how to trust. Our women graduate sober. They either have their children back or are close to unification. Both of our graduates have found housing. We have wonderful wraparound services."*

These wraparound services include mental health services that are also available at the American Indian Family Center. *"Chemical health and mental health are so intertwined. We write into Rule 25 assessments that they need to complete a mental health evaluation. Trauma is one of the major issues our clients need to work through. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and historical trauma all need to be addressed. Our other services have also stepped up to help our women. Our case workers, housing, employment and family services have rallied for our women. Our participants are strong, resilient women. They are highly resourceful in attaining services for their children. They are very protective of their children. And American Indian women are very funny. This is a wonderful asset in group."*



Sharyl Whitehawk,
ADC-III/LADC



Dawn Alteri, LADC

The program serves American Indian women who reside in Hennepin and Ramsey counties and staff continue to build relationships with each county. *"I feel we have a strong relationship with both Hennepin and Ramsey county ICWA and child protection. Our counselors have frequent contact with child protection workers. Most of our clients have child protection issues. Many times the clients view their workers as working against them. We work on helping the clients to understand the job the workers play. We are present at many ICWA Ramsey county meetings. I think we are off to a good start."*

Latterner also sees a bright future ahead for the Khunsi Onikan Program, the American Indian Family Center, and expanding services. *"We have a capital campaign moving forward. A much larger building is part of that plan. We have many requests for a men's program grounded in cultural ways. Men are starving to get sober through culture. When working with Zoom so frequently during COVID times I have had a dream about a culturally based adolescent intensive outpatient treatment. It would not have to be bound by a geographic spot. Adolescents yawn over simple programs like Zoom. We could get a young technical savvy LADC to facilitate a group like this. Youth would not be pulled out of their high schools and away from their friends. We have a men's support group that is grounded in culture. The leader of this group, Rich Antell, is a dynamic man that is also a licensed drug counselor. I am anxious to see where the creator will take this group."*



Finally, Latterner noted that *“the Khunsi Onikan Program has shown that culturally specific American Indian programming works. Our women have learned the songs and teachings. Many times, Indian names are given in this type of programming. Our women come to know what it means to be an Urban Native American woman. Women are the heart and soul of Indian families. When they get well the families heal.”*

To learn more about the Khunsi Onikan Program, please visit <https://aifcmn.org/services/recovery/>. Miigwech to Rich Latterner and the Khunsi Onikan Program for answering our questions and serving our American Indian families!

Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung: A Look Back on a Successful First Year

November 12, 2020, marked the one year anniversary of the first resident to move into the Ain Dah Yung Center’s Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung (MOADY), a culturally-appropriate 42-unit permanent supportive housing project for American Indian youth and young adults. Angela Gauthier, Associate Director of the Ain Dah Yung Center, reflected that *“it has been a challenging and successful first year for Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung. What we have learned – or come to understand differently now – is that housing is the first step on what may be a long and winding journey. We are fortunate to be there to offer support and services for them along the way.”*

The achievements of MOADY’s first year would not have been possible without the hard work of dedicated team members, especially against the unique hardships presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. *“The Ain Dah Yung Center is so proud of the hard work and dedication the MOADY team has put in to make this first year a success,”* Gauthier said. *“On a tight deadline we were able to fill all 42 units by the end of February. Just as we were settling in with a building full of new residents, we were hit with the pandemic. We entered quarantine two weeks after we completed a full lease up. This upended our plans and program development right as we were starting. Our team took their dedication and figured out how we were going to make MOADY everything we had hoped, despite the limitations we faced.”*



Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung, located in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The pandemic also highlighted unique challenges for the new residents: *“Moving into a home after experiencing homelessness is a huge transition, and as excited as the new residents are when they get housing, it can also be overwhelming, confusing, scary, and lonely,”* Gauthier remarked. *“We had expected to be there on site to help with this – respond when they needed us and had questions, be a familiar face when they came home, and just get to hang out and get to know everyone, and that was taken away. We had to adjust very quickly and have continued to work very hard to connect with our residents, offer services, build relationships, and support them. We meet in person with the residents when needed, but do the majority of our services remotely. We are finding ways to stay connected during the winter. Overall, we have made this work and done a great job during this challenging time. We are sad that we will have missed the in-person time we have with our residents, but ultimately keeping them and the staff safe is our biggest concern.”*

Despite these barriers, Gauthier indicated that throughout the pandemic *“we kept our units full, have helped our residents sign up for benefits and continue to teach them how to navigate the sometimes-challenging process. Residents have started new jobs, signed up for school and GED programs, and they have made friendships.”*

Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung (Continued from page 3)

“As summer came to end and we learned more about how to enact safety precautions to help with social activities, we hosted a series of events for our residents. We were able to kick off the activities with a safe, socially-distanced BBQ, hosted bingo, and had 12 residents sign up for educational programming, sexual health education, and partnered with Elpis Enterprises to teach the residents basic woodworking.”

The Zhawenimaa (“They Are Loved Unconditionally” in Ojibwe) Safe Harbor Program also began operating in July. Gauthier said that “ADYC is proud to partner with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity and the Minnesota Department of Health to provide safe harbor services to youth experiencing, or who have a history of sexual exploitation, human trafficking and survival sex. Zhawenimaa provides culturally specific trauma informed care and case management services for American Indian youth before, during, and after periods of exploitation.”

Though the pandemic has impacted program development and implementation, Gauthier noted that “we are looking forward to when we can gather again at our place of work, when we will begin to offer all the services we had planned, such as cooking classes, mental health groups, physical activities, art, and cultural activities. In addition, we have recently begun implementation of our entrepreneurship programming, focused on employment skill building and job readiness. We are eager to provide these services in-person to our residents and support them on their journeys.”

Chi Miigwetch to the Ain Dah Yung Center staff for their hard work as they continue to serve our American Indian youth and families! To learn more about how to support MOADY and all of ADYC's programs, please visit <https://donate.onecause.com/minosidoon>.

Liaison Lowdown: Spreading Holiday Cheer!

By Mariah Smith

Mino-Oshki-Biboon, Happy New Year from me to you! I hope this new year brings you and your loved ones good health and joy.

Although we were not able to hold our annual Community Holiday Party due to COVID-19, we were still able to celebrate and support our American Indian youth this year. In collaboration with Department of Indian Work, St. Paul Indian Education, and the American Indian Family Center, we were able to deliver 80 boxes around the metro to American Indian families, serving 260 youth. Each box contained kits to keep our youth busy during the holidays, including: ornament kits, a gingerbread house kit, cookie kits, Target gift cards, and Cub Foods gift cards. Staff and volunteers met at the Department of Indian Work on December 14th to assemble the boxes and on December 21st we all split up with our routes to start delivering some holiday cheer. The boxes were well received. The following is from a family who received a box:



Cookie kits for holiday boxes delivered to American Indian families in the metro.



The first residents moved into Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung in November 2019.

“I just want to say how grateful my family is for all your help & support!!! We appreciate it sooo much. My kids love the arts & crafts going to do them today!! We wish all of your staff a very Blessed & Merry Christmas as well. We wouldn't have made it this far without you all!! Thank so much from afar.”

Liaison Lowdown (Continued from page 4)

We hope next year we will be able to hold our Community Holiday Party in person but for now we thank all the programs we collaborated with for their hard work in assembling these holiday boxes.

I've also kept busy with partnering with Ramsey County. I have started to go along with the Ramsey County Child Protection intake workers and shadowing their work (assessments, investigations, etc.) to see where my services are most needed. As I've started doing this I've gained a lot of knowledge and understanding of all they do. I look forward to prioritizing this in January and February and continue to grow into my role as the Nokomis Circle Liaison!

Community Events: Successful Education Event and Meet and Greet!

The Family Preservation Subcommittee of the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID) hosted two events during the fall of 2020. On October 22nd the group hosted an education event for those caring for American Indian children in foster care. The event included information on transfers of legal custody, parental and family rights, and rights of foster parents. It also included a panel of foster/adoptive parents, relative caregivers, and other professionals who could answer questions based on their experiences.

The Family Preservation Subcommittee also hosted a virtual Meet and Greet on November 9th for child welfare justice partners and American Indian community organizations in the Twin Cities to learn more about each other's roles in the child welfare system. Attendees had the opportunity to introduce themselves and talk more about the work that they do and ways to collaborate.

Thank you to everyone who attended each event!

Court Updates

The ADYC Compliance Newsletter includes positive observations from ICWA hearings as well as ICWA highlights that demonstrate the great work happening in Ramsey County.

Observation: Judge Millenacker congratulated the father, social worker Rob Fluto, and Guardian ad Litem Rachel Evangelisto on their tremendous work during the case. The father noted that he and his daughter have a long journey and a happy ending ahead of them.

Observation: There were technical difficulties when a father tried to appear by phone for a Zoom hearing. Social worker Crystal Hedemann worked to resolve these issues and coordinated with the father on her cell phone while she was on Zoom.

Observation: Social worker Skye Johnson stated she could not find words to express how proud she was of the mother and her strength throughout the child protection process. Judge Smith, tribal social worker Anderson Jones, mother's attorney Nicole Gronneberg, and Guardian ad Litem Tara Bruening echoed the praise.

Observation: Social worker Rob Fluto commended the father for stepping up during a difficult time for the family. Judge Smith, the father's attorney John

Sadowski, and Guardian ad Litem Rachel Evangelisto also acknowledged the father's hard work.

Observation: Social worker Crystal Hedemann noted how proud she was of the family and the perseverance they have shown, which was echoed by Judge Smith, Guardian ad Litem Patra Siedlecki, and tribal representative Juliane Chase-Wilson. The mother thanked everyone for their support and for pushing her to be a better parent.

Observation: Communication between the father and social worker was difficult because the father did not have a phone. Judge Hilgers helped coordinate a time for the social worker to give the father a phone to help with visitation and case plan compliance.

Observation: Tribal social worker Anderson Jones thanked everyone involved in the case for their hard work towards finding permanency for the child, as well as for the foster parent providing a loving home for the child.

ICWA Violations

The ADYC Compliance Newsletter includes ICWA violations which may be from hearings held at court and/or from case files. We are blessed to have such a close working relationship with Ramsey County professionals and the judges who preside for our families. We are pleased to report that there were no violations observed during Quarters 2 through 4! We look forward to our continued partnership as we work together to find ways for our families to be successful!



Tribal Attendance

The following chart indicates the tribes involved in ICWA cases in Ramsey County during Quarters 2 through 4. The chart includes the tribes involved, the number of hearings that occurred, and the number of times the tribe attended hearings. This data reflects hearings the court monitor attended and does not include all Ramsey County ICWA cases.

TRIBE	NUMBER OF HEARINGS	TRIBE PRESENT
Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians	1	1
Cherokee Nation	1	-
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	1	-
Choctaw Nation	2	2
Ho-Chunk Nation	1	1
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians	1	-
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	18	16
Lower Sioux Indian Community	3	3
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	3	3
Oglala Sioux Tribe	1	1
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	2	2
Red Lake Nation	12	9
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	3	3
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate	3	-
White Earth Nation	12	7
Unknown*	22	-

About the Quarter 2-4 Data

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hearing data was limited for several months in 2020. Data from Quarters 2-4, April 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, has been combined and included here. This data was collected by the court monitor at hearings held at court, talking to the parties involved, and reading case files. This data reflects hearings the court monitor attended and does not include all Ramsey County ICWA cases.

Attendance

The majority of cases monitored during Quarters 2-4 were held remotely via Zoom or phone. Some emergency hearings were held in person.

Mothers attended hearings 47.1% of the time in Quarters 2-4, compared to 61.2% of the time in Quarter 1.

Attendance of fathers decreased from 31.3% in Quarter 1 to 23.4% in Quarters 2-4.

Attendance of children also decreased from 12.5% in Quarter 1 to 5% in Quarters 2-4.

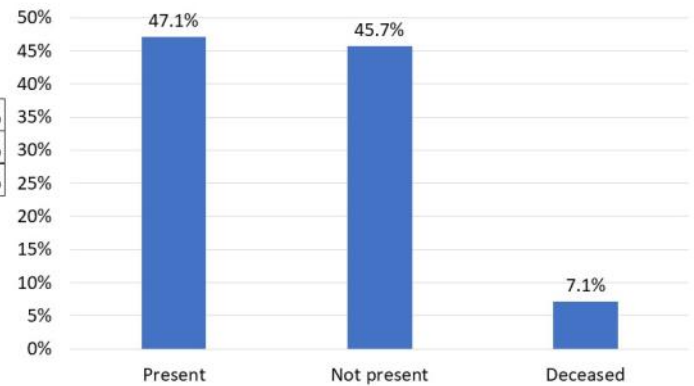
Though specific reasons for the decrease in attendance are unclear, there were several instances of technology issues that hindered attendance. There was often discussion of ways to engage parties and encourage attendance.

The Ramsey County Social Services Department provides phones to many parents so they are able to attend hearings.

The Second Judicial Branch also provides tablet technology that can be used at the Ramsey County Juvenile and Family Justice Center so parties have access to Zoom hearings.

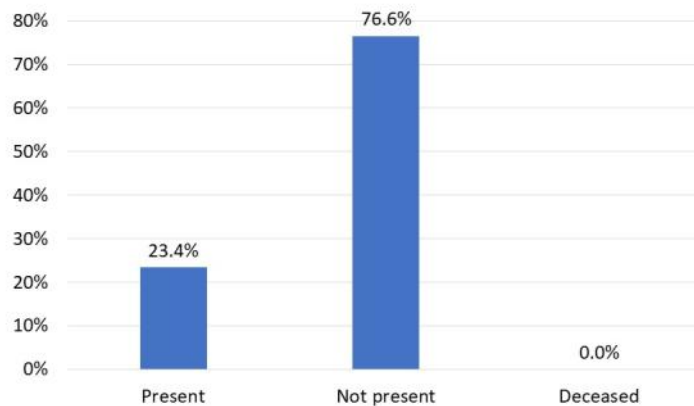
Attendance of Mothers

Present	33	47.1%
Not present	32	45.7%
Deceased	5	7.1%
Grand Total	70	



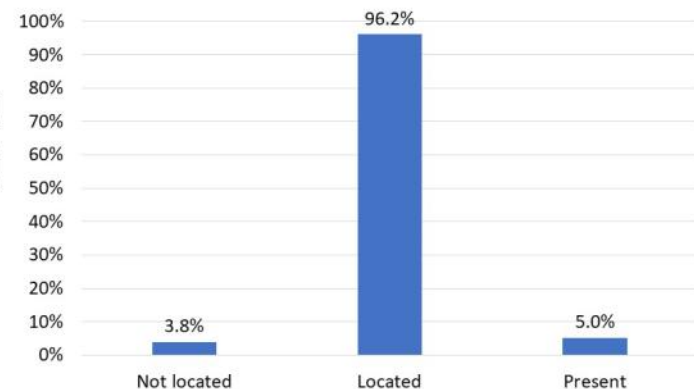
Attendance of Fathers

Present	15	23.4%
Not present	49	76.6%
Deceased	0	0.0%
Grand Total	64	



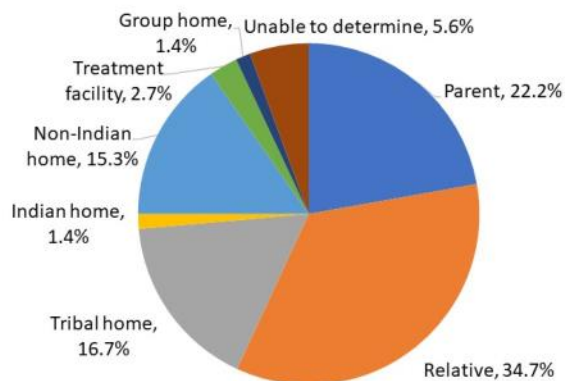
Attendance of Children

Not located	3	3.8%
Located	77	96.2%
Present	4	5.0%
Grand Total	80	



Placement

Parent	16	22.2%
Relative	25	34.7%
Tribal home	12	16.7%
Indian home	1	1.4%
Non-Indian home	11	15.3%
Treatment facility	2	2.7%
Group home	1	1.4%
Unable to determine	4	5.6%
Grand Total	72	



Placement

Children were placed with a parent 22.2% of the time and with a relative 34.7% of the time in Quarters 2-4.

When the tribe was present, a representative presented placement recommendations 72.9% of the time. These recommendations were the same as the agency's recommendations 100% of the time.

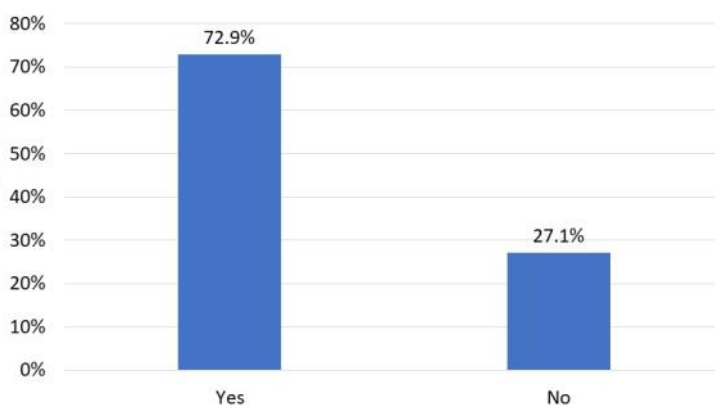
Placement preferences were followed in 75% of hearings. When the preferences were not followed, there was a finding of good cause to deviate 100% of the time.

The reasons were generally due to the unavailability of suitable foster families or other reasons, such as the medical needs of the child or arranging a plan to move the child into an ICWA placement.

These are great outcomes for our families!

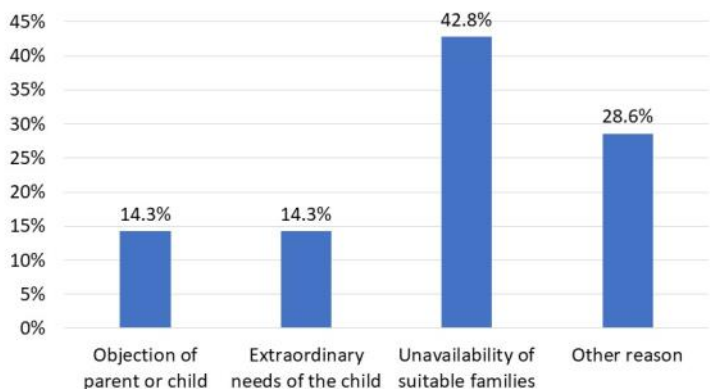
When the tribe was present, did the tribe seek to present a recommendation regarding placement?

Yes	35	72.9%
No	13	27.1%
Grand Total	48	



If placement preferences were not followed, why not?

Objection of parent or child	2	14.3%
Extraordinary needs of the child	2	14.3%
Unavailability of suitable families	6	42.8%
Other reason	4	28.6%
Grand Total	14	



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