

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AGENCY

In May of 1984, a group of concerned parents and professionals formed the Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre committee to identify the child care needs in the community and initiate much needed children's services in Wawa. That committee has since evolved into a twelve member Board of Directors, which meets regularly and gives direction on issues of policy making, budgeting and other components of the Centre's operation.

Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre received non-profit corporation status in 1985. That same year the corporation was funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services to open a rural Resource Centre in Wawa. This program consisted of a toy lending library, play facility and parent resource centre. It was to become a popular informal meeting place for parents/caregivers and their children.

In 1986, once again the W.P.C.P.C. organization surveyed the Wawa area to assess the need for a licensed day care service. The results of this survey indicated that there was a need for a licensed day care service in Wawa and that it would be utilized.

On July 8, 1986, Premier Peterson made an announcement of economic initiatives for Northern Ontario. Included in the announced initiatives was funding to Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre for the construction of a "Hub" child care centre to be built in Wawa. The centre has been called a "hub model" because it has more than one component of programming.

At that time, Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre offered the following programs:

1. Family Resource Centre
2. Licensed Private Home Day Care Agency
3. Licensed Integrated Day Care Centre

The new Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre Hub Model was completed in August, 1987. It was the first Hub Model to be built in Ontario. The Resource Centre portion resumed operation in the new facility in September, 1987. The Day Care component received its licensing and began operating in November, 1987. The Private Home Day Care Agency began child care services in August, 1988.

Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre Corporation received charitable organization status in April, 1988.

In June of 1990 the operating name of our Hub Centre officially became Superior Children's Centre. Our mission statement, adopted in November, 1990 was as follows:

"We are committed to the enhancement of the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of all children in Wawa and the surrounding area by providing quality, versatile programs and resources to children, their families and others entrusted with their care in an informative, caring environment."

In January of 1991 funding was approved for an outreach program through an agreement with Health and Welfare Canada's Child Care Initiatives Fund. This funding would be for an eighteen month period. The purpose of the project was to develop and implement a support service for parents and informal caregivers in the isolated communities surrounding Wawa through workshops, playgroup activities, the provision of resources and the development of an informal caregiver networking system. An additional six months funding, which ended in March of 1993 was accessed due to the success of the program. We were able to continue the service on a very small scale into the middle of June 1993 through collaboration with a number of other service providers in Wawa and the smaller communities and the parents themselves.

The project was very successful with a total of 135 families in the communities of Dubreuilville, Missinabie, White River, Hawk Junction, Michipicoten Mission and Montreal River using our service.

In 1994 Superior Children's Centre once again applied for funding, in conjunction with other service providers from across the district of Algoma, by responding to Health Canada's Community Action Program for Children Call for Proposals. In October we became the North Algoma patron for the district wide program through the newly formed Algoma Cooperative Children's Services. With this new funding a van for travel to the above communities was also purchased. Once again we were coordinating a Mobile Family Resource Centre program in the above communities, this time with the funding from Health Canada's CAPC program (Community Action Program for Children). Funds were also made available for In Home Support Services in the communities surrounding Wawa. A few months later funds were also received for North Algoma from the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP), another Health Canada initiative.

In January of 1996, we assumed sponsorship of the Hornepayne Family Resource Centre and have been successfully operating that program through staff located in that community since that time.

In January of 1998, additional programming was proposed and funding was received to expand our local CAPC program. This included a position for Wawa to provide local In Home Support and to act as a Resource Centre liaison. As a result we were able to offer new parent support groups to the community.

Beginning in June of 1998 some leading edge decisions were made. Space was rented downtown for our Family Resource Centre to examine accessibility issues

we felt were affecting service. The dramatic increase in usage indicated that we had made the right move. In November of 1998, an opportunity to purchase the building downtown presented itself. This was approved and the location became permanent. In January of 2000, the CAPC "Outreach" program was moved to the downtown location in an effort to make resources more available to everyone. This too has been a positive move. Subsequently, the Resource Centre began building resources and contacts to better serve families pre-natally and post-natally. We include support for those who choose breast-feeding and Community Kitchens through the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP). In addition we provide much needed office space and meeting space to other service providers and community members at that location.

In January of 2000 our major funder became Algoma District Services Administration Board as a result of the Ministry of Community and Social Services downloading to municipalities.

The Board of Directors and staff of our Centre have been committed to providing child care services and parenting resources that fulfill as many needs as possible through the resources available to us. Over the years they have participated in regular professional development and are currently working with a well-established model of Board Governance. In 1995 we revisited our mission statement and it was changed to, simply, "*Helping Children Grow*". To this end our partnerships have expanded to the whole district in our work to ensure not only that children in North Algoma receive the benefits of any services offered, but that we advocate on behalf of all children. In conjunction with this, staff has been encouraged to participate on other child serving organizations in the district. It is also the intent of the Board that professional development be an important part of how we deliver services and that these are grounded in current research and theory.

Since 1998 we have also offered a variety of services at our Algoma Street location that meet the changing needs of the community. We have expanded our licenses to include a toddler program as well as a 5-6 year old Summer and After School program when numbers warrant. We have also provided temporary space to Wawa Cooperative Nursery School. A School Readiness program as well as a French Nursery School program, were offered in the fall of 2001. A licensed French nursery school program for the community of Dubreuilville began operating in September of 2002. This program operates in partnership with our CAPC program out of Dubreuilville's Kendra Centre. We are currently in the process of expanding the Home Child Care Program to the smaller surrounding communities.

In January of 2001 we became the local sponsor for the Breakfast for Learning Program offered to the community by the Children's Service Coordination Committee. In October of 2001 we began a partnership with Children's

Rehabilitation Centre – Algoma to house a Resource Educator to deliver special needs services to childcare programs in North Algoma.

In May of 2001 Ontario Early Years Centres were announced. We began a process to ensure that our Family Resource Centre would be considered for the Lead Agency for the Algoma-Manitoulin riding. Shortly after, the Executive Director of the Agency was asked to sit on the Early Years Steering Committee for Algoma. In April of 2002 she was appointed as Co-Champion for Algoma-Manitoulin and charged with the task of co-leading the planning process for Ontario Early Years Centres for the riding.

The Service and Site Assessment of our Family Resource Centre for Early Years Centre suitability took place in June of 2002. As a result of the planning process (and with the Executive Director ineligible to vote), Superior Children's Centre was chosen as the Lead Agency for Algoma-Manitoulin. This was formally announced in March of 2003 with our official opening in June of 2003. This placed us in a position to work with other Family Resource Programs (clusters) across the riding in order to ensure the delivery of mandated core services as well as to further cement partnerships already in place.

Articles of Incorporation needed to be reviewed and the Board of Directors revisited our mission statement and expanded it to "*Building Communities, Supporting Families and Helping Children Grow*" in recognition of our expanded mandate. Changes in the makeup of our Board included the addition of one board member from each cluster area.

In September of 2002, in conjunction with Algoma Cooperative Children's Services we began offering the Roots of Empathy Program in Wawa and White River. This is a violence reduction program, offered in the classroom, that builds empathy in children through their involvement with an infant and their observations of the developmental milestones the infant experiences.

In May of 2003 our Challenge Fund proposal, submitted in conjunction with the local Children's Service Coordination Committee, was approved for a Recreation Program for children 0-6.

Officially becoming the Ontario Early Years Centre for Algoma Manitoulin in June of 2003 provided us with many opportunities to strengthen both new and old partnerships and sponsorships to further enhance services for families and children in the riding. In our own community, other agencies look to us to provide leadership and high quality programming when children and families are involved. We work closely with both the Township and the other agencies to provide recreational activities and celebrations on a regular basis. Throughout the riding we are working with other Family Resource Programs, now Early Years Satellites, to ensure the Early Years core services and opportunities necessary for healthy early child development and care are available to all. We provide extensive professional development and evidence based curriculum development in these programs.

In August of 2004 we launched our website located at www.superiorchildrenscentre.org.

In September, 2004 we changed the location of our program in Hornepayne and are now in a building where we are co-located with Children's Aid, the outreach program from the area's women's shelter (Chadwic Home) and the local food bank.

At the beginning of 2005 two new programs were launched. An infant program for Wawa was licensed for 6 children, while child care for White River was initiated with a nursery school program offered out of St. Basil's School. This program also operates in partnership with our CAPC programs there.

In March of 2005 our Breakfast for Learning (Eat to Learn) program experienced some change as a result of new Provincial directives through the School Nutrition program. We are working in partnership with Algoma Family Services (the District Sponsor) to adapt the existing program to meet new criteria.

In September of 2005 we were successful, in partnership with the other Northern Ontario Early Years Centres, to be awarded funding through Social Development Canada for the Understanding the Early Years research project. Superior Children's Centre was the sponsor for that project which continues to provide us with information on how well prepared children in Northern Ontario are to enter the school system as well as community information to inform our planning for early years services across the north and in our communities.

By November of 2005, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services had developed their Best Start Plan for children and families. Child Care programming and a "School's First" Policy was the first stage to be developed and in that phase we were able to work with Algoma District Social Services Administrative Board and the Algoma Best Start Network to build on our existing partnerships with St. Basil's School and the Huron Superior Roman Catholic Separate School Board to construct and develop the first new Algoma Best Start child care program for the community of White River. This program opened in early 2006 and included toddler, preschool and school age programs for up to 36 children.

Within a few months we were also told that Ontario Early Years Centres in the North would become Best Start Hubs, one stop locations for parents to access all their early learning services and supports, including child care if available. This once again would change our relationships across the riding and necessitate some revisions to our by-laws.

Once again we rose to this new challenge to become the first Best Start Hub in Algoma at our

66 Broadway Avenue location. As part of Algoma's Best Start Network, we also began operating Hubs in conjunction with our existing programs in White River (at our school location) and in Hornepayne.

In June 2007 our operating name became our legal name of Superior Children's Centre. In April of 2008 we unveiled our new logo. In conjunction with this, our staff worked enthusiastically together to create a new program operating philosophy for our agency that everyone is very proud of.

An exciting opportunity that also evolved through Best Start were new partnerships with our two local Francophone Boards of Education, Conseil Scolaire Catholique du Nouvel-Ontario and Conseil Scolaire du district du Grand Nord de l'Ontario, to provide all Hub services, including new Francophone child care programs in new schools in Wawa (École Ste. Joseph-39 spaces) and Dubreuilville (l'Ecole secondaire Carrefour-Supérieur Nord-39 spaces). The Francophone Hub opened at École St. Joseph in Wawa in September of 2008 while the program in Dubreuilville opened in February of 2009.

In fact, over the years our ability to show leadership and engage our local schools and other partners effectively has helped us be successful throughout the Best Start planning process.

Superior Children's Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2010. The opening of new playgrounds with natural elements was in 2012. We started our outdoor gardens in 2013. We also started the implementation of Emergent Curriculum in our programs.

In 2014 Hornepayne Best Start Hub moved into a classroom at the Hornepayne Public School. A new and larger playground was built at 41 Algoma in Wawa.

In 2015 Superior Children's Centre celebrated its 30th anniversary. SCC started indoor gross-motor activity centres and in 2016 a rock climbing wall was put in at 41 Algoma.

In 2017 Dubreuilville opened its doors to new staff, new children and new families on a full time basis. They offer infant, toddler, preschool and school-age programs. A new Before and After School program opened at St Joseph's French Immersion School in Wawa. Hornepayne Best Start Hub celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Best Start Hubs officially became EarlyON Child and Family Centres in 2018. Garderie Francophone in Wawa opened an infant program that is licensed for six infants.

Superior Children's Centre currently employs 21 full time and 28 contract and part time employees. Since our inception we have grown steadily. Success is

not just the result of the programs we offer, it is the approach we take in offering them. We have proven our ability to plan strategically to successfully respond to community needs and interests. It is the responsive and responsible leadership of both board and staff over the years that have enabled this to happen.