

# THRIVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THE VISION OF OUR KIDS NETWORK

## INTERIM DIRECTOR SHARES GOALS FOR ORGANIZATION

Inside Halton conducted a Q&A with new interim executive director of Our Kids Network, Elisabeth Wells. Here's what she had to say:

**Q What is Our Kids Network?**

**A** Our Kids Network (OKN) is a Halton-wide partnership of agencies and organizations serving children and youth.

Our vision is all children and youth thrive. We are a collective impact organization, and we build the capacity of community organizations that support children, youth and their families. As a Halton-wide partnership, we work collectively to mobilize knowledge and resources to support Halton professionals in their work. OKN is known for its Halton specific research and data, and our strong

relationships in the community.

**What is the importance of an organization such as OKN in a community?**

The network is important to the Halton community because we bring different community partners together to a common table, working towards our vision that all children and youth thrive. As a network from across different sectors and community organizations, we can identify gaps and issues affecting children, youth and families and work collectively to organize action on these issues at the community level.

We provide the support to enable that work to happen effectively at the community level; for example, by using data and evidence to identify and act on problems, by partnering and teaming up on important initiatives, and by co-ordinating efforts among partners. It is the role of OKN to conduct and share research, promote and help sustain relationships, develop resources to help partners achieve their outcomes, and provide



Graham Paine/Metroland

**Elisabeth Wells is the new interim executive director of Our Kids Network.**

knowledge translation that educates and informs partners in their work, leading to action and measurement of progress.

**Could you expand on the work OKN is doing towards Indigenous reconciliation?**

Our Indigenous reconciliation strategy provides leader-

ship, tools and resources to increase professionals' knowledge about Indigenous literacy. A key aspect of our strategy includes supporting professionals in Halton to increase their Indigenous literacy and build their capacity (to) apply this knowledge in their work with children, youth and families in Halton.

For example, our website offers a large library of resources for professionals that supports Indigenous literacy, including information about the 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation report, Indigenous history and culture, and territorial acknowledgments just to name a few.

**Could we get a general overview of where OKN is headed under a new interim executive director?**

OKN is known for its research and data, and our strong relationships in the community. My goal is to continue to build on those strengths, focusing on research and knowledge translation to build our community's capacity to support children, youth and families. I am looking to work collaboratively with community partners and identify opportunities for us to collectively make an impact on the well-being of our children and youth.

OKN has a strong research framework and we will continue

to develop that capacity to better support the network and effectively move research and knowledge into action. We will focus on relationships to facilitate connections and collective action across multiple sectors, we will advance awareness of evidence and knowledge by continuing to conduct and share research that guides the network in planning and action, we will increase access to OKN data, resources and tools and we will facilitate professional learning and skill development by continuing to provide engaging training and learning opportunities and workshops for professionals, ultimately moving research into practice.

**Is the research conducted by OKN available to everyone?**

OKN collects, analyses and shares data across the community. We also help people interpret and use it effectively so they can make well informed decisions about programs and services for children and youth. We believe that data and information should be open, free and accessible to everyone in our community so that everyone can work towards our vision that all children and youth thrive. For example, the OKN Data Portal is an interactive database containing a large inventory of community-level data that is accessible to everyone.

COMMUNITY

## CHAMBER BUSINESS AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Drumroll, please. The winners of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce 2021 Business Excellence Awards have been revealed.

**Here are the recipients:**

- Community Excellence Award: Douglas Brock of Caledon Labs and Williams Mill Art Studios

- Association of the Year: Distress Centre Halton (Dara Eisner Clancy)
- Environmental Excellence Award: Kaia Hair Studio (Jessica

Patterson)

- New Business of the Year: Balo Balloons (Brandi Balanowski)
- Employee of the Year: Lindsay Petch (Paul C. Armstrong Insurance Brokers)
- Small Business of the Year: Quinta Quinoa (Jamie Draves)

- Large Business of the Year: Superior Glove Works Ltd. (Heather Larsen)
- Hometown Hero Award: Kori Arsenault

The winners were recognized at the annual awards gala at The Club at North Halton on March 30.

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