

Backgrounder for Toba Centre's We Will Capital Campaign

ABOUT TOBA CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

Toba Centre was previously known as Snowflake Place for Children & Youth. In 2020 the name was changed as part of an internal shift towards an expanded mandate which would see Toba Centre become a first-class child advocacy centre with wrap-around, child-centred services.

Previously, Toba Centre's primary role was to support child abuse investigations by providing child-friendly safe spaces for victim and witness interviews. With limited space and capacity, Toba Centre interviewed fewer than 10% of child abuse victims in Manitoba. The rest being interviewed at police stations or by Child and Family Service workers in the community.

Currently, all community services related to child abuse operate in silos. This creates delays and inefficiencies in the system, and great stress, confusion, and repetition for victims of child abuse and their families.

In the future, with the re-opening of Toba Centre at its new location at 710 Assiniboine Park Drive:

- All essential services related to the investigation of child abuse cases and support services for victims and their families will be co-located
- Victims and their families will experience continuity and efficiency within an on-site circle of care as all services will be available under one roof.
- Case navigators will be at the centre of each case circle, navigating the system with clarity. No one will ever again have to wonder "what happens next?"

OUR TEAM

Toba Centre is building up a staff complement that will be able to fulfill its mission of providing a first-of-its-kind, made in Manitoba, centre of excellence. The centre is led by Executive Director Christy Dzikowicz and Director of Operations Karen Chymy.



**CHRISTY
DZIKOWICZ**

Christy Dzikowicz is the Executive Director of Toba Centre for Children & Youth and is spearheading the evolution of the Centre to a fully functioning child advocacy centre where the recovery needs of children and families take precedence over systemic processes and system outcomes. Christy has worked in child maltreatment in a variety of roles for over 25 years. Prior to her position with Toba Centre, Christy was the Director of the Child Safety and Family Advocacy Division of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection for 11 years. There, she led a team that supported families of missing and exploited children, and led the development of a support network for adult survivors of child sexual exploitation. Christy worked for two years with Manitoba Justice in Victim Services and spent nine years before that with child welfare in Manitoba. Christy's child welfare experience includes six years with the Child Abuse Investigation Unit. She is an outspoken advocate for children and for better systemic and community responses to child maltreatment.



**KAREN
CHYMY**

In her role as the Director of Operations at Toba Centre for Children & Youth, Karen Chymy is overseeing program and policy development, internal operations, interagency collaboration, service needs, and outcomes of service delivery as Toba Centre transforms its services.

Prior to joining Toba Centre in 2019, Karen was employed at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection for 11 years. As the Director of Operations, Karen was involved in the operations of two of the Canadian Centre's national programs, Cybertip.ca (Canada's tipline for reporting online sexual exploitation of children) and the Child Safety and Family Advocacy Division. Karen worked within the child welfare system for nine years, including six years in the Child Abuse Investigations Unit, as well as at other child-serving organizations providing programming to at-risk children.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse is any behaviour that intentionally endangers the development, security or survival of someone under the age of 18. Child abuse can be sexual, physical, or emotional in nature.

SOURCE: ZEBRA CHILD PROTECTION CENTRE AND CENTRAL ALBERTA CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE.

In Manitoba, about 4,000 child abuse investigations are undertaken every year. It is widely believed that many more cases of child abuse in Manitoba go unreported.

WHAT ARE SOCIETAL IMPACTS OF CHILD ABUSE:

Our best efforts today to support victims of child abuse and their families will reduce the very significant negative impacts on individuals, families, and communities throughout Manitoba.

- Poverty: Victims of child abuse are **26 times more likely** to become homeless.
- Violence: Boys abused by a family member are **45 times more likely** to perpetrate dating violence as adolescents.
- Education: Children who have been abused are **30% less likely** to graduate from high school.
- Job Stability: Adults abused in childhood are **more likely** to have problems holding jobs.
- Well-Being: Adult survivors of child abuse have **four times as many** contacts with mental health services as people who did not suffer abuse.
- Crime: Children who have experienced abuse are **four times more likely** to be arrested as a juvenile.
- Addiction: Nearly **75%** of people in a detoxification program reported a history of abuse.
- Suicide: Victims of child abuse are **four times more likely** to report harming themselves or having suicidal thoughts.

A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE

With the new Toba Centre for Children & Youth, we will enhance systems and dramatically improve outcomes for every victim of child abuse and their families.

CO-LOCATION

By co-locating desired and required services involved in a child abuse case, we will improve outcomes and processes for children and their families. Under one roof, there will be:

- medical staff to treat children who have suffered abuse and to support investigations;
- police officers from agencies across the province;
- social workers;
- forensic interviewers;
- other professional supports.

The entire CAC team is designed to support and work with children and their families as they seek to heal.

CASE NAVIGATORS

Of special significance will be the addition of Case Navigators. This is the real game changer in supporting victims of child abuse and child witnesses to violence. Skilled navigators will help children and their families understand the process and work with colleagues to minimize

delays and repetition in investigations. There will always be someone for a child or a parent to call. Someone with an answer—a champion to help families through the process and to support them for as long as necessary.

PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST

Toba Centre will adopt best practices and learn from other established child advocacy centres across Canada to create a first of its kind, made in Manitoba, centre of excellence. We already know that child advocacy centres result in:

- Stronger working relationships and better case outcomes
- Increased and quicker access to services
- \$3 in community benefits for every \$1 invested in children
- Reduced time and costs per case for child protection, law enforcement, and health care professionals
- Lower rates for trauma related symptoms

We intend to do more, to do better, and to lead the way for Manitoba children.

BACKGROUND

WHAT ARE CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRES?

Child advocacy centres (CACs) were first established in the United States in 1985 to better respond to child abuse. The core principle of a CAC is to bring the system to the child and bring the agency professionals together to work in a collaborative approach that results in effective, efficient and child-centered casework.

Today, there are over 20 child advocacy centres in Canada. Although CACs may differ with respect to clients they serve and the range of services they offer, all CACs are based on the core principle of a child-centred foundation, providing:

- A child-friendly facility that is comfortable for children and is both psychologically and physically safe
- A multi-disciplinary team approach in which the CAC works with police, child protection professionals, physical and mental health professionals, prosecutors and victim advocates
- Specially trained forensic interviewers who gather investigative information thereby avoiding repeat, sequential interviews of the child
- Medical evaluation either at the CAC or through collaboration with specialized medical service providers
- Specialized mental health services provided either at the CAC or in co-operation with collateral providers
- Victim support / advocacy available either at the CAC or through collaboration with other providers
- Case reviews with the multi-disciplinary team conducted on a routine basis to share information, plan and co-ordinate investigation and other services
- Case tracking provided in a systematic way to monitor case progress, service outcomes and the efficacy of the program.

This collaborative approach requires the integration of practices across multiple agencies, coordinating service delivery, and integrating the activities, wherever possible, of the agency professionals. While there is no universal approach to integration or integrated practices they should support the key features identified above.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE ACCREDITATION

Toba Centre is transforming into a full-service CAC following accreditation guidelines provided by the National Children's Alliance (NCA). The standards are evidence-supported and evolve over time and require revision as research progresses.

1. **Multidisciplinary Team** – An accredited CAC coordinates the efforts of a multidisciplinary team to respond to child abuse allegations and includes representatives from: law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical, mental health, victim advocacy, and children's advocacy centre.
2. **Cultural Competency & Diversity** – CACs provide culturally competent services for all CAC clients throughout the duration of the case.
3. **Forensic Interviews** – Forensic interviews are coordinated to avoid duplicative interviewing and are conducted in a manner that is legally sound and of a neutral, fact-finding nature.
4. **Victim Support and Advocacy** – Victim support and advocacy services are provided to all CAC clients and their caregivers as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
5. **Medical Evaluation** – Specialized medical evaluation and treatment services are available to all CAC clients and are coordinated as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
6. **Mental Health** – Evidence-based, trauma-focused mental health services, designed to meet the unique needs of the children and caregivers, are consistently available as part of the multidisciplinary team response.
7. **Case Review** – A formal process in which multidisciplinary discussion and information sharing regarding the investigation, case status, and services needed by the child and family must occur on a routine basis.
8. **Case Tracking** – CACs must develop and implement a system for monitoring case progress and tracking case outcomes for all multidisciplinary team components.
9. **Organizational Capacity** – A designated legal entity responsible for program and fiscal operations has been established and implements basic sound administrative policies and procedures.
10. **Child-Focused Setting** – The child-focused setting is comfortable, private, and both physically and psychologically safe for diverse populations of children and their family members.

A COMMUNITY IN SUPPORT OF TOBA CENTRE

QUOTES:

“ This transformation to a more comprehensive child advocacy centre model changes the dynamic from a place where specialists mainly work to support the criminal investigation to a more holistic, interdisciplinary approach where we can see the bigger picture of child abuse and do our best for the children we work with. We want to see long-term tracking of kids and provide long-term medical and psychological care so that today’s victim is less likely to suffer adverse consequences throughout their lifetimes.

– FORMER RCMP SUPT. MICHAEL KOPPANG

“ We need to expand our definition of justice. It is of course important that we identify, arrest, and convict child abusers, but as a society we must also look at the needs of victims of child abuse and their families. And not just the immediate needs of victims and their families, but also their long-term needs. There can be no justice without healing.

– CHRISTY DZIKOWICZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TOBA CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

“ The land, trees, water, and animals, the little bridge through the woods, the walking paths all create the serenity of this wide-open space, where one feels the fresh air in the wind, sees the sky, sun, and stars. Imagine a scenario— a child has just been interviewed— and has the opportunity to go outside to feel the warmth of the sun, to touch the land, to see a family of deer stroll by, to hear the birds singing in the trees, the rustle of the leaves. A place where one can cry and breathe deeply.

– THEODORE FONTAINE, SAGKEENG OJIBWE
FIRST NATION FORMER CHIEF AND BAND MEMBER,
ELDER AND KNOWLEDGE KEEPER

“ Under the current way of doing things, we record an interview with a child, they leave, and we might never hear how they are doing. How are we supposed to make a difference if we don’t even know what is happening for the child after we do our part?

When we see children they are often really hurting, really struggling. At the new centre we will be able to offer so much more. We will have expert colleagues right on site. We will stay with these kids and make sure we’ve done all we can for them.

– MIKE CHIBORAK, CHILD FORENSIC INTERVIEWER