

A young child with dark hair and a white shirt is reaching out towards the camera. Their right hand is in the foreground, with fingers spread, and it is covered in colorful paint (blue, green, yellow). The background is slightly blurred, showing other children and colorful decorations. The overall tone is warm and positive.

# 2024-2025

**Annual Report**



**George Jeffrey  
Children's Centre**

ENRICHING CHILDREN'S LIVES

## George Jeffrey Children's Centre

George Jeffrey Children's Centre (GJCC) is a paediatric outpatient health facility located in Thunder Bay, Ontario. We have been meeting the communication, developmental, and physical needs of children for over 60 years; providing services to infants, children, and adolescents aged birth to 21 years.



George Jeffrey  
Children's Centre

ENRICHING CHILDREN'S LIVES

# Table of Contents

i.	Mission, Vision, Values.....	4
ii.	Message from the CEO .....	6
iii.	Message from the President .....	8
iv.	Staff Recognition.....	10
v.	Clinical Statistics .....	12
vi.	Board of Directors .....	14
vii.	Management Leadership Team.....	17
viii.	Additional Clinical Highlights.....	18
ix.	Additional Highlights .....	26
x.	Foundation Report .....	32
xi.	Statement of Operations .....	34
xii.	Funding .....	35

## i. Mission, Vision, Values

### Our Mission

Enriching lives by delivering specialized rehabilitative and inter-professional services in client-centred environments.

### Our Vision

Empowered and inspired children, youth and families.

### Our Values

Our values govern our actions and are reflected in our work with children, youth and families, as well as with our community partners and each other.

**DIGNITY & RESPECT:** We provide high quality and compassionate services that honour the unique experiences of every individual.

**DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVENESS:** We create environments that are shaped by openness, respect and a willingness to learn and adapt. We serve the diverse needs of all people and communities in Northwestern Ontario, ensuring equitable opportunities to access services across our large geographical catchment area.

**RECONCILIATION:** We work to build understanding and relationships with Indigenous people for the improved health and well-being of all children, youth and families.

**LEADERSHIP:** We deliver innovative and evidence-informed services by providing an environment that fosters professional development and leadership within our community and the child development and rehabilitation sector.

**COMMUNITY:** We connect to our clients and our communities by building stronger relationships, meaningful partnerships and exploring opportunities for collaboration.

# Our Services

## Early Years and School Years

Occupational Therapy

Physiotherapy & Registered Kinesiology

Speech-Language Pathology

---

## Social Work

Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Behaviour Support Services

Infant & Child Development (Greenstone)

## Seating and Mobility

SmartStart Hub

Recreation and Leisure



## Little George's Child Care Centre

Our services also include Little George's Child Care Centre, located within Sherbrooke Public School. Little George's offers licensed full and part-time child care for children aged 18 months to five years of age.



## ii. Message from the CEO

It is with great pleasure that I highlight the activities and accomplishments of the organization within our annual report.

2024-25 was a busy year in all areas for GJCC. We continued implementing changes in line with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services', Leading Innovation for Transformation (LIFT) strategy. This included the realignment of services into Early Years and School Years clinical service programs. We remained active with multiple streams of the Ontario Autism Program, including the local diagnostic hub and operating the Entry to School program.

GJCC successfully participated in two governance risk assessment reviews. One with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) for our core operations and one with The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) for our Little George's Child Care Centre.

I would like to thank the GJCC Board of Directors for their dedication and commitment. I appreciate the time they

have given to support the organization and provide the strategic guidance required over the last year.

To the leadership team, they keep us moving forward every day. There have been many exciting new initiatives and program developments, and I want to recognize all the incredible work that happens behind the scenes. So much effort, coordination, and dedication go into making things run smoothly. I would like to thank them for their time, commitment and service.

With gratitude to our clinical, administrative, and support teams whose innovative and inspiring work is reflected in the client stories of success and pathways to progress within the organization. It fills my heart to see our staff interacting day to day with the children and families. Helping them with communication, movement and other skills, and welcoming some of the younger children into my office to say hello and be a part of their work.

As always, to the clients and families who allow us the privilege of being a part of their journey and remind us daily of the

importance of learning, growth, and compassion, thank you for choosing GJCC to be a part of your family's service journey.

Thank you to the George Jeffrey Children's Foundation for supporting client care and other projects made possible by their fundraising efforts.

I believe 2026 is going to be an exciting year for GJCC. We are about to begin a new strategic planning process. This will be an opportunity to reflect on our vision and purpose and focus on the future.

It is an honour and a privilege to be a part of a community that is as special as GJCC. Thank you to everyone who contributes and for being part of our success.

Tina Bennett  
Chief Executive Officer  
George Jeffrey Children's Centre



## iii. Message from the President

Dear Friends, Partners, and Members of the GJCC Community,

Each year brings new opportunities to reflect on our purpose—and the people who bring it to life. As Chair of the Board, I am incredibly proud of the progress we've made over the past year and the shared commitment that continues to guide our work at George Jeffrey Children's Centre.

We know that the foundation of any great organization is its people. This year, we continued to invest in our team—through professional development, recognition of service milestones, and open conversations about our workplace culture. These efforts speak to more than just retention or morale; they reflect our deep belief that the well-being of our staff directly enhances the quality of care we deliver.

Our focus on equitable access has also grown stronger. Whether through renewed engagement with community partners, enhanced collaboration across the region, or ongoing advocacy with government, we are working to ensure that every child has access to the services they need, when and where they need them. This work is both operational and cultural. We are proud to have updated our organizational land acknowledgement this year and to have engaged staff in meaningful dialogue around reconciliation and inclusion.

On the care front, we continue to lead with quality. From updates to client policies and standards, to our participation in new diagnostic partnerships, our clinical and operational teams are continually evolving to meet the needs of the families we serve. I'm also pleased to share that our governance practices were reviewed by the Ministry and received a "Low Risk" rating—affirming our commitment to responsible oversight and continuous improvement.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on delivering excellent, inclusive services that reflect the values and priorities of our community. We know the path forward will require adaptability, creativity, and continued collaboration—and we are ready.

Thank you to our staff, leadership team, and fellow board members for another successful year. Your efforts, both seen and unseen, are making a real difference.

Warm regards,

Andy Armitage  
Chair, Board of Directors  
George Jeffrey Children's Centre



## iv. Staff Recognition

### Thank you to all of our staff and volunteers.

Appreciation goes out to all of our staff and volunteers for their hard-work, tenacity and ingenuity. Each individual plays an important part in our success. We thank each one for their unique talents, efforts and never-wavering passion to empower and inspire children, youth and families.

### Milestones & Years of Service

The following staff reached service milestones in 2024. Our success is a direct result of our valued employees. We thank them for their dedication and commitment.

#### 5 years

Jessica Sonego  
Lauren Schram  
Alyssa Degagne

#### 10 years

Tina Bennett  
Jillian Courtis  
Vanessa Riccio

#### 15 years

Jaime Obergh  
Kellie Zysko

#### 25 years

Kelly Goold

# A Fond Farewell

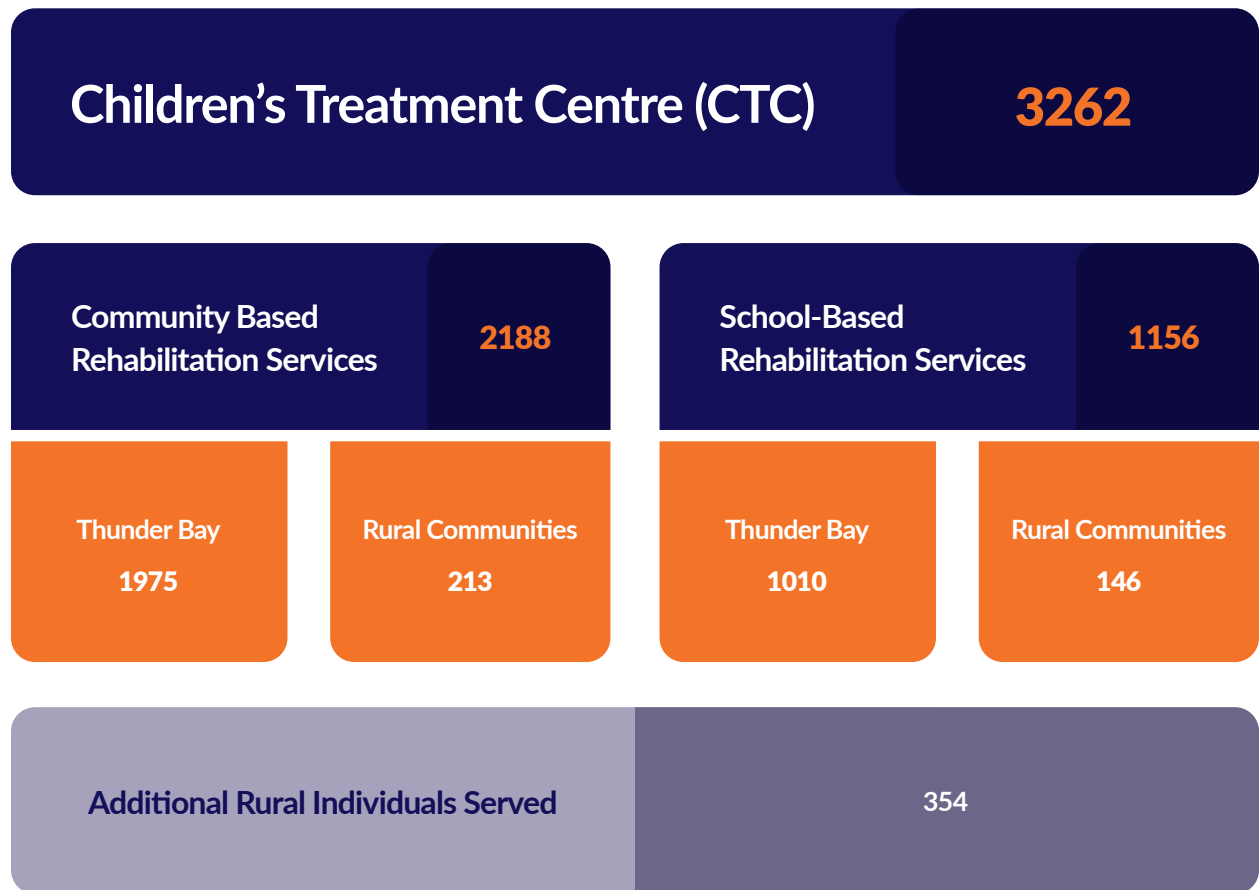
## Hélène Mercier

George Jeffrey Children's Centre congratulated Hélène Mercier on her retirement after 33-years of service as a Physiotherapist with our organization! Over her career with GJCC, Hélène has supported thousands of children and families to reach their full potentials. She has brought a quiet, gentle, and accepting spirit to her work which has been invaluable in putting children, families, and colleagues at ease. Over the years, she worked with children of all ages, mentored students, participated in research studies and took on other lead roles. Her dedication and commitment to children and families has extended into the rural and far north communities, demonstrating flexibility and creativity when faced with unexpected circumstances.

**We wish Hélène all the best with this new chapter in her life.**

## v. Clinical Statistics

### Number of Individuals Served





Number of Client Visits  
Over the Past Year

Face To Face

21,059

Telephone

7,271

Virtual

344

## **vi.** Board of Directors

The volunteer Board of Directors of George Jeffrey Children's Centre is comprised of individuals with unique strengths and experiences from our community. We strive to have representation from family members as well as business, healthcare, and other professionals.



Tina Bennett  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Andy Armitage  
PRESIDENT



Mark Beazley  
VICE-PRESIDENT



Jon Racco  
TREASURER



Allen Lee  
SECRETARY



Gillian Baboolal  
DIRECTOR



Judy Bragnalo  
DIRECTOR



Andrew Campbell  
DIRECTOR



Nancy Gladun  
DIRECTOR



Matthew Lindstrom  
DIRECTOR



Dr. Michael Scarcello  
DIRECTOR



Robert Schroeder  
DIRECTOR



Dr. Christopher Mushquash  
DIRECTOR



Kathy Peterson  
HONOURARY MEMBER



## **vii.** Management Leadership Team

**Tina Bennett**, *Chief Executive Officer*

**Michelle Blackburn**, *Director of Programs and Services*

**Stacy Greenwood**, *Human Resources Manager*

**Michael Muratore**, *Finance Manager*

**Marlene Trystruha**, *Health Information Services Manager*

**Lindsay McDonald**, *Manager of Client Services*

**Andrea Stach**, *Manager of Client Services*

**Melissa Stolz**, *Behaviour Support Services Supervisor*

**Ashley Woodcock**, *Child Care Supervisor*

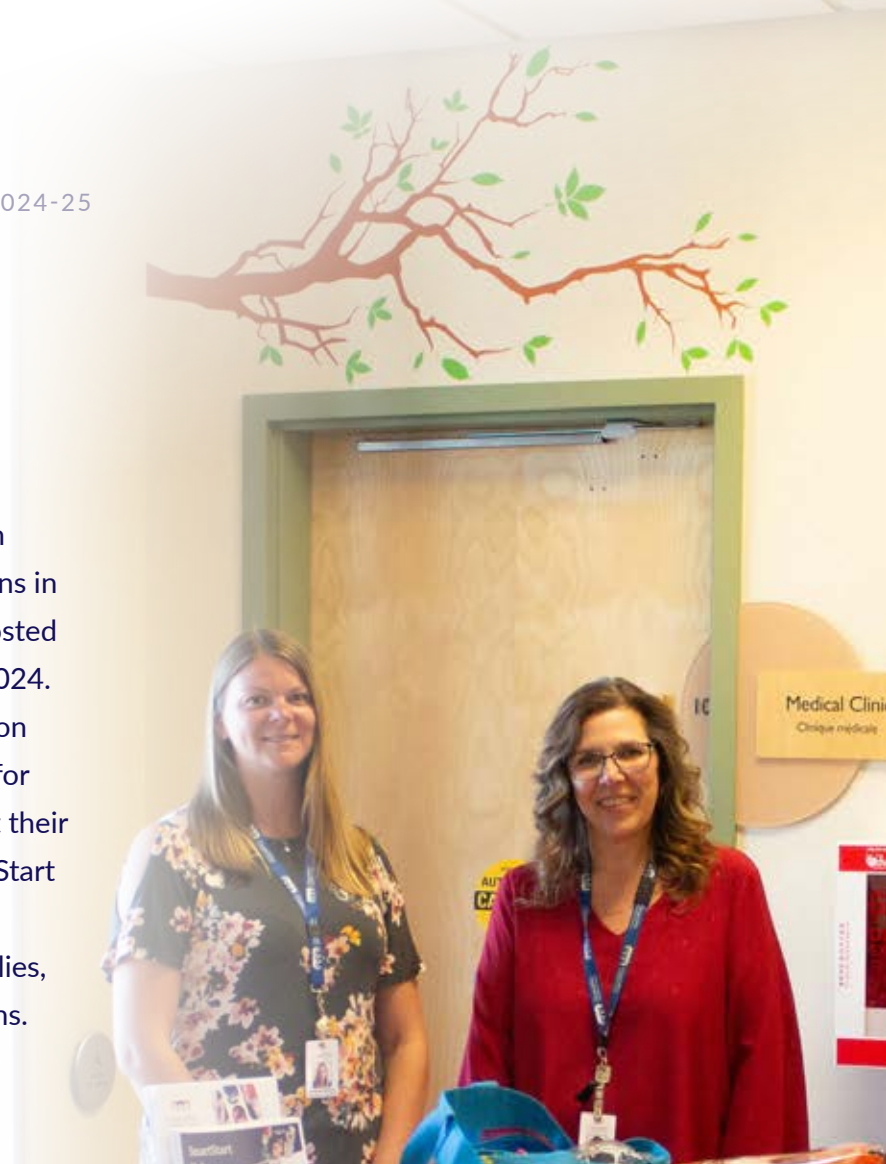
## viii. Additional Clinical Highlights

Looking back on 2024-2025, George Jeffrey Children's Centre has had the privilege of celebrating many highlights and success stories from within our programs and community.



## SmartStart Hub and Service Navigation

Our SmartStart Hub and Service Navigation team increased community outreach sessions in local and rural communities. We proudly hosted a second Early Years Open House in May 2024. Many community partners set up information booths at the GJCC. It was an opportunity for parents and families to ask questions about their child's development, learn about the SmartStart Hub, have access to other local children's resources, and make connections with families, community partners, and other organizations.



## Ontario Autism Program (OAP)

Our behaviour support services team continues to partner with Child and Community Resources (CCR) to deliver Caregiver Mediated Early Years programming, Foundational Family Services and School Support Services.

GJCC delivers the Entry to School (ETS) program within the service delivery area. The entry to school program helps children develop school-readiness skills and provides transition supports as they enter kindergarten or Grade 1 for the first time. Our ETS team proudly hosted the Honorable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services for a tour of the program in April 2024.



## Fee for Service - Core Clinical Services

Our Core Clinical Behaviour Services offer specialized, evidence-based interventions that address a wide range of behavioural and emotional challenges. Following the completion of an assessment by a Registered Behaviour Analyst, each child will receive an individualized treatment plan that outlines goals based on a variety of therapeutic interventions. We focus on enhancing emotional regulation, improving social and communication skills, and reducing problematic behaviors. Our services are tailored to support long-term success in environments that are important to each child and family.

There is a cost associated with Core Clinical Services. If your child is under 18 and has access to financial supports through the Ontario Autism Program (OAP), Jordan's Principle or other funding sources, including private pay, they can register for this program.

**Please visit our website for more details:**

**<https://georgejeffrey.com/programs-services/services/behaviour-support-services/>**

## Another Successful Bike Clinic May 2024

GJCC hosted our annual bike clinic again this year. At the bike clinic kids have an opportunity to try out accessible bikes, many for the first time. It was a great chance for children and families to explore adaptive options in a supportive environment. This year 14 clients were fitted for bikes. Thank you goes out to Fresh Air (Alan Cranston) Freedom Concepts (Larry Penner) and Kim Sjolund for all of their help with the clinic and George Jeffrey Children's Foundation for contributing to snacks and materials for the clinic and many other recreational activities over the course of the year.

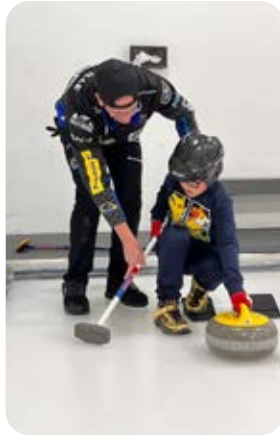


## Sledge Hockey

GJCC clients had an opportunity once again to get out onto the ice during a Lakehead University (LU) Thunderwolves Hockey game to sledge skate in support of accessible sports in Thunder Bay. Part of the evening also included an accessible sports booth in the lobby hosted by students from LU. Thank you to Lakehead University, Fort William Gardens and all of the volunteers who helped make this event possible.



# Other Memorable Moments



## **Youth P.A.C.K (Preparing Adolescents in Communication and Kindness)**

Our speech-language pathology team collaborated with the recreation and leisure program to create the Youth P.A.C.K. (Preparing Adolescents in Communication and Kindness) social group, and offerings like March break speech and social communication groups. All programs were well attended and lots of fun was had by all.

One of the special events for the Youth P.A.C.K was a learn to curl session with Team Bonot at the Kakabeka Falls Curling Club. Thank you, Team Bonot (Trevor Bonot, Mike McCarville, Jordan Potts, Kurtis Byrd) for joining our group on the ice.

## **Toe Walking & Gross Motor Clinic**

The physiotherapy team had a successful first year of implementing the Toe Walking Clinic, serving over 50 clients through the pathway. In collaboration with our Registered Kinesiologist the Gross Motor Clinic continued successfully.

## **2025 Scotties Tournament of Hearts**

GJCC was grateful to receive 15 tickets from Curling Canada for GJCC clients to attend the 2025 Scotties Tournament of Hearts held in Thunder Bay in February. A big thank you to Team McCarville (Krista McCarville, Andrea Kelly, Ashley Sippala, Kendra Lily, Sarah Potts) for taking the time to do a meet and greet with the clients after their game and sign autographs for us.

## ix. Additional Highlights

### Human Resources

To aid in our recruitment efforts, we were thankful to receive funding through George Jeffrey Children's Foundation and pleased to work with ReactNorth on the development of a recruitment video which highlights our people, organization and the benefits of living in Northwestern Ontario.

<https://youtu.be/nTz08MjqWGI>

## Student Placements

GJCC hosted thirteen (13) student placements during the 2024-25 fiscal year. Students were placed in the areas of SLP, OT, Social Work, Kinesiology, Behavioural Sciences, Communicative Disorders and Early Childhood Educators. Facilitating placements offers an opportunity for students to gain hands on experience and the skills they need for future practice. GJCC hopes to inspire students to pursue careers in paediatric practice and consider employment opportunities with our organization.



## Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)

We continue to participate with the MCCSS – LIFT initiative. Key highlights this year included:

- Tiered Service Delivery – Our occupational therapy team increased services in kindergarten classrooms through the delivery of a variety of small group programs. These included Get SET! for Kindergarten, Fun with Fine Motor and Scissor Skills.
- Clinical staff across all programs and services are realizing efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering client services as a result of the realignment of services into Early Years and School Years.
- Our clinical service teams continue to travel to the rural communities and have increased provision of consultation for clients in these areas.





## Empowered Kids Ontario Membership

GJCC remains actively involved with Empowered Kids Ontario (EKO), our provincial membership association.

The EKO Spring Symposium took place in April 2025 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto. We were honored to have GJCC representatives who were selected to deliver two concurrent sessions at the symposium.

Members of the clinical management team facilitated a session entitled Reimagining Service Delivery: lessons learned through adopting a change management approach. Their presentation reviewed a case study of an organizational change initiative undertaken by George Jeffrey Children's Centre to reimagine current service delivery and blend School-Based and Community-Based rehabilitation programs in advance of the 2024/2025 school year.

One of GJCC's client service coordinators alongside several sector partners, facilitated a session entitled WHY and HOW of Cultural Adaptations: learnings from the F-Words. The panel shared key learnings and successful strategies around adaptations to the F-Words that contribute to improving clinical services.





## Little George's Child Care Centre: A Year of Growth and Connection

This past year has been one of great change and growth for Little George's Child Care Centre. With many new staff members and new leadership—we've been able to welcome new families into our community while continuing to provide a safe, nurturing, and child-centred environment.

Over the year, we've shared countless hugs and had thousands of learning conversations—sometimes with the educators doing the learning! We've also served nearly 500 healthy and fun snacks.

Looking ahead, we're committed to creating the best space possible for our children by engaging in meaningful professional learning, sharing ideas and strategies as a team, and connecting with other child care centres to grow and share knowledge.

We're excited to reopen our before and after school program, allowing us to welcome even more Thunder Bay families into our Little George family.

We'll also be focusing on enhancing our mealtimes, with support from the TBDSSAB and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit's collaborative training program. Additionally, we're thrilled to continue improving our outdoor space, thanks to a generous donation from George Jeffrey Children's Foundation.

We look forward to hosting more family-centred events like our Family Day Open House, Little George Christmas Open Doors celebration, and, of course, our much-loved annual preschool graduation. Last year we had 12 children graduate from our program and this year we have 14 children graduating.



## X. Foundation Report

I am so proud to share that George Jeffrey Children's Foundation raised almost \$520,000 during the 2024–2025 fiscal year, thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors, volunteers and supporters throughout Thunder Bay and the surrounding region!

Every donation, every event, and every act of kindness helps us do more for the children and youth who rely on George Jeffrey Children's Centre. Our community's support keeps our snack cupboard stocked for little ones who need it, ensures families can get to vital appointments through our taxi ride program, and fills the many gaps that government funding simply cannot reach. These may seem like small things, but to our families, they are everything.

We are equally thankful for the dedicated volunteers who give their time and talents to our Foundation. Whether selling tickets, assisting at our golf tournament, or serving on our board, their commitment is invaluable.

Each donated dollar helps nearly 3,000 children and youth reach their greatest potential. To everyone who supports our Foundation—thank you for making a real and lasting difference.



With My Heart-Felt Gratitude,

Cindy Levanto  
Proud Donor and CEO  
George Jeffrey Children's Foundation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy".



## Thank you Sylvia Kayzer for your support

For more than 20 years, former teacher Sylvia Kayzer has been a loyal and generous supporter of George Jeffrey Children's Foundation. As a loyal volunteer and with over 80 donations (many made in memory of loved ones), Sylvia's commitment reflects her deep belief in the impact the Centre has on local children. We are truly grateful for her compassion and the lasting difference her kindness continues to make in our community.

## xi. Statement of Operations

Revenue	Actual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services</li> <li>Thunder Bay DSSAB</li> <li>Recoveries &amp; Other Income</li> <li>Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions</li> </ul>	<p>\$7,343,734</p> <p>\$536,013</p> <p>\$1,800,184</p> <p>\$439,560</p>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,119,491</b>
Expense	Actual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salaries &amp; Benefits</li> <li>Other Expenses</li> <li>Amortization of Capital Assets</li> </ul>	<p>\$6,771,217</p> <p>\$2,340,705</p> <p>\$441,590</p>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,553,512</b>

**Excess of Revenue Over Expenses for the Year**

**\$565,979**

## xii. Funding

The Centre's main funder is the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

George Jeffrey is fortunate to have the support of George Jeffrey Children's Foundation. The Foundation is committed to raising funds for programs and services offered at the Centre.

Funding is also received from the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) to support Little George's Child Care Centre.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY  
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD





George Jeffrey  
Children's Centre

ENRICHING CHILDREN'S LIVES

807 623 4381 | [INFO@GEORGEJEFFREY.COM](mailto:INFO@GEORGEJEFFREY.COM)