

PEEL CAS

2018 - 19

# annual report

Supporting. Protecting. Caring. Together.



2018 - 19

[www.peelcas.org](http://www.peelcas.org)

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Peel CAS received more than 13,200 calls last year

The agency served close to 11,000 families in our community

Peel CAS has the lowest number of children in care per capita of any CAS in Ontario

More than 130 direct service volunteers contributed countless hours and helped us provide service to over 10,000 families

## Peel CAS Board of Directors

Juliet Jackson, President

Nina Acco Weston, Vice President

Sandra Trepte, Secretary

Kojo Odoom, Member at Large

Sandeep Aujla, Member

Solomon Owoo, Member

Sundeep Bhatia, Member

Harminder Dhillon, Member

Inayat Vasta, Member

Veronica Hall, Member

## Committed to diversity, equity and inclusion

Peel CAS has made achieving and maintaining a diverse Board, that reflects the community it serves, a commitment and believes that achieving equitable outcomes begins with having diverse voices at the governance level.

Diversity on the Board is not new and the agency has had racialized male and females in the role of Board President. When issues are discussed at the Board, members bring their diverse lens into the conversation.

One tool used to review the composition of our Board is a matrix which is updated annually. It includes a wide variety of information including representation by sector; geography; gender; ethnicity; First Nations, Métis, Inuit; French Language; and youth as well as skills & experience.

Other ways the Board is committed to this work includes:

- Board procedures related to recruitment, nomination and orientation that helps achieve diversity, equity and inclusion
- Board participation in training related to diversity and anti-oppression
- A Board Ends statement related to diversity, equity and inclusion



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# CEO & BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*“Keeping children safe is everyone’s responsibility”*

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much” - Helen Keller. There is no quote more fitting than this classic from Helen Keller that describes the work of child welfare. Keeping children safe and strengthening families can only be done through partnership. So at Peel CAS we have made building and sustaining positive, collaborative relationships a priority.

Our work continues to be increasingly complex and involves social issues such as poverty, domestic violence, custody and access, mental health, and substance abuse. Together with our community, Peel CAS strives to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families facing complex social issues.

It is through innovative partnerships that conversations turn into action. In addition to our ongoing work with police, schools, justice, children’s mental health, and health, we are also developing collaborations with settlement, ethno-cultural, family service, development service, shelters and even those beyond our Region such as Canada Border Services Agency and Global Affairs Canada. Ninety-five per cent of our work is done within the community – these are some of the stories and partnerships we want to share with you in this report including:

- Together with the Black Community Action Network of Peel (BCAN), developing ways to coordinate services for Black families within the community. The partnership recently hosted the Cross-Sectorial Equity Leadership Development Session—a historical meeting attended by various systems leaders including representation of senior officials from school boards, police, health, and probation.
- As the province’s Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence, Peel CAS continues to advocate for children and families facing immigration and settlement issues, aided by Senator Victor Oh who has been a strong supporter of the Centre and its work.
- Together with our foster and kin caregivers we have been focusing on permanent homes for children and keeping families together and you will hear from families directly in the coming pages.
- A welcome change to legislation has enabled us to work with our partners to provide services to 16 and 17 year olds and with the help of the Peel Children’s Aid Foundation we are helping youth to achieve their educational goals.

At Peel CAS, we are always looking to ensure our services create positive outcomes for those we work with. The agency is committed to using evidence and data to support our work and to make improvements. We reach out to our community for feedback and our most recent client satisfaction rating was 84%, which helps us to know that we are seen as helpful to those families we work with and an integral part of the community. Over the past year, Peel CAS also celebrated the official ground-breaking of our new home, scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2020. We are excited to be able to continue to serve our community from a more accessible and central location at Hurontario Street and the 401.

Looking ahead, the upcoming year will not be without challenges. The landscape of child welfare is shifting. Together the agency and the Board of Directors are preparing for changes in areas such as the scope of child protection services, funding, restructuring and governance issues. We look at changes as opportunities to work together with our partners to serve those who need us most.

Our work could not be done without the dedication of our staff, foster and kin families, volunteers and donors. We have also received support from the Region of Peel, our elected officials and MPPs and newly elected Mayor of Brampton Patrick Brown who has taken time out of his busy schedule to visit the agency. Thank you to everyone who has helped us to make a difference in the lives of children, youth and families in our community.

**Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS**

**Juliet Jackson, President, Peel CAS Board of Directors**



Members of the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence

# NEW PROVINCIAL IMMIGRATION CENTRE

Helps youth achieve status after 10 years

The Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE) supports children, youth, and families involved in child welfare with unresolved immigration status issues. The first of its kind in Canada, CWICE is a partnership between Peel CAS and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and has received almost 200 referrals from across the province in its first year of service. The following story is one example that illustrates the work of the centre and the positive impact it is having on children, youth and families.

Not long after the official launch of the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence in July 2018, a foster parent heard about the centre and called to request support for two youth she was caring for. The brothers, aged 13 and 15 were under the care of another CAS in Ontario and had been living in Canada without immigration status for over 10 years.

"I learned that the older brother who was turning 16 wanted to apply for a job but had no documentation to apply for a Social

did  
YOU?  
know

Last year staff from CWICE presented information about the intersection of child welfare and immigration to over 2000 individuals.

If you have questions or need more information on the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence Contact us at:



905-363-6161 ext. 2222



CWICE@peelcas.org

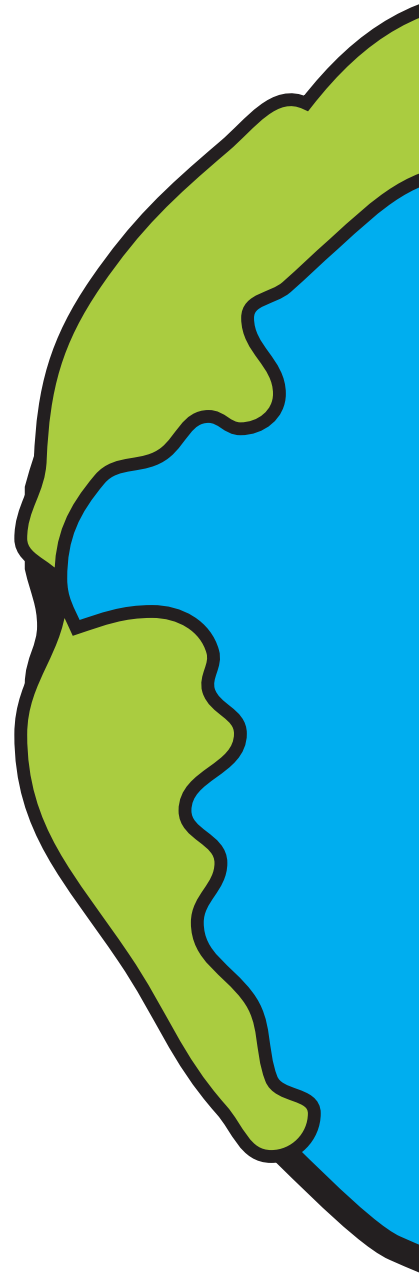


www.peelcas.org/cwice

Insurance Number," says Claudia Obreque, Immigration Specialist, CWICE. "The young man shared that he was afraid he would be deported from Canada and returned to a country he did not know. While supporting the boys, their foster parent and the CAS worker, I learned the boys' birth mother was born in Canada. This meant that the youth were eligible to apply for citizenship as they weren't required to first apply for permanent residency."

To move forward, identity documents were needed to prove the boys were born to a Canadian citizen. "We needed the mother's birth certificate and the boys' birth certificates," says Claudia. "Sometimes this can be very challenging as families are not willing to share documents or documents have expired. In this case, their worker and I gathered the documents and I was able to assist the CAS with applying for Canadian citizenship certificates." Thanks to strong relationships with several immigration and community partners, developed over years of working with families facing immigration and status issues, the citizenship certificates were received within a few weeks upon submission.

"The CAS worker shared that the boys were so happy, relieved and thankful for the help we provided in resolving their immigration status," says Claudia. "The foster mother recently reached out to let me know that the older brother is actually making plans for his future. He can apply for a Social Insurance Number, pursue post-secondary education and employment and most importantly not live in fear that he may be deported to a country he doesn't know or remember."





# WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS

## Providing culturally appropriate services for families

At Peel CAS our work is guided by our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-oppression. Our job is to listen, respect and work with families to create strong and safe environments for children and youth. With more than half of residents in Peel identifying as a visible minority, Peel is one of the most diverse regions in Ontario. “Issues such as racism, anti-black racism, anti-indigenous racism, discrimination, marginalization, poverty and food insecurity impact families in our community,” says Chima Nsitem, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Peel CAS.

Engaging the community in this work is a big area of focus for the agency. “Working with families to keep children and youth safe is a shared responsibility,” says Chima. “We have an opportunity to collaborate with organizations that serve families in our community. By reaching out and hearing from those we serve, we can build relationships and engage others in our work.”

## Black Community Action Network of Peel (BCAN)

Last year, Peel CAS and BCAN formed an alliance to lead the development of an anti-racism, community capacity-building and systems change initiative in Peel. The collaboration has brought together leaders of various organizations that serve children, youth and families across Peel to speak about anti-black racism, look at biases within existing systems and develop a unique wraparound practice of servicing our African-Canadian families. “I feel overwhelmed and humbled to be a part of something that I believe will move our community from having conversations into action,” says Sophia Brown Ramsay, Executive Director, BCAN. “By coming together to have courageous conversations, we are building relationships that will help us coordinate services for families within the community.”

“As a child welfare agency, Peel CAS exists to support children, youth and families,” says Rav Bains, CEO of Peel CAS. “We want African-Canadian families to know that we are listening and are committed to providing culturally-safe and supportive services so that they experience us differently. Our partnership with BCAN is helping us to make this happen.”

## Indus Community Services

For more than 20 years, Peel CAS has had an informal partnership with Indus Community Services to link South Asian families with services in the Peel community. The partnership has since been formalized with the purpose of developing a service model, to help both organizations get better outcomes for South Asian families.

This wraparound service model is being rolled out in phases. “In phase one, we conducted research and developed key questions to distribute to stakeholders across different sectors,” says Jakki Bukeridge, Manager, Family Services at Indus. Our next step will be to roll out these questions, gather feedback and analyze what we learn.”

“We like to think of ourselves as champions who can bridge the gap of knowledge that exists in the South Asian community about the services provided by children’s aid,” says Jakki. “Our organizations share a goal to support South Asian families and provide culturally responsive services. And doing the work together is much more effective to helping us achieve this goal.”

## Indigenous strategy

In 2017, Peel CAS pledged to work collaboratively with First Nations, Metis, Inuit (FNIM) and self-identifying Indigenous families in the Region of Peel to find ways to support and strengthen Indigenous families by keeping children within their communities and family circles.

“We are working on building relationships with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, The Indigenous Network, the Credit River Metis Council (CRMC) and strengthening relationships with Indigenous service providers in the Region of Peel and across the province, as well as maintaining contact with Band representatives,” says Chima. “We want to improve our understanding of the needs of Indigenous children and families, provide culturally appropriate services and keep Indigenous children out of care.”



A big part of helping youth succeed is done through focusing on education and employment. Youth involved with Peel CAS are encouraged to stay in school and can apply for bursaries to pursue post-secondary education. Thanks to the generosity Peel Children's Aid Foundation donors, in 2018/2019, youth received bursaries totaling more than \$225,000.

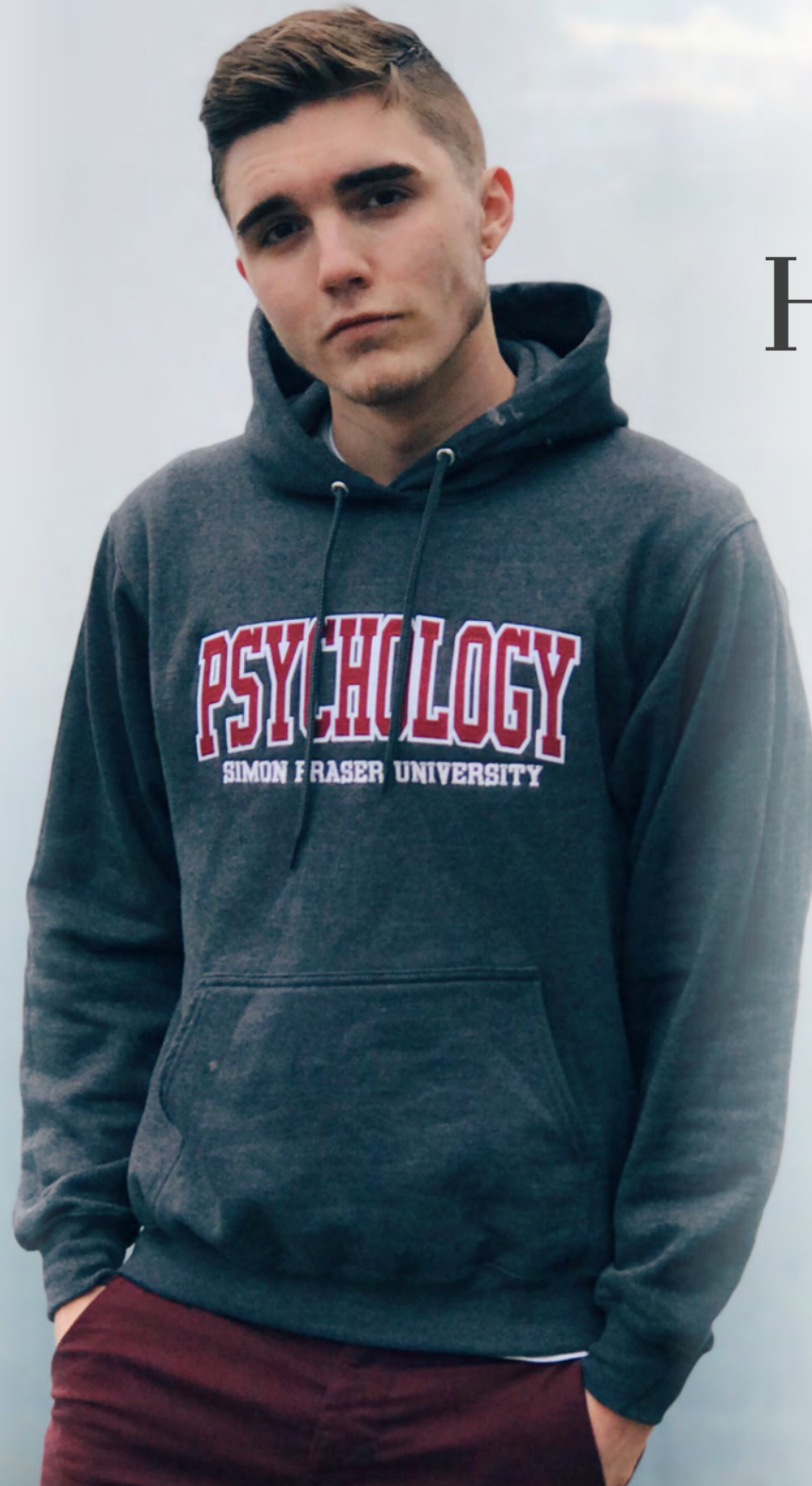
## YOUTH SUCCESS

### A priority at Peel CAS

*"I'm now in a much better place than I was a year ago and working with Peel CAS has been a positive experience for me."*

Helping youth is a commitment and priority for Peel CAS. In January 2018, the age of protection was raised to 18, and now the agency can provide a full range of child protection services to youth 16 and 17 years old including initial assessment, ongoing services, kinship, and out of home protection services.

Since the new legislation came into effect, the agency has been able to provide support to almost 800 youth in this age group. Oakley is one of these youth. Last year Oakley was 17 and living in a shelter. A support worker at the shelter told her about Peel CAS and the services the agency could provide to a youth in her situation. She began to voluntarily work with the agency and was assigned a worker who was able to provide support in a number of areas. "My worker helped to me to find somewhere to live, made arrangements for school, took me to appointments and even got me some financial literacy training," says Oakley. "I'm now in a much better place than I was a year ago and working with Peel CAS has been a positive experience for me."



# HOW A BURSARY HELPED ME SUCCEED

### A student's perspective

When Tristan was in high school, he sometimes felt like he wasn't the same as everyone else because he was involved with children's aid. "I had very different worries than other students," says Tristan. "Instead of worrying about an upcoming test, I worried about where I was going to live in six months or how I was going to manage when I aged out of care. I definitely didn't think that going to university was an option for me."

Getting an educational bursary changed that. "It actually made something that I felt was intangible into something that I could pursue," says Tristan. "I'm currently in my third year of psychology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. I'm also a Community Advisor in residence and provide support for other students living on campus."

Tristan finds it hard to put into words the feelings of gratitude that he has for the donors who support the bursary program. "You don't even know me, but your generosity has truly opened up a whole new world. Instead of worrying about putting food in my fridge, I'm able to focus on my grades and be an active part of my university community. All I can say is thank you. It really has made all the difference."



# BEING FOSTER CAREGIVERS

*It's just a part of our lives*

*"We have welcomed many children of various ages into our home and they all hold a special place in our hearts."*

Janice Tomlinson and her husband DeVon began caring for children as foster caregivers for Peel CAS more than 20 years ago. Having a big family didn't deter them from welcoming additional children into their home. In fact, working with vulnerable children and

families inspired Janice to go back to further her education, including becoming a social services worker. "My education definitely helped me to better meet the needs of the children we cared for in our home," says Janice.

About four years ago, Janice's family began caring for two siblings, ages six and seven. "When Nashia and Nazier came into our home we instantly felt a bond with them," says Janice. "Nashia was such a warm and loving child and Nazier was so helpful and wanted to be the big boy of the house."

The Tomlinsons cared for the siblings while Peel CAS worked towards reuniting the children with their birth family. "As foster caregivers we know that the goal is for children to return to their family and we do whatever we can to support this."

However, when it was determined that being reunited with their birth parents was no longer an option for the siblings, the Tomlinsons didn't hesitate to make their home a permanent one for Nashia and Nazier.

On a stormy day in February, Janice, DeVon, their four biological children, and Nashia and Nazier went to court and the family got legal custody of the siblings. "I will never forget Nazier excitedly saying 'we are officially a family now,'" says Janice.

The story doesn't end there. The Tomlinsons have never wavered in their commitment to being foster caregivers and they continue to care for children involved with Peel CAS. "We also have two other siblings, who are seven and 17, in our home and they are also an important part of our family."

did  
YOU?  
know

There is a shortage of foster caregivers in our Peel community. Foster caregivers work as part of a team to support children and families involved with Peel CAS. Peel CAS needs families for older children, medically fragile babies, sibling groups and caregivers who are willing to provide a home to children of any age who are most in need of support.

## A FAMILY TRADITION

Growing up with parents who openly welcomed children in need of a safe place to live into their home has made a big impact on two of the Tomlinsons' biological daughters. "Two of our daughters, who are now adults, live together and are also foster caregivers for Peel CAS," says Janice. "It is just a part of our lives. In our home our children learned valuable life lessons such as how to share what they have, not take anything for granted and the importance of being kind to others. These experiences shaped their lives and they are now doing what they can to continue to support vulnerable children and families. We are so fortunate."

# THE STRENGTH OF A MOTHER'S LOVE

Keeping families together through kinship

*“Family is the most important thing – it doesn’t always mean blood, it means loving and caring about their yesterdays, todays and tomorrows.”*

Almost forty years ago, Janet suffered an ectopic pregnancy and was told she would not be able to have children. She decided to adopt through her local children’s aid society. She adopted three children, two boys and a girl. “Throughout the adoption process, I had lots of support from CAS,” says Janet. “Whenever I got the chance I would talk about my experience with others to help them better understand the valuable role CAS played in our lives.” Miraculously when she was 36 years old, Janet got pregnant and had a daughter, completing her family.

Today, Janet is once again working with CAS but this time as a kin caregiver. “My eldest daughter developed a substance abuse problem when she was in college. When she became pregnant, she was unable to care for her baby because of her drug use,” says Janet. “I knew that when the baby was born, I would do everything in my power to ensure he was safe and loved.”

As an adoptive parent and kin caregiver, Janet has had a lot of experience working with CAS. “When I was at the hospital waiting for the baby to be born, my worker was there with her hand on my shoulder. I could feel her strength and knew I could handle the challenges ahead. I have always been able to be honest with her and share my feelings. I’ve gotten angry, we’ve cried and laughed together. No matter what, I know she’s always there to support us.”

From the time of his birth, Janet worked together with her worker from Peel CAS to ensure that the baby’s needs were met. “There were some complications with the birth and he was born with drugs in his system, but I knew from the moment I met him that he



Janet with Bear and his aunt

did?  
YOU!  
know

The benefits of a kinship arrangement are numerous. When children are placed with kin, they remain connected to their family, community, culture, and religion and have a greater sense of belonging. Last year Peel CAS’s Kinship team supported 127 children placed in caring, loving kin homes.

was a fighter. I call him Bear because of his immense strength, a tribute to my Mi’kmaq heritage.”

Her daughter’s drug use continued, so Janet currently has sole custody of Bear. However, she has never given up hope that this situation will change. “A mother’s love is unconditional and I continue to pray that my daughter is able to get the help she needs so she can be involved in her son’s life. For now, I am doing everything possible to keep him safe and make sure he knows he is loved. He has brought so much joy into our home and I believe eventually my daughter will get to experience it as well.”



# ACCOUNTABILITY

## The Children's Aid Society of the Region of Peel Statement of operations and changes in fund balances for the year ended 31, March 2019

	2019	2018
<b>Revenue</b>		
Ministry funding		
Current year	68,681,237	69,554,320
Income from other sources	174,486	101,152
Gain on sale of assets	3,791,481	
	72,647,204	69,655,472
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Adoption costs	870,961	818,365
Boarding rates	10,892,032	12,367,539
Building occupancy	2,842,267	3,063,834
Clients' personal needs	1,309,005	1,560,465
Employee benefits	9,072,800	8,469,036
Health and related costs	480,674	684,580
Miscellaneous	394,463	236,998
Office administration	219,040	277,642
Other program costs	176,144	146,710
Promotion and publicity	287,615	285,136
Purchased services-client	780,457	871,103
Purchased services-non-client	564,203	1,599,662
Salaries & wages	38,747,196	37,910,921
Technology	658,479	1,059,198
Training and recruitment	449,413	490,402
Travel	1,456,817	1,884,215
Amortization - net	465,288	367,415
	69,666,854	72,093,221
Expenditure recoveries	1,632,381	2,883,038
	68,034,473	69,210,183
Surplus of revenue over expenditures for the year	4,612,734	445,289
Fund balance -beginning of year	2,467,660	2,002,371
Transfer to operating fund from capital fund	0	0
<b>Fund balances - end of year</b>	<b>7,080,391</b>	<b>2,467,660</b>

Full audited financial statements are available upon request. Please call 905-363-6131 ext. 3334.