



Peel Children's Aid Society

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



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Peel Children's Aid Society

25 Capston Drive
Mississauga, Ontario, L5W 0H3

Phone: 905-363-6131
Toll-free: 888-700-0996
Fax: 905-363-6133
Email: mail@peelcas.org
Website: peelcas.org

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Message from our CEO and Board President

It has been a year unlike any other at Peel CAS. Like the rest of the country and the world, we have had to be nimble to respond to the rapidly changing COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring public health advice and adapting our services accordingly. The communities we serve have been disproportionately impacted by the health and economic toll of this global crisis. We extend our sincere thanks to all our staff members, who have been working so hard over the past two years to support children, youth and families through this difficult time.

In the midst of the upheaval COVID-19 has brought to all our lives, Peel CAS entered a critical turning point of transformation during this time. Our staff raised important concerns about our workplace culture, including experiences related to systemic racism. This led to the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services initiating a Comprehensive Review of all aspects of our organization and workplace culture.

Our agency welcomed this opportunity for change and renewal and is working diligently to address each and every recommendation in the Comprehensive Review Report. (Learn more about our work plan on [page 7](#).) While this has been a difficult period for all members of our organization, we know that through this collaborative process, we will build a stronger, more compassionate, more inclusive Peel CAS. We are grateful for the partnership of the Board, management, staff, foster caregivers, volunteers, and our community. A transformational change has been set in motion, and we will see it through together.

As progress continues on our work plan and workplace restoration process, our mission to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth and to strengthen families through partnership guides us forward. We are proud of the important steps we have taken this year to build relationships with Indigenous agencies and communities so that we may better serve First Nations, Inuit and Metis families. This work builds on our existing ethno-cultural service models,



Akoma, Saath, and Ma'an, which provide culturally appropriate services and supports to our region's Black, South Asian, and Arab communities. (Learn more about our DEI initiatives on [page 8](#).)

None of this work would be possible without our community partnerships. For example, we are one of many agencies working together to tackle the issue of human trafficking. New legislation from the Government of Ontario this year has provided us additional tools to be able to intervene in these cases. We are grateful for the support of our partners who provide assistance to survivors and their families. (For more on this work, see [page 11](#).)

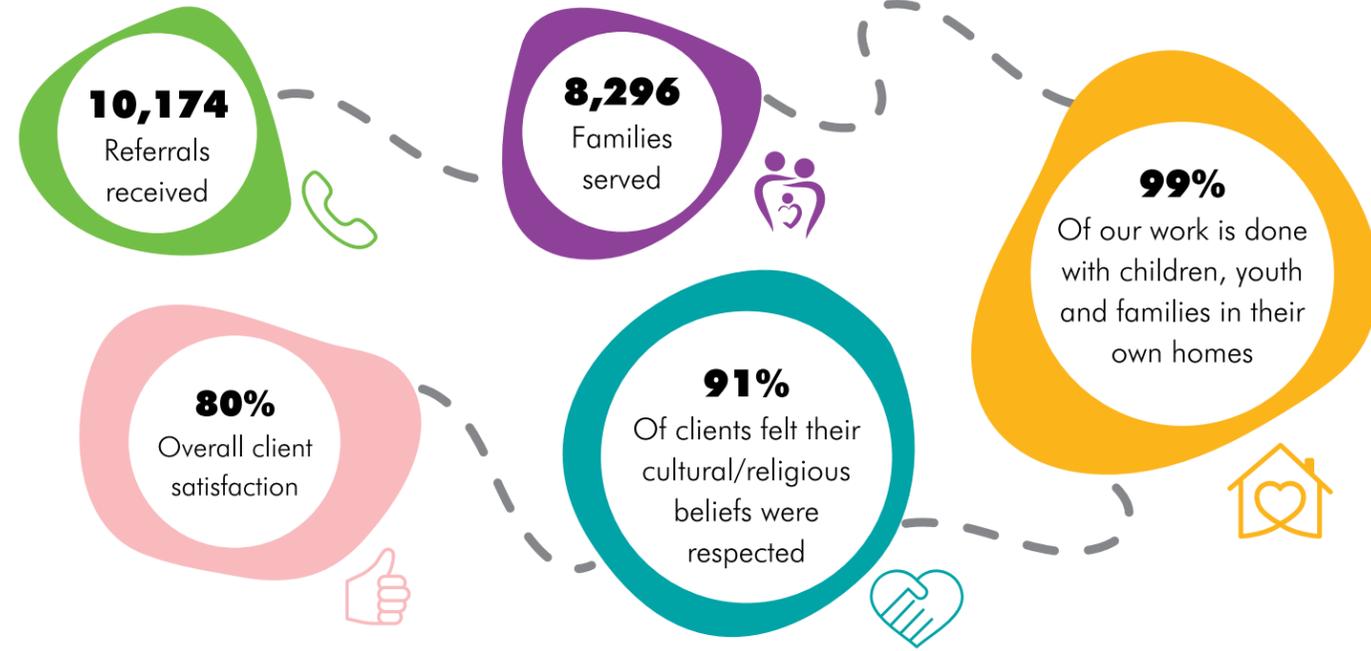
This year has been a time of change and transition in many ways. Mary Beth took on the role of Acting CEO this year, and Juliet's term as Board President is coming to an end this spring. During this year of uncertainty and transformation, it is our incredible team that has seen us through. Our staff have embraced a collaborative process of workplace restoration, sharing their perspectives, ideas and experiences to improve our organization, while maintaining their outstanding level of service. Our foster caregivers, Board members and volunteers have been unwavering in their commitment to caring for and supporting our children, youth and families. Our community partners have stood with us and those connections enrich everything that we do.

We look forward to the year ahead as Peel CAS continues to adapt, build on our strengths, and find solutions to our challenges together.

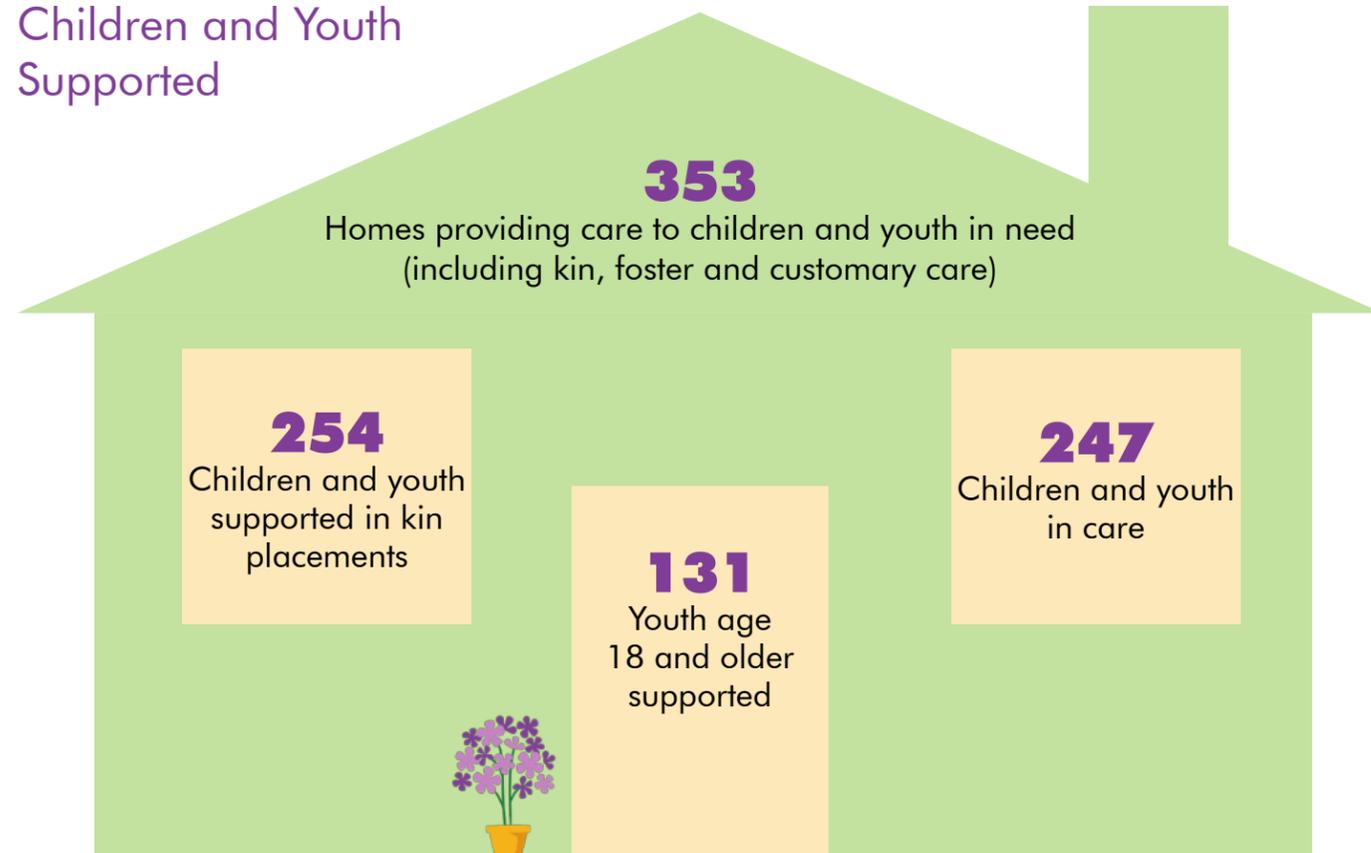
Mary Beth Moellenkamp, Acting CEO and Juliet Jackson, President, Peel CAS Board of Directors

By the Numbers

April 1, 2021 - March 31, 2022



Children and Youth Supported



Translation and Interpretation Services





Pandemic: Year Two

This past year has been marked by continued upheaval in our communities, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have all moved through lockdowns to lifting restrictions, watched new variants emerge, and navigated changing guidance on testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and vaccination. Through it all, our staff has demonstrated resilience and flexibility, adapting quickly as circumstances change, and always keeping the needs of the children, youth and families we serve at the forefront.

Peel CAS has supported the health and safety of our employees, volunteers and foster caregivers by providing free PPE and rapid testing kits, adopting a vaccination policy, and encouraging staff to work from home when possible. Recognizing that one cannot pour from an empty vessel, our Workplace Wellness committee has organized numerous workshops and training sessions to support self-care and wellness for our staff members.

Many of our employees told us that they appreciated the opportunity to work remotely at least some of the time and would like to continue to do so when the pandemic is over. In March 2022, the agency launched a new Flexible Working Policy, enabling our teams to decide the working arrangements that are most suitable for them - fully remote, a hybrid of on-site and remote work, or full-time in the office - depending on their role in the organization.

No matter where they choose to do their work, we are deeply grateful for the tireless efforts of our staff, volunteers, and foster caregivers. Our workers are doing difficult jobs during extraordinary times, in one of the hardest hit regions for COVID-19 in the country. We thank them for their exemplary teamwork, compassion, and dedication to improving the lives of children, youth and families in Peel.

Transforming Peel CAS

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services initiated a Comprehensive Organizational Review of Peel CAS in 2021, in response to concerns expressed by our staff. The overall scope of the review encompassed workplace culture, governance, our service delivery model, compliance with the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, community partnerships, human resources and finance. The bulk of the review was conducted by The Osborne Group, with the workplace culture portion led by the Centre for Conflict Resolution International (CCR).

When the Comprehensive Review Report was released on October 1, 2021, it identified the key areas of strength in the organization, as well as areas of concern. The agency's strong service delivery model was highlighted, including its focus on collaboration with families and community partners, a high level of compliance with legislation, and use of metrics to evaluate and improve service. Issues around the workplace culture were noted as the main areas of concern, including a need for a more inclusive leadership style at the agency, and improving the union-management relationship.

"The safety, well-being and inclusion of our staff and the community we serve are our highest priorities," noted Juliet Jackson, Peel CAS Board President. "The report has made it clear that while we have focused and delivered on our commitment to excellence in service delivery, we have at times lost sight of the needs and experiences of our own dedicated staff - the foundation of our agency. We must do better, and we will do better - through concrete, unified, measurable action."

The first step in taking that measurable action was the development of a detailed work plan in response to the review report. The work plan was published on our website on January 20, 2022, itemizing all the recommendations in the

report, along with the plan of action, timeline and responsibility. The Board also chose to include several additional items in the work plan to improve the agency moving forward. These items include providing an independent ombudsperson for staff who do not feel comfortable reporting issues to management related to harassment, discrimination, and racism; and the creation of an anti-racism policy, which will explicitly include anti-Black racism.

The implementation of the work plan is currently underway, overseen by the Board of Directors. CCR is leading a workplace restoration process based on input and participation from all staff across the organization. Policies and procedures are being reviewed and updated to ensure best practices are followed. These processes will continue for many months to come as we focus on putting our people first, and creating transformative, sustained, positive change. We are grateful to all our staff members for their ongoing engagement in this journey and their commitment to building a better, more inclusive Peel CAS.

The full Comprehensive Review Report and the work plan are available on our website at [PeelCAS.org](https://www.peelcas.org). Updates will continue to be posted there in the months ahead as we report back on our progress toward implementing the work plan.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Learning, Growth, and Taking Action

The principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are foundational to the work we do at Peel CAS. This year we have reinforced DEI principles and education through training sessions and cultural celebrations, offered safe spaces for discussion in Employee Resource Groups, reviewed agency policies through a DEI lens, and continued to expand our culturally competent service models.

Our dedicated DEI team facilitated 36 training opportunities for staff and partner agencies over the past year. Senior and middle managers received Inclusive Leadership and Racial Equity training, and a Courageous Conversations series is currently underway for all staff, focused on creating a greater sense of equity in our organization. Training specific to working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis families has also been provided to staff by our Indigenous partners (learn more about our Steps Toward Reconciliation on [page 10](#)).

DEI hosted 14 different internal events recognizing and celebrating cultural heritage dates from around the world. In addition to highlighting the cultural diversity within our region and our agency, events were also held to recognize Pride and the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

These events were planned in collaboration with interested employees and with the relevant Employee Resource Groups. Currently, Peel CAS has three such resource groups: the Black Employee Network, the Diversity and Inclusion Council, and BRIDGE Beyond Rainbows (our 2SLGBTQ+ group). We also offer affinity groups for youth involved with the agency, including The Village (for Black youth), Kindred SEEA (for Southeast and East Asian youth) and SAYA (for

South Asian youth). Our DEI team connected with those groups this year as well, conducting a needs assessment, COVID-19 wellness session, and anti-Black racism discussions.

Peel CAS is in the process of reviewing all of our policies as part of the Comprehensive Review Workplan (see [page 7](#)). Our DEI team is participating in that process to ensure that new or revised policies reflect our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. In particular, the team has focused on policies related to human resources, like hiring, absence management, succession planning, and harassment. The agency also developed a new policy to manage external harassment complaints.

While much of our work this year focused on internal programs for staff to combat racism and improve cultural competency, we also built on our service delivery models for clients from diverse backgrounds. In addition to our existing Akoma, Saath and Ma'an service models (for Black, South Asian, and Arab communities respectively), work began this year to develop a similar offering for Southeast and East Asian (SEEA) families. These service models are created through close collaboration with community agencies that serve these distinct communities, enabling us to provide more sensitive and appropriate assistance to the children, youth and families we work with. We look forward to officially launching the new SEEA service model in June 2022.

A focus on building sustainable anti-racism practices, dismantling anti-Black racism, working towards justice, Truth and Reconciliation remain key strategic priorities for the agency with the ultimate goal of creating a culture of belonging for all staff. Diversity, equity, and inclusion at Peel CAS is an ongoing process of learning and growth for our employees at all levels of the organization.



DEI Statistics for 2021-22

130

wellness kits distributed to children/youth in care

14

internal events reached a total audience size of **2,600**

36

training sessions with almost **1,030** trainees

137

community presentations to an audience of **3,850**

53

DEI articles published internally

200

hours of Cultural Service Navigation

155

referrals to Akoma

310

referrals to Saath

52

referrals to Ma'an

Steps toward Reconciliation

Peel CAS took important steps forward this year in our commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action. As an agency, we recognize the harm that the child welfare sector has inflicted on Indigenous families over generations, and we are partnering with Indigenous communities and organizations to be a part of the solution.

Service Agreement with Native Child and Family Services Toronto

In November 2021, Peel CAS and Native Child and Family Services Toronto (NCFST) signed a new agreement to provide culturally appropriate Child and Family Well-being (child welfare) and Holistic (prevention services) supports for First Nations, Inuit and Metis (FNIM) individuals that we serve. This agreement is a critical step forward in our goal to ensure that all Indigenous children, youth and families have access to culturally appropriate services provided by an Indigenous well-being agency in Peel.

The formal agreement between our organizations will ensure that all children, youth and families who identify as Indigenous have the choice to receive service from NCFST in Peel Region. There is a coordinated approach to the transfer process which includes working with the individuals, community partners and the Indigenous community including a Band, Nation or Association.

"As a culturally grounded agency centered in Indigenous worldviews, we are honoured to walk in relationship with Peel CAS to provide culturally appropriate services to Indigenous children and families in the Peel region. This agreement represents another important step towards ensuring that all Indigenous children and families in Ontario have access to programs and services that are led and delivered by Indigenous agencies," said Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer, Executive Director of NCFST.

As we continue to build this relationship, we are working together to ensure that Indigenous children, youth, and families in Peel receive services that best meet their needs and preserve their cultural connections.

Partnership with Aboriginal Legal Services

Aboriginal Legal Services, with whom we began to work with at the beginning of 2021, continue to facilitate all our Traditional Talking Circles with our Indigenous families. The Circles provide families with a safe space with a goal of developing a plan that will meet children's needs in a culturally relevant and integral way.

We are pleased to announce that our work with Aboriginal Legal Services is expanding. They are now available every Tuesday for consultation, guidance and support to our staff. They are assisting us with our communications with different First Nations and Indigenous communities, engaging with families and in developing cultural plans.

We look forward to continuing to build meaningful relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities and organizations to foster respectful dialogue, and honour the cultural safety of Indigenous children, youth and families in Peel.

Working together to fight Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a growing problem in Peel Region, and around the world. Traffickers control and exploit their victims, forcing them to work and subjecting them to psychological and physical abuse. In our region, sex trafficking is the most common form of human trafficking, with the majority of victims being young women and girls. According to Ontario's Human Trafficking Strategy, the average age of recruitment into sex trafficking is 13 years old.

Cases involving human trafficking can be complex to navigate. Traffickers prey on the most vulnerable individuals, disproportionately impacting Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. Children and youth involved in child welfare are also at an increased risk. The Province of Ontario recognized the challenges faced by Children's Aid Societies dealing with human trafficking cases and passed new legislation to enhance our ability to respond effectively, and support survivors and their families. The new legislation allows CASs to better document human trafficking concerns, to intervene in cases involving youth who are 16 or 17 years old to protect their safety, and to offer ongoing financial support and resources to youth attempting to leave a trafficking situation.

Our agency's internal Human Trafficking committee was created more than two years ago to address this growing problem, and it played an important role this year in educating staff about the legislative changes. The committee has created and facilitated training around human trafficking for more than 300 staff and foster caregivers, consulted on cases, and produced helpful resources for workers and families. Representatives include both front-line and management colleagues, who are part of numerous community tables and committees across the GTA that work together to combat human trafficking and support survivors.



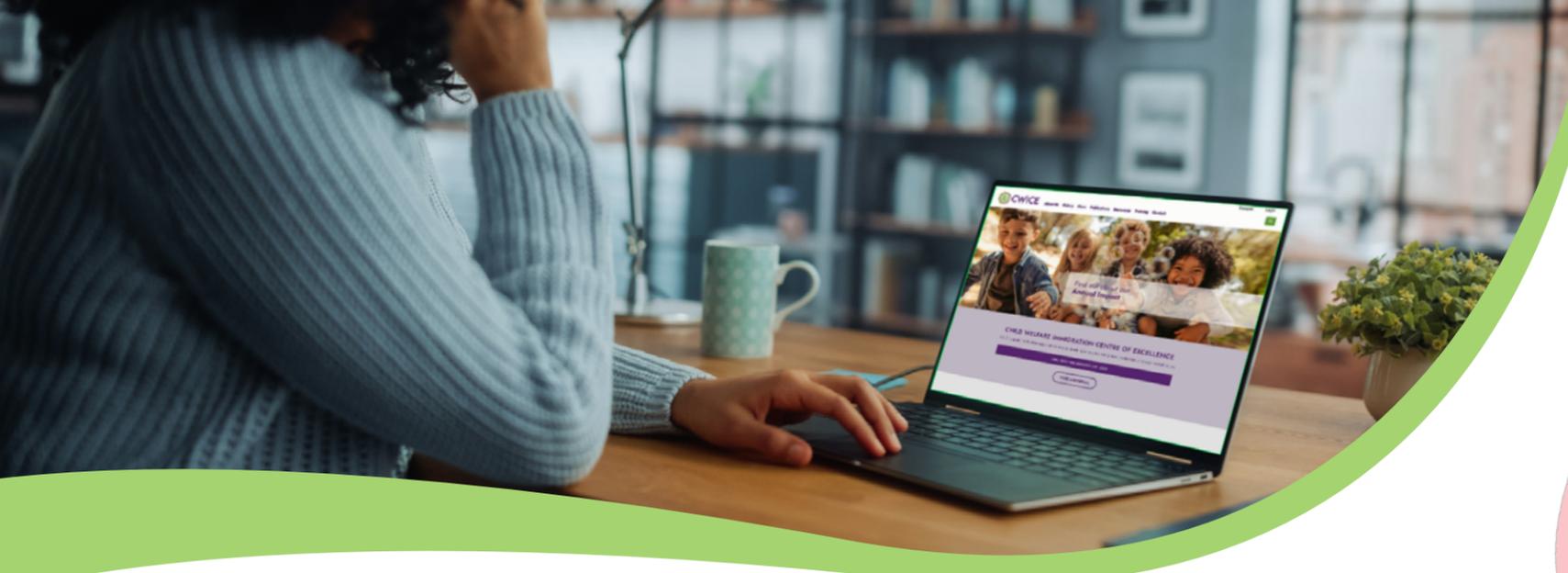
A Dangerous Situation

Monique* was in a dangerous situation when she called her CAS worker for help. Her trafficker was at her house, threatening the safety of herself and her family. Her worker had helped Monique escape this man before and was now able to use the new powers granted by the province to help her again.

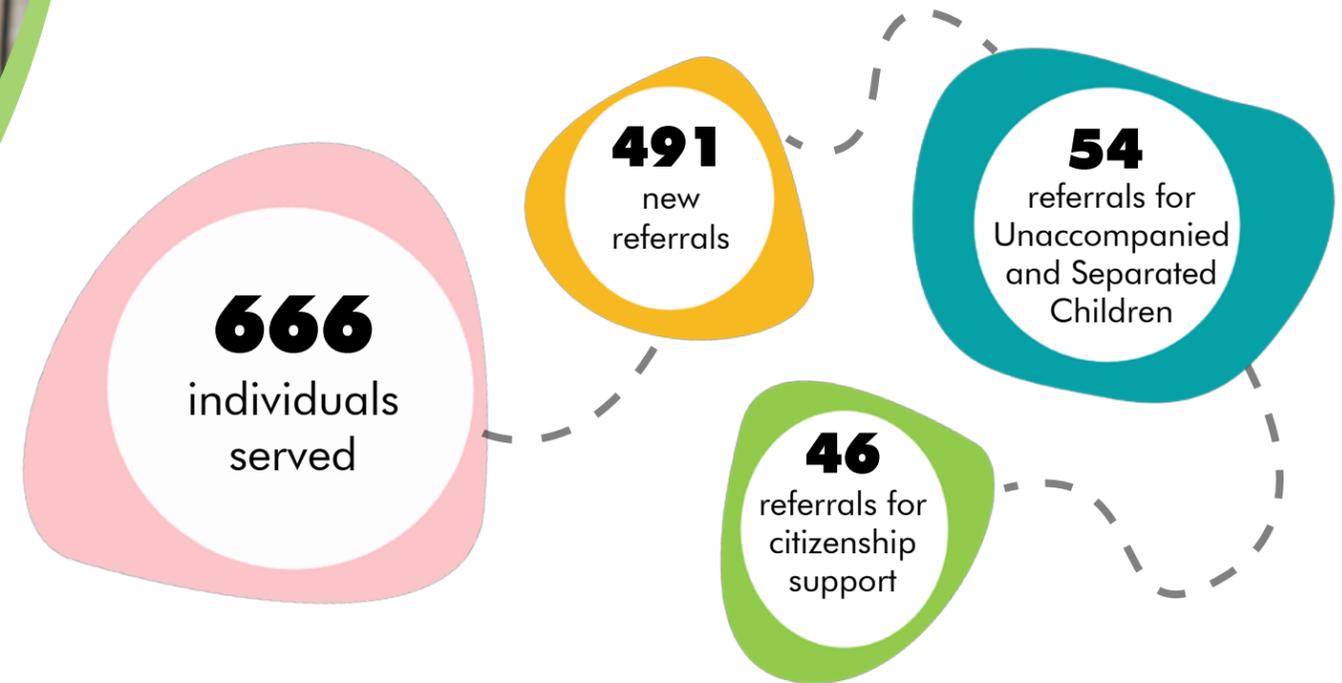
The worker intervened immediately, removing Monique from her family's home and arranging accommodation for her at a safe house provided by the Elizabeth Fry Society. Monique accepted a temporary Voluntary Youth Services Agreement so that she could live independently with financial assistance from Peel CAS while her worker connected her to community resources and support.

Monique ultimately returned to her family home and Peel CAS continues to work with her and her family to educate them about the realities of human trafficking, and plan for their ongoing safety.

**Not her real name*



CWICE service statistics for 2021-22



The New Look of CWICE

The Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE) got a makeover in 2021 and a new website to share its mission with the world.

As the first centre of its kind in Canada, CWICE makes a direct impact on children, youth and families in Ontario, and serves as a resource and thought leader to child welfare organizations across the country. This province-wide service and training centre has become known nationally for its leadership. It needed a memorable and impactful logo to define its brand, and a dedicated website to share its mission and message.

About the logo

It is through unity and working together that CWICE finds success, empowerment, and opportunity. The three intertwining circles that surround the world's globe evoke the essence of community and connectivity, while also celebrating and elevating diversity through the use of colour.

The colours green, orange, and purple connect the CWICE logo to its partner Peel CAS. The use of green is authentic and grounded, like CWICE's mission to support child welfare cases involving immigration, settlement, or border-related issues. The use of purple sparks creative energy – a nod to the perspective and insights CWICE brings to the child welfare sector. The use of orange is a message of joy and determination, reflecting CWICE's friendly, helpful spirit.

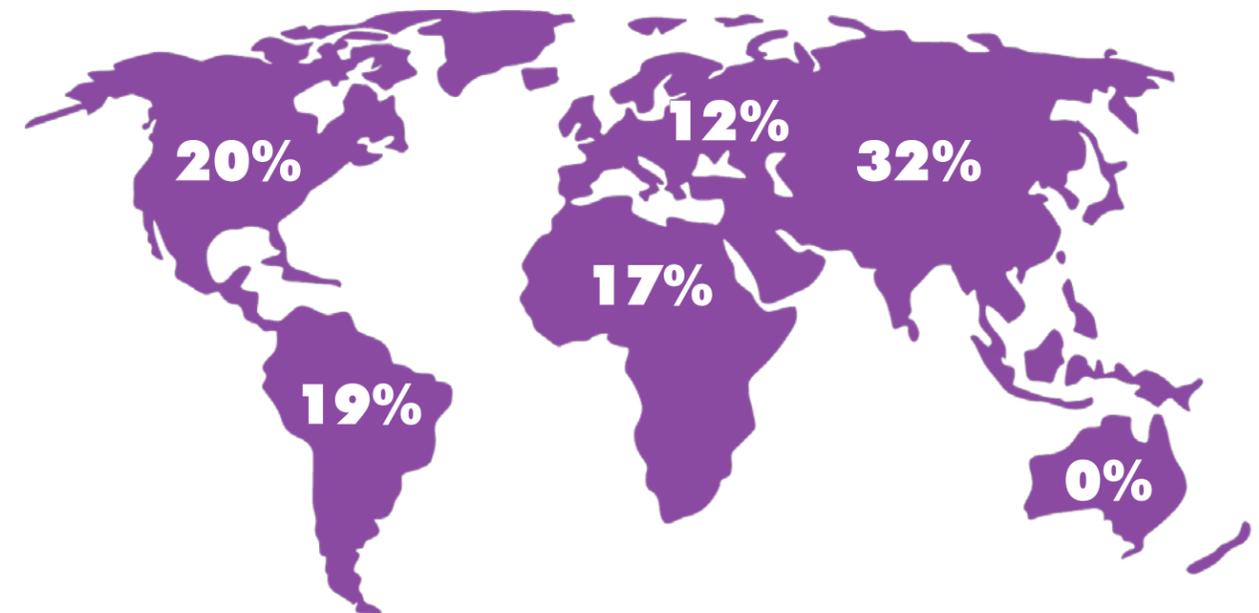
Together, the logo presents a simple, modern, timeless message that will resonate with a global audience.



About the website

In November 2021, CWICE.ca was launched as a new standalone website. The project team based the design on the PeelCAS.org site, which reinforces CWICE's close connection as part of Peel CAS, while updating all site content. Visitors can access information about making a referral to CWICE, the history of the organization, review publications like its annual impact reports, evaluations and executive summaries, and find out about the 8-part Training Series Certificate Program and how to register, including a new FAQ. A recent addition to the site is a list of links to community resources that provide assistance to newcomers arriving in Ontario.

Continents of origin for our clients



CWICE capacity-building statistics for 2021-22

- 941** child welfare professionals received our monthly newsletter
- 352** participants across **8** courses in our certificate program
- 217** non-service inquiries

Thanks to Peel Children's Aid Foundation

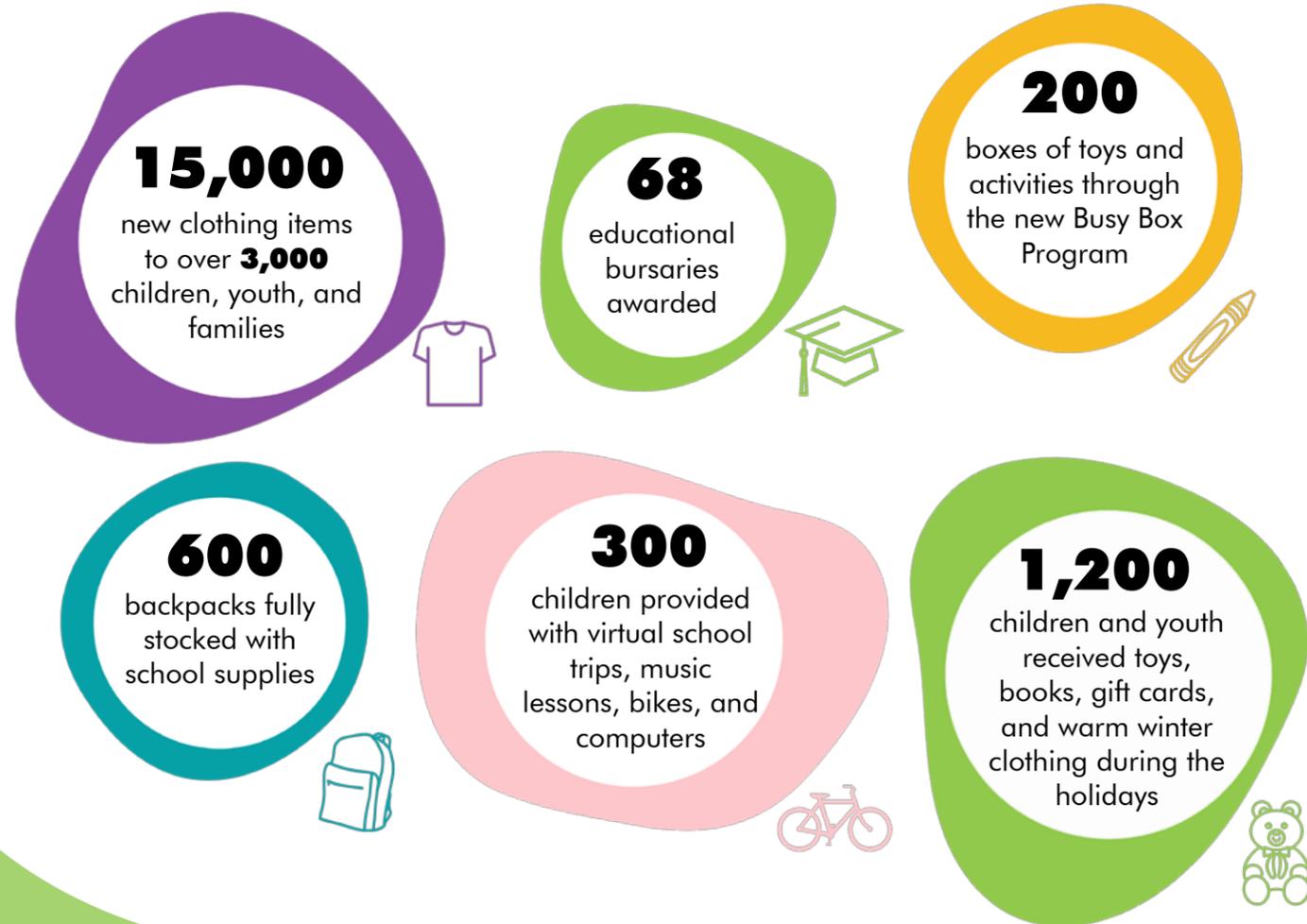
In 2021, Peel Children's Aid Foundation provided more than **\$1.3 million in financial support and \$300,000 of in-kind support** to children, youth, and families involved with Peel CAS.

The Foundation raises funds to support programs and services that are not government-funded. Their support gives children and youth in our community the chance to experience more nurturing childhoods, equal opportunity to education, and future success as they transition to adulthood.

This year, through our Foundation, youth received training in subjects like financial literacy, job skills development, cultural pride, and stress management. Children received clothing, toys, equipment and lessons so that they could enjoy regular childhood experiences.

We are so grateful to the Foundation, its donors and volunteers for their generous support of the children, youth and families that we work with. Their gifts change lives in our community, every single day.

Gifts provided to children, youth and their families



Fundraising successes



Operating Revenue and Expenses

April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022

Numbers are in thousands of dollars

Revenue	2022	2021
Ministry funding - current year	72,241	71,807
Income from other sources	217	237
Gains on sale of assets	0	1,048
Total revenue	72,458	73,092
Expenses		
Adoption costs	879	850
Boarding rates	10,821	11,374
Building occupancy	4,954	3,914
Clients' personal needs	880	2,570
Employee benefits	9,922	9,424
Health and related costs	538	346
Miscellaneous	236	495
Office administration	275	305
Other program costs	270	151
Promotional and publicity	65	130
Purchased services - client	1,462	1,125
Purchased services - non-client	634	575
Salaries and wages	39,259	41,117
Technology	835	632
Training and recruitment	207	223
Travel	615	399
Amortization - net	1,644	1,383
Total expenses	73,496	75,013
Expenditure recoveries	1,379	1,842
Net expenditures	72,117	73,171
Surplus (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures for the year	341	-79
Fund balance - beginning of year	7,212	7,291
Fund balances - End of year	7,553	7,212

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