



Annual Report

2020-2021

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About Peel CAS

Peel Children’s Aid Society is a community-based, family-first organization with children at the centre. Peel CAS strives to ensure the safety and well-being of the community’s most vulnerable with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

With the support of our partners, we work with parents and caregivers to build healthy families and a safe, strong community. With the lowest number of children in care per capita in Canada, we believe that children and youth belong at home with their families in their own communities whenever possible, and will do everything we can to keep families together.

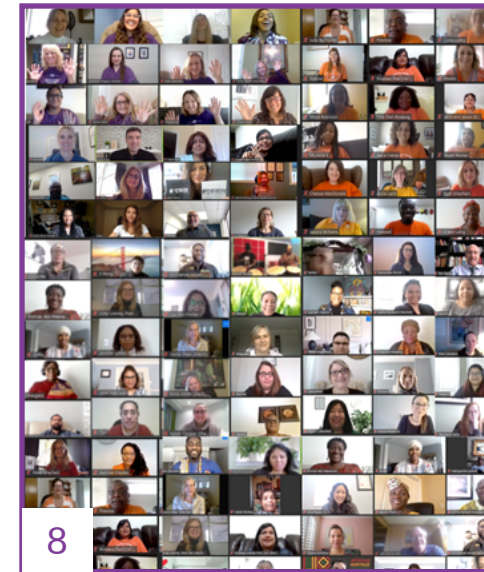
Our values are the foundation of the work we do and our goal is to make the lives of children, youth and families better through their interaction with us.

We are Peel CAS and we are here to help.

On the cover



The image on the cover is a digital illustration by the artist Rei Misiri of one of the many new pieces of art that were commissioned for the new Peel CAS office at 25 Capston Drive in Mississauga. For more photos and information, see page 14.



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Left: A mural on display in a corridor at the new Peel CAS building, by artist Marilena Madio. Top right: Juliet Jackson, President, Peel CAS Board of Directors. Bottom right: Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS

Message from our CEO and Board President

This has been a year of crisis on a global scale. A year of change and uncertainty, of hope, reflection, and perseverance. The challenges that our community, and others around the world, have faced in 2020 have served as a reminder to focus on what is truly important: **Safety. Family. Community. Loved ones. Taking care of each other.**

At Peel CAS, these values have always been central to our work. As we have risen to the challenges that faced us this past year, our commitment to those values has allowed us to continue to grow our partnerships, support our community, and move our organization forward toward a brighter future.

While some of our work has moved online, our front-line workers, volunteers and caregivers have continued to do everything possible to look after our children, youth and families. Volunteer drivers

continue to transport kids to their appointments, mentors video chat to stay in touch with youth, foster and kin caregivers open their homes to children and youth who need a safe and secure place to stay, and when a home visit is needed, our workers are there. We are so grateful for the dedicated team at Peel CAS, whose commitment to the well-being of children, youth and families has not wavered during difficult times. If anything, it has grown stronger. [Read the Caring through COVID article](#) for more information on how we adapted our services this year.

In spite of the year's challenges, we achieved exciting new milestones, like the opening of our beautiful new building in June 2020. There is so much optimism to be found in those spaces, as we decorate with colourful artwork that reflects Peel's vibrant diversity. We look forward to seeing children climbing on the playground, youth playing basketball in the sports complex, staff chatting in the lounge, and family members meeting in our access centre. We can't wait to welcome our clients, partners and the community to enjoy the facilities as soon as it is safe to do so. [Look ahead in this report to see some pictures of our new spaces.](#)

We launched our [new, modernized website](#), to make it easier for people to learn about us and access our services online. The new site is user-friendly, with online forms for ease of access to information, fully updated content in both official languages, lots of resources about parenting, fostering and adoption, and a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, anti-racism and Truth and Reconciliation.

Two of our flagship ethno-cultural service models, Saath and Akoma, celebrated their first anniversaries this year. [We are so proud of these important partnerships, and the recognition they have received from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.](#) It is thanks to innovative programs like these that 93 per cent of clients surveyed say that they felt their cultural and religious backgrounds were respected. Work is underway to expand on these successful models to continue to improve our

service to the community.

We were pleased to be a part of the development of [Peel Region's Community Safety and Well-being Plan](#), and continue to actively participate in efforts to achieve its goals. We work with partner organizations on major issues in the region, like human trafficking and intimate partner violence, to support survivors and their families. We take great pride in our partnerships and the work we are doing collectively to address systemic issues like racism, discrimination, poverty, and other forms of marginalization that impact so many residents in Peel.

We acknowledge that racism exists in all institutions, and our organization is not immune. We have developed an [Anti-racism Strategy](#) to dismantle and eliminate racism and discrimination in all its forms. [Learn more about our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives](#), like our new Employee Resource Groups: Black Employee Network, Diversity and Inclusion Council, and a 2SLGBTQ+ Committee. These groups encourage staff to meet, share information and influence practice throughout the agency. Recognizing the importance of supporting our staff's mental health through these challenging times, we have connected with our Employee Assistance Program to ensure employees can access services from a culturally matched provider. We look forward to engaging in a comprehensive Ministry-led operational review and workplace assessment in 2021 and commit to implementing their recommendations in partnership with our staff. Together, we will create a stronger, more inclusive Peel CAS.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we will continue to work together to rise to the challenges before us. In collaboration with our team and our partners, we will protect the safety of children and youth, support families to thrive, and above all else, take care of each other.

Juliet Jackson, President, Peel CAS Board of Directors and Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS

By the numbers

From April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021



8,294

Families served in our Peel community



268

Homes provided by kinship, foster and adoption caregivers

10,611
Referrals received



5,972
Investigations completed



189

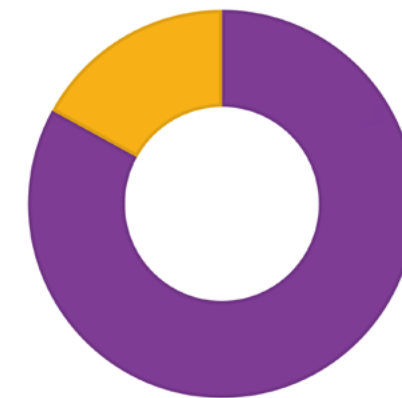
Children in care (on average) – a **35%** decrease since 2017-18

99%

Of the work we do is with children, youth and families in their homes

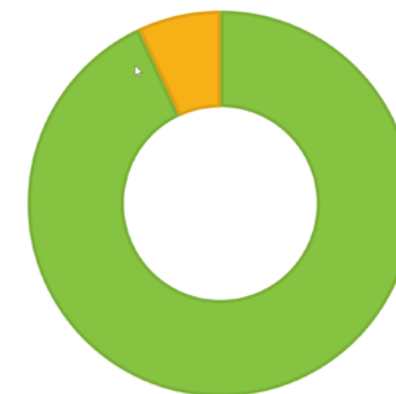


Client Survey Results



83%

Overall client satisfaction



93%

Of clients agreed that their cultural/religious beliefs were respected



Caring through COVID

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world in 2020, it brought with it rapid change and evolving challenges for every individual, and every organization. Peel CAS met these challenges head on, supporting our staff to take the important measures needed to protect themselves, while continuing to care for the children, youth and families in our community.

Employees were encouraged to work from home as much as possible, switching to a remote workforce almost overnight. We adopted a flexible approach to client service and in some cases moved to telephone and video conference, where appropriate, while ensuring all ministry standards were met. When an in-person visit was needed, workers were provided with personal protective equipment to reduce the

risk of infection. Policies and procedures were adapted to protect the safety of our staff and clients as our top priority. Mental health and wellness resources were provided throughout the year to help our team cope with the personal and professional challenges the pandemic has caused.

Peel Region is among the hardest hit regions in the country in terms of COVID-19 infections, so the families we support are facing enormous strain and unprecedented challenges. The virus has had a disproportionate impact on already marginalized communities, which are dealing with increased illness, job loss, social isolation, school closures, and reduced access to community supports. Children, youth and families need our support more than ever, and we are here to help.

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the hundreds of community members who provided donations to our sister agency, Peel Children's Aid Foundation in support of their COVID-19 Emergency Fund. Over \$485,000 was raised for local families while providing urgently needed items like groceries, toiletries, and baby formula.



Emergency kits of personal care items that were delivered to clients.



Our distribution centre with clothing and other supplies waiting to be distributed.



Members of our Infant Wellness Team with medical and baby supplies.



Our Youth Success Team has continued to offer events online to keep young people connected, including the **Think Big! Dream Big! Be Big!** networking event, **In it Together** virtual forums, and camp opportunities. In this online March Break baking camp, Vanessa from Vanessa Legair Events & Design guided children and youth to create some delicious treats!

Our Community Engagement team pivoted to offer our educational presentations digitally through Zoom. In addition to our usual **Duty to Report** sessions, we developed a new webinar called **Parenting during the Pandemic**, to discuss the struggles and opportunities, and offer tips and advice to parents dealing with this new reality. This presentation was offered in Arabic, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu, as well as English.



The new PeelCAS.org

After more than a year in development, Peel CAS launched its new and improved website in December 2020. The new [PeelCAS.org](https://www.peelcas.org) features many improvements:

Clear, intuitive navigational structure

Modern, more attractive design, with more images and focus on our brand colours.

User-friendly content management system for greater flexibility

Fully AODA compliant, with online forms to enhance accessibility

Mobile-friendly design adapts to different screen sizes for visitors using a tablet or phone

A special password-protected section, just for our kin, foster, and adoption caregivers

Fully updated content in both English and French

Enhanced emphasis on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Ethno-cultural programs celebrate key milestones

At Peel CAS, we know that building strong relationships with our community partners is key to our success in creating positive outcomes for the diverse families we support. Some of our key collaborations reached important milestones this year, including the first anniversaries of our **Saath** and **Akoma** Wraparound Services.

Saath, which means “Together,” is a partnership with Indus Community Services to provide culturally competent support to the South Asian communities in Peel Region. Akoma, which means “Heart,” was created to serve the Black, African and Caribbean communities in our region, in collaboration with the Black Community Action Network, Roots Community Services, and the Free for All Foundation.

Through these programs, families that come into contact with Peel CAS are paired with a cultural facilitator, or wraparound worker, who supports the family within their cultural context.

Initiatives like these recognize the systemic barriers and oppression racialized youth and families experience, and help to address them through cultural competency and enhanced community partnerships.

“Together we are amplifying the voices of our clients while listening and learning to ensure cultural needs are met,” said Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS. “We have achieved a lot this past year, but there is much more work to do to better understand and address issues that impede the success of Black, Indigenous and racialized groups throughout the region.”

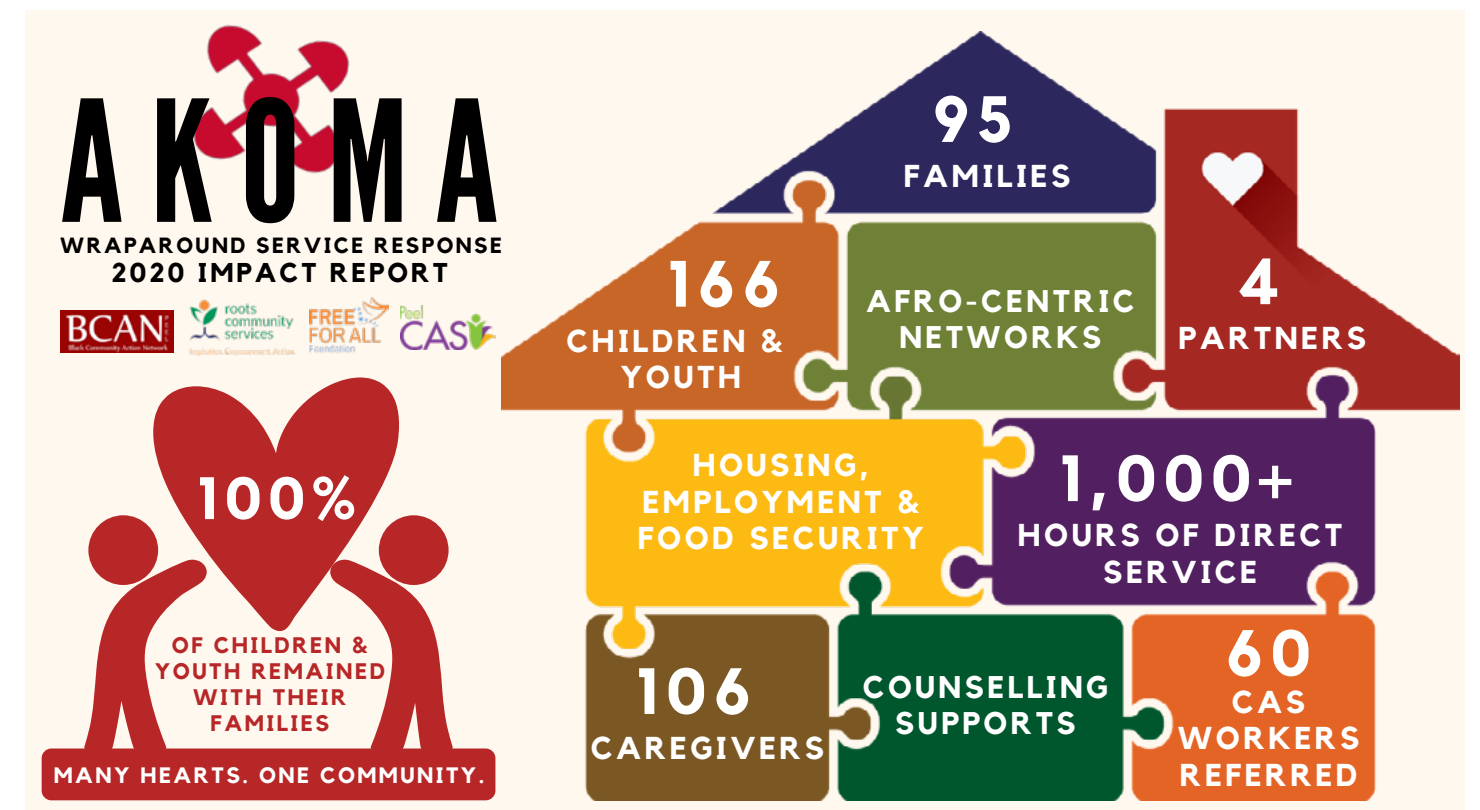
Recognizing the value of these programs in Peel, and potentially for other child welfare agencies in the province, the Government of Ontario has invested \$250,000 in support for the coming fiscal year. These funds will be directed to our community partners to enhance and expand their existing services, collaborating with Peel CAS to develop a model that other child welfare

agencies may consider implementing in their communities.

Peel CAS is already working to adapt the Saath and Akoma service models for other ethno-cultural communities in Peel. The Ma’an wraparound service model is at its final stage of development with our Arab communities and our South East Asian model is currently in the developmental stage as well.

Saath is also expanding to include a new initiative called MASSI that aims to pair South Asian parents with a volunteer who can provide guidance, coaching and mentorship, with an emphasis on children in care and children at risk of being separated from their families. MASSI stands for Multicultural Access to Social Support Initiative, and also reflects South Asian words for “aunt.”

Visit the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) section of our website to learn more about our community partnerships, the services available, and our commitment to supporting the cultural heritage of the children, youth and families we serve.





Our new home

After three years of planning, design and construction, Peel CAS and the Peel Children's Aid Foundation officially moved into our new building on June 25, 2020. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic has limited our ability to use the new space, as our teams have been working remotely and public events have moved online. However, we continue to prepare our beautiful new facility for our community to enjoy when it is safe to do so. We look forward to welcoming you to our new home at 25 Capston Drive in Mississauga! In the meantime, here is a sneak peek at what you will find.



Colourful artwork is on display throughout the building, with a focus on children, youth and families, honouring the cultural diversity in Peel region.



Artist credits, clockwise from top left: Rei Misiri; Chief Arnold Jacobs, Stephanie Caldeira; Nicole Alexander; Rei Misiri.



We know our private playground will be a hit with the younger crowd when they come to visit!

Modern workspaces for our staff, including individual work areas and collaboration zones.



Our spacious, welcoming lobby also serves as an event space.

A comfortable, private setting for family access visits.



Thanks to MLSE Foundation, Canadian Tire Jumpstart, and Jays Care Foundation for their generous support of our new community hub and sports complex. This gymnasium will host sports programs for the children and youth we support.





Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues Jill Dunlop (front row, centre) and local MPPs visited the Peel CAS office in August 2020 to make a funding announcement of \$200,000 in support of CWICE.

New funding from the Government of Ontario for CWICE

Peel CAS is proud to be home to the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence, thought leader on the intersection of child welfare with unresolved immigration, settlement or border-related issues. This service and training centre is a resource for the child welfare sector across Ontario, which offers consultation and support for organizations managing complex child protection and immigration cases.

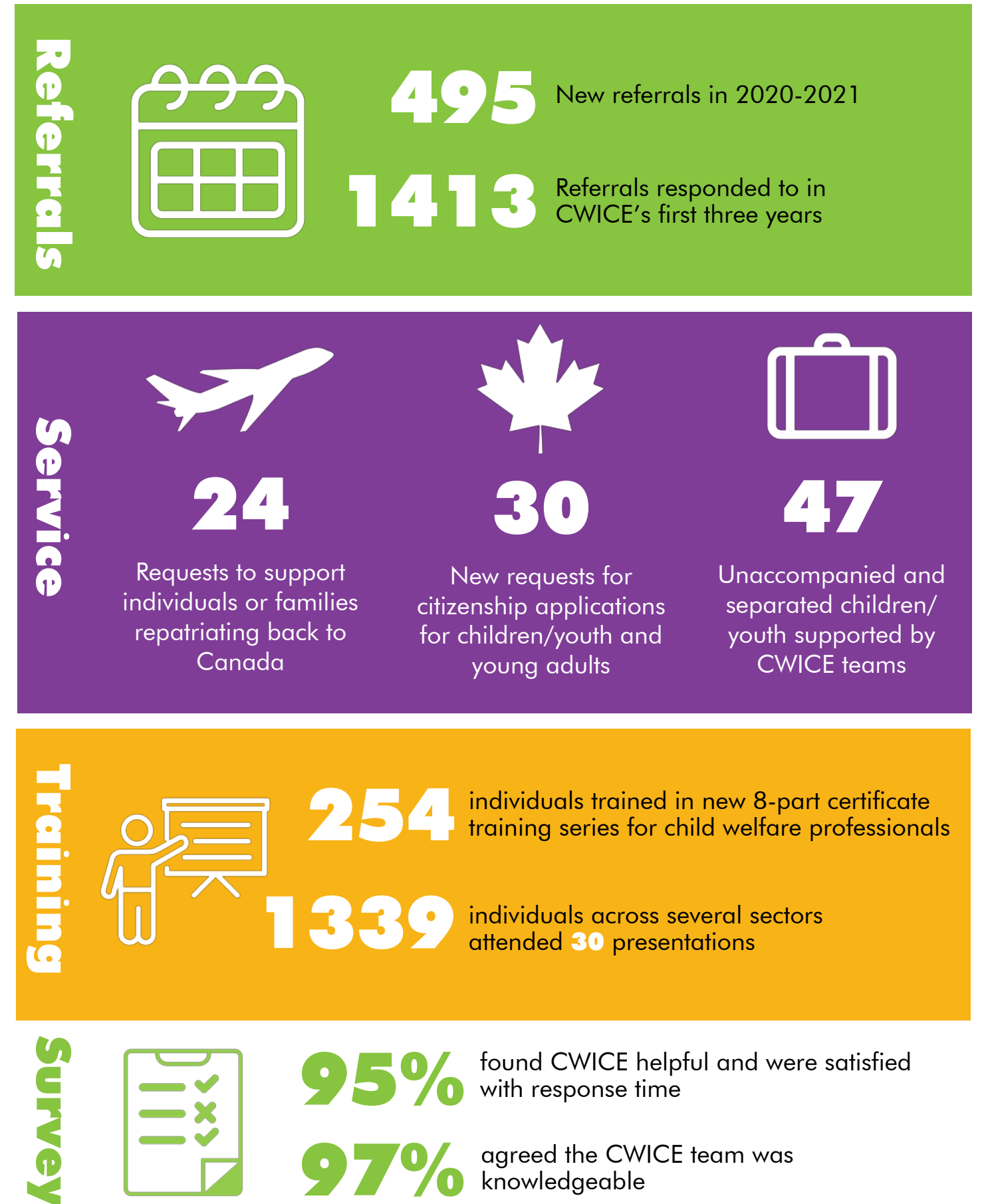
In August 2020, the [Government of Ontario](#) announced new funding of \$200,000 per year to support CWICE as the centralized service in Ontario. This funding enabled CWICE to hire additional staff to provide support across the province, and to develop and deliver new training opportunities for agencies across Canada.

“As part of our government’s redesign of the child welfare system, we are expanding successful projects such as this Centre of Excellence so that children, youth and families,

as well as communities, can move past these issues and focus on developing more positive futures,” said Jill Dunlop, Associate Minister of Children and Women’s Issues. The investment in the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence is a part of Ontario’s plan under the new child welfare redesign strategy to strengthen supports for children, youth, families and communities, and create a more efficient and sustainable child welfare system.

One of CWICE’s roles is to build capacity throughout the sector to ensure child welfare agencies in Ontario, and elsewhere in Canada, have a better understanding of the intersection of immigration and child welfare. CWICE has developed an 8-part certificate training series to teach child welfare professionals about the immigration system, pathways to citizenship, and best practices. CWICE launched the first of its training modules in Fall 2020.

CWICE Highlights





Portion of a mural by artist Wenting Li, commissioned for the Peel CAS building.

Centring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At Peel CAS, our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is ingrained in everything we do. This is reflected in the innovative partnerships we have built to better serve our diverse community (see [Ethno-cultural programs on page 12](#)); in the artwork we have commissioned to decorate our new building (see [Our New Home on page 14](#)); in the programs and opportunities we offer to the children and youth in our care; and in the supports we offer to our staff and families.

For Children and Youth

We know how important it is for children and youth in care to stay connected to their culture and communities. This year, we offered culturally appropriate training for youth to keep them safe and connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Culturally matched support is always available through our internal affinity groups. Our Black youth are grounded in their Afrocentric tradition and culture through staff coaching and mentoring by our *Ujima* affinity group. *The Village* provides Black youth with a space for empowerment, networking, guidance, and to discuss the struggles they face and find solutions together. Similar groups are available for our South Asian youth through the staff *Awaaz* committee, and the *South Asian Youth Alliance (SAYA)*. A staff group that focuses on the South East and East Asian community is also available, called *Kindred SEEA*.

In 2020, we expanded our relationships with

local Indigenous elders and agencies, so that we can consult with them to ensure we are providing culturally competent service to our Indigenous community. We are pleased to be building new partnerships with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, on whose traditional territory Peel CAS is located, and Indigenous agencies like Aboriginal Legal Services, Peel's Friendship Centre (The Indigenous Network), and Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

This year, Black youth were invited to participate in the One Vision One Voice Power-up Provincial Symposium to help empower them to succeed. We also developed and launched our first ever Black Youth Wellness Kits, which are provided free of charge, thanks to our Ujima Committee and Peel Children's Aid Foundation. These kits feature self-care items such as body and hair butter and African Castile Soap from Cleo Organics, as well as a pamphlet that highlights where foster caregivers can access services to support Black youth.

We are proud to provide culturally responsive service through our internal committees and external partnerships. Our teams work together to ensure that the cultural and religious backgrounds of the children, youth and families we support are honoured and respected.

For Employees

This year, our agency took a number of important steps forward to better support our

racialized employees. Three Employee Resource Groups were created to centre the voices of our staff, establish a sense of belonging, influence policies, and highlight staff achievement. These groups include a Black Employee Network, a Diversity and Inclusion Council, and BRIDGE Beyond Rainbows, our 2SLGBTQ+ group.

We have amended the Health and Safety incident report to designate acts of discrimination as a reportable hazard. All complaints related to anti-Black racism/discrimination are investigated and affected workers are immediately removed from these cases. In addition, we worked to ensure cultural matching of our EAP services for our workers. Additionally, we have developed an equity-based supervision framework. We have had several celebrations of our staff diversity and numerous cultural competency trainings.

Many internal articles have been published to inform practice, and an anti-racism library developed to guide conversations and aid in dismantling anti-Black racism. (See the sidebar for details.) *Courageous Conversation* training remains a mainstay of our DEI capacity building journey.

Our DEI Journey

While our DEI journey began many years ago, we have made significant strides forward in this work over the past year. In 2020, Peel CAS developed its first formal [Anti-racism Strategy](#) and [Action Plan](#), and greatly expanded the DEI

[content on our new website](#). We also worked with local leaders from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous agencies to draft the land acknowledgement that is read at the beginning of all major events and meetings.

Peel CAS has long been recognized as a DEI leader in the child welfare sector, but we still have work to do. The milestones we have achieved in 2020-2021 have set us on the right path to continue this important work into the future, making sure that everyone who comes in contact with Peel CAS feels welcomed, valued, and respected for the unique perspective they bring. DEI is everyone's responsibility, and it is integrated into everything that we do.

Training and Outreach

| | |
|-----|--|
| 120 | Community engagement presentations |
| 25 | Anti-Black racism/anti-racism trainings within and outside of the agency |
| 6 | Indigenous/Truth and Reconciliation trainings |
| 4 | 2SLGBTQ+ trainings |
| 36 | DEI articles published internally |

Thanks to our Peel Children's Aid Foundation

In 2020, the 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. We are so grateful to the foundation and its donors, for their generous support of the children, youth and families that we work with. Their gifts change lives in our community, every single day.



Helped **300** children to attend virtual summer camps.

Awarded **65** bursaries to Peel CAS youth and funded training programs in subjects like financial literacy, job skills development, cultural pride, and stress management.

Gave toys, books, gift cards, and grocery gift cards to over **1400** children during the holiday season.

Provided **200** children with virtual school trips, music lessons, toy bikes, and other regular childhood experiences.



Gifted **450** backpacks fully stocked with school supplies.



Supplied **15,000** pieces of new clothing to over **3000** children, youth, and their families from the Clothing Distribution Centre in the new Capston office.

Funded **87** youth with **\$1000** COVID-19 emergency assistance grants.

Donated COVID-19 emergency kits to **200** families with cleaning supplies and PPE.

Delivered **500** meals to families.

Created **100** baby bundles for infants up to the age of 18 months.



Supported **400** families and **200** youth with technology, grocery gift cards, rental support, and toiletries.

Operating Revenue and Expenses

April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

| Revenue | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Ministry funding - current year | 69,871,912 | 71,807,199 |
| Income from other sources | 132,504 | 237,269 |
| Gains on sale of assets | 0 | 1,047,602 |
| | 70,004,416 | 73,092,070 |
| Expenditures | | |
| Adoption costs | 895,834 | 849,601 |
| Boarding rates | 10,932,968 | 11,374,305 |
| Building occupancy | 2,670,777 | 3,914,183 |
| Clients' personal needs | 1,501,580 | 2,570,157 |
| Employee benefits | 9,672,812 | 9,423,485 |
| Health and related costs | 459,683 | 345,728 |
| Miscellaneous | 482,811 | 495,416 |
| Office administration | 340,725 | 305,255 |
| Other program costs | 195,495 | 151,001 |
| Promotional and publicity | 346,228 | 129,811 |
| Purchased services - client | 1,085,211 | 1,125,143 |
| Purchased services - non-client | 353,326 | 574,890 |
| Salaries and wages | 39,246,168 | 41,116,821 |
| Technology | 1,113,032 | 631,988 |
| Training and recruitment | 555,476 | 223,299 |
| Travel | 1,518,536 | 398,790 |
| Amortization - net | 367,678 | 1,383,445 |
| | 71,738,340 | 75,013,318 |
| Expenditure recoveries | 1,943,992 | 1,842,194 |
| | 69,794,348 | 73,171,124 |
| Surplus of revenue over expenditures for the year | 210,068 | (79,054) |
| Fund balance - beginning of year | 7,080,391 | 7,290,459 |
| Transfer to Operating Fund from Capital Fund | 0 | 0 |
| Fund balances - End of year | 7,290,459 | 7,211,405 |

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