



CWICE

Child Welfare Immigration
Centre of Excellence



CWICE Annual Impact Report Executive Summary

| 2021-2022

2021-2022

During the pandemic, our work in child welfare has been critical. As service providers, we can attest to the complex social issues experienced by individuals and families. We also witnessed expanding needs everywhere at the same time around the globe. Unfortunately, the pandemic made gaps in the social safety net wider in many instances. The pandemic also made disparities, disproportionalities, and systemic racism more visible. As we embark on a period of renewal and transformation, both in the child welfare sector and the wider society, it is with a sharpened focus on experiences and outcomes that will mark a period of great change.

The CWICE's work is, and always has been, grounded in understanding intersectionality – both of identities and systems – and the shifting that happens and the shifting still required.

Over this year, the CWICE evolved into a consultancy role for many government bodies and organizations. The CWICE provided consultative work to Global Affairs Canada, which had international significance and impact.

Nationally, the CWICE participated in consultations on amendments to CBSA policies related to minors, along with notable national and international organizations such as CCR, UNHCR, Red Cross, Amnesty International to name a few. The CWICE has also been asked to provide input and guidance to child welfare regulation and policy development in two provinces and with several agencies.

The CWICE will continue to share information about relevant and emerging topics through: monthly e-newsletters, several webinars per year through the CWICE Issues and Trends series with OACAS, presentations to teams and organizations as requested, and periodic Issue Notes. There will also continue to be articles, resource information, and publications on the newly launched the CWICE website: cwice.ca

As we move into the next fiscal year, we know there is a lot to transform. We are proud the Centre of Excellence is championed provincially, as part of the child welfare redesign strategy underway in Ontario. With our focus on early intervention in the CWICE, we are able to design differential services that meet the unique needs of our clients.

Through 2023, we look forward to continuing to examine specific and emerging intersectionalities – including use of Voluntary Youth Service Agreements with youth experiencing unresolved settlement or immigration needs, youth experiencing “crimmigration” pipeline issues, barriers to education, children placed across borders, and collaboration with the developmental service sector.

In this upcoming year, we are excited to launch our Newcomer project, expand our Status project, and continue to support graduates in our 8-course certificate program and build a network of ambassadors. Lastly, we look forward to engaging and aligning our work with a range of service providers and we thank those who will continue to collaborate with us in the next year.

We remain energized to continue to address key issues, identify emerging trends, and share our knowledge. We thank you, and look forward to hearing from you and transforming with you.

D. Ungara
Danielle Ungara, RSW

CAPACITY BUILDING

Individual, organizational and institutional capacity-building across child welfare, settlement and immigration sectors





Partnerships

What partners say about collaborating with CWICE

Jessica Kwik

Director, Peel
Newcomer
Strategy Group
(PNSG)

“CWICE is an important partner on our Peel Newcomer Service Delivery Network and our Refugee Resettlement Support Working Group. Their insights and systems view of intersections among children’s needs, with immigration and equity, have helped elevate our planning and collaborative discussions.

We are very grateful to CWICE for our work together.”

Emmaline Houston

PhD Student at
the Factor-
Inwentash Faculty
of Social Work,
University of
Toronto

“As a research assistant, I believe it is critical to remain connected with the community.

I had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate with the CWICE team to develop a list of resources, which support children and families who are new to Canada.

Due to their unique role, the CWICE provided valuable insights and feedback on the project.

Thank you, CWICE! “

Steve Meagher

Project Director
Centre for
Refugee Children

“We know that refugee and migrant children in Ontario's child welfare system face significant risks if issues pertaining to their immigration status and legal processes are not given adequate attention and responded to effectively. This is why, as a community organization, we appreciate the focus and expertise that the CWICE team approaches their work with.

Not only are they able to serve as an important immigration-focused resource within the child welfare system, but they are also able to act as a bridge between the child welfare system and community-based supports for refugee and migrant children in the province who are facing barriers and challenges surrounding their immigration and settlement processes.”



Partnerships

What partners say about collaborating with CWICE

Sarah Pole

Childhood Arrivals Support & Advocacy Program Director, Justice for Children and Youth Legal Clinic

“CWICE has provided very valuable, expert supports for a number of our young clients whose difficult personal circumstances and protection needs are compounded by complex immigration precarity.”

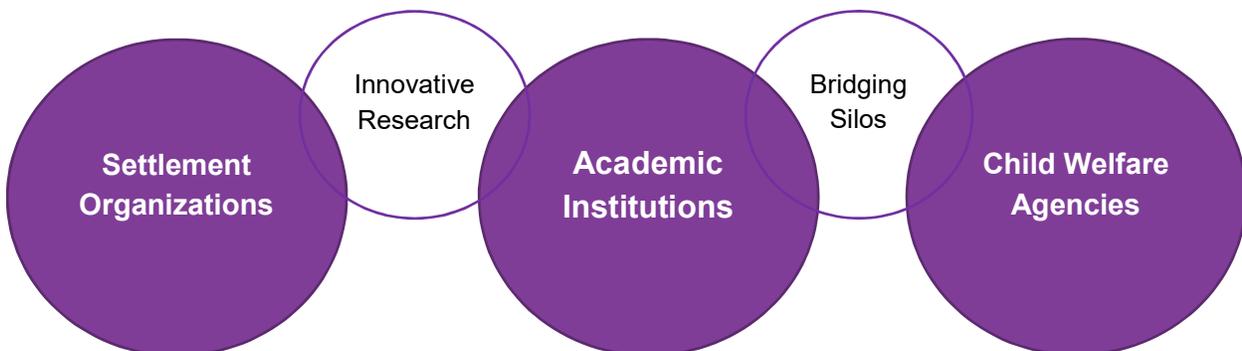
We are always happy when CWICE is part of a young person’s support team and are grateful for their collaborative, problem solving approach.”

Sylvie J. Lapointe

Executive Director, International Social Service Canada

“ISS Canada and Peel CAS (CWICE) have a long-standing cooperation. When you find a like-minded agency where children’s rights, family reunification, and immigration policy are a priority and part of your day-to-day actions for Canadian families and families abroad, you collaborate, support and work together to make the sometimes-impossible work, possible!

Together ISS Canada and CWICE worked on many cases again this year. Cases that were heartwarming and yet challenging but working with Danielle and her team is always a pleasure.”



Our Impact – Across Sectors



Outreach

CWICE obtained survey feedback, following outreach presentations, with a response rate of 17%. The feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with a majority of participants expressing they gained a deeper understanding of the impact of immigration on child welfare services. Through these presentations, participants learned about the services provided by the CWICE and how to make a referral.

What outreach participants say about our presentations



The information provided was easy to understand and useful

They had a better understanding of the CWICE services & how to make a referral

They felt comfortable contacting CWICE when working with a client with immigration status issues & would recommend colleagues to contact CWICE for support when needed

Comments from participants



- Outreach presentation was a “**great beginning**” for them
- Appreciation for CWICE for sharing the **reality and struggles** faced by those relocating to Canada

“We will reach out to consult, start the process as soon as possible, to afford all possible advantages to any youth or children we are working with who need support with immigration issues.” - Child Welfare Professional

Milestones & Highlights: A Year in Review

APRIL 2021

Through its annual reporting, CWICE learned it had maintained a **97% satisfaction rate**.

CWICE staff request feedback following closed services. Respondents shared for the second year in a row, consistently positive feedback about CWICE staff's knowledge in managing requests and respondents felt services were helpful.

The annual report each year is posted publicly on the website, and outlines this feedback as well as service data, projects, and other initiatives related to capacity building. The annual reporting includes full report, executive summary, and infographic.

To find the annual reports, please visit: www.cwice.ca/publications

MAY 2021

CWICE Managers and Data & Research Coordinator joined the Advisory for the Bordering Practices research project. This is a multi-year joint research project between University of Toronto and University of Victoria.

Remarks from the Bordering Practices Research team:

"The Bordering Practices project aims to create awareness, collaboration, and partnerships to address how systemic racism in immigration policies contributes the erasures of immigration status in child welfare policy and practice.

In our past forum with project partners working on anti-black racism advocacy, gender-based violence and legal rights for children and youth, we learned that perspectives towards the barriers and challenges that immigrant families' experience vary across sectors and organizations.

We are grateful for CWICE's support on our research advisory committee and fostering knowledge, training, and resources for the child welfare sector to recognize the role it plays in safeguarding the immigration status of children, youth and families in care."

JUNE 2021

CWICE has developed a record of service excellence over the last three years (2019-2022), ensuring the successful repatriation and reunification of **58 Canadian children, youth and families**.

CWICE provided consultative services to Global Affairs Canada, between February and June 2021, providing consultation, outreach, and capacity building services. These value-added services included:

- Pre-arrival, arrival and post-arrival service and coordination for repatriating children/youth;
- Development of an Ontario-wide guide for consular officers inside Canada;
- Designing a tip sheet for consular officers interviewing children around the globe;
- Providing a summary report including data, recommendations and best practices.

CWICE continues to engage with GAC through cross-system partnerships, and believe it is critical for child welfare professionals to provide service when needed to support the complex needs of children and families returning to Canada.

JULY 2021

CWICE team members collaborated with a child welfare agency on the successful reunification of a 10-year old Canadian child with their parent outside Canada. The child's entire family supported this plan and the child will be able to visit family in Canada, with the possibility to return to Canada at any point in the future.

This successful reunification process is now CWICE's gold standard for placements or reunifications abroad.

Planning required several weeks and months of meetings with diverse stakeholders, all committed to ensuring this child's voice was centred as well as the family. A **successful reunification** across borders was achieved despite several logistical issues related to travel restrictions, border control measures, and COVID-19 travel-related issues such as testing and quarantine.

AUGUST 2021

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, and in collaboration with several community partners, CWICE launched the **Afghan Initiative**.

The Afghan Initiative includes:

- Joining the Refugee Resettlement working group covering Peel, Halton and Toronto regions to plan and coordinate services for Afghan newcomer families;
- Collaborating with Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) organizations to provide information sessions and outreach presentations to staff and families at the Peel-Halton integrated Services Reception Centre;
- Attending the reception centres/hotels to meet with families and staff and consult as needed;
- Providing consultations and brief services to support Afghan families and unaccompanied or separated children;
- Communicating with the child welfare sector through Issue Note and article, highlighting the diverse needs of families arriving; and
- Developing new partnerships with agencies involved with the Afghan community.

SEPTEMBER 2021

The CWICE is currently collaborating with the School of Social Work at Toronto Metropolitan University⁸ (previously Ryerson University), mapping the institutional processes and practices at the intersection of child welfare and immigration systems.

The **institutional ethnography study** aims to gain a better understanding of the culture and practices within the child welfare and immigration systems. In the last year, the Ryerson Research team has conducted interviews with child protection workers, immigrant and settlement practitioners across Ontario.

Milestones & Highlights: A Year in Review

October 2021

CWICE worked to **successfully repatriate** a 13-year old Canadian youth to another province, following concerns about human trafficking. The circumstances regarding unaccompanied children are often that they have been separated from parents, guardians, and extended family.

Over the years, we have supported many unaccompanied and separated children. It is a diverse group of individuals, with various immigration status. In many situations, these youth are making refugee claims and have been separated from their families during humanitarian crises.

November 2021

CWICE launched a new standalone website - www.cwice.ca. The project team based the design on the PeelCAS.org site, which reinforces CWICE's close connection with the agency, while updating all site content.

In the website, visitors can find the following information:

- How to make a referral to CWICE
- Articles, blogs and related publications
- Annual impact reports, executive summaries and infographics
- 8-part Training Series Certificate Program and training evaluations
- List of community resources for newcomers in Ontario

In its first five months, **the new website had over 1,000 page views.**

December 2021

The CWICE Youth Group was launched with a purpose to support and assist immigrant youth including unaccompanied and separated or repatriated youth as they integrate and settle in Canada. The overall goal is to harness and empower these youth to reach their full potential in Canada.

Outreach continues and youth may be referred at any time to attend the meetings. There have been some challenges for youth to consistently attend monthly meetings, so support and encouragement from foster caregivers, guardians, community service providers, or child welfare workers is important.

Peel Children's Aid Foundation has been a strong and welcomed support of the CWICE Youth group. Informal feedback received from the participants thus far has been positive, with one youth sharing the group is an: **"open space to be able to share, talk about anything and lean on each other. We're in similar situations and can rely on one another and help one another"**. Another youth shared his feedback saying, **"It was nice to be in this group, thank you for taking the time."**

January 2022

CWICE launched a pilot **Foster Caregiver training course** in Peel Region. Twenty-one foster caregivers attended. As a result of its success, CWICE will offer the training to any foster caregiver across Ontario in 2022/23 year. For more information, or to register, please visit www.cwice.ca/training

Selected feedback:

"Very grateful for this information."

"Great training. Trainers are experts in their field."

"I learned who to call and contact in case I have a child in my care that needed help."

"The importance of early intervention and raising immigration concerns as soon as possible."

February 2022

As the end of the year approached, the service project teams worked to review the accomplishments of the year as well data and trends analysis. All service projects integrated identity-based data and the annual report focuses on disaggregated data by gender, race and other identities to better understand outcomes. The full annual report outlines findings from the service projects, including the **Immigration Status Project**.

The Immigration Status Project reports annually data on the immigration status for all children in out-of-home care with Peel CAS. This includes children and youth in kinship service placements, foster care, youth on voluntary youth service agreements or living independently, as well as young adults receiving continued support for youth. For the first time, the project shared additional identity features (i.e. self-identified race) for the children, youth, and young adults receiving service who are not yet Canadian citizens. This is ground breaking work that the project team encourages all agencies across Ontario and Canada to participate in.

March 2022

CWICE celebrated the first graduating cohort of training participants to complete the 8-course CWICE certificate training program for child welfare professionals. One participant shared:

"This was a great training, a lot of information and digestible. Child protection agencies should make this training available to more staff to increase their knowledge within the agency and in the community."

Registration for training can be found on the [CWICE website](http://www.cwice.ca), in addition to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Some highlights from training include:

- Launch of Foster Caregiver training in January 2022
- Successful completion of [Course 101 evaluation](#)
- Provided 24 sessions with a total attendance of 352 individuals
- Individuals joined from 11 organizations across three provinces (Ontario, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan).
- Since its launch, CWICE has provided a total of 300 hours of training

CWICE SERVICES ›



Our Impact – In the Community

Hear from Child Welfare Professionals & Families

“Did CWICE make a difference to a child, youth or family?”

“Youth estranged from her family of origin and I had the privilege to see how excited she was taking the oath of citizenship.”

“On behalf of the family,
thank you!”

“Yes. It gave the child a new lease of life!
Brought a sense of hope, as we wait for a response.
They helped support completing documents to remain in Canada and remain safe.”

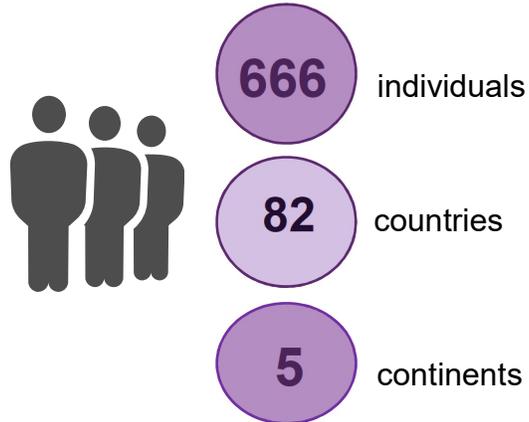
“Eased anxiety for youth.
Absolutely.
They helped me write a letter of support for the family so the children could see their grandparents for the first time in a couple of years.”

“The CWICE service made a significant difference to the entire family.
The parent was at risk for deportation, which put the entire family's stability in jeopardy and would have negatively impacted 4 very young children.”

All the CWICE Service Recipients

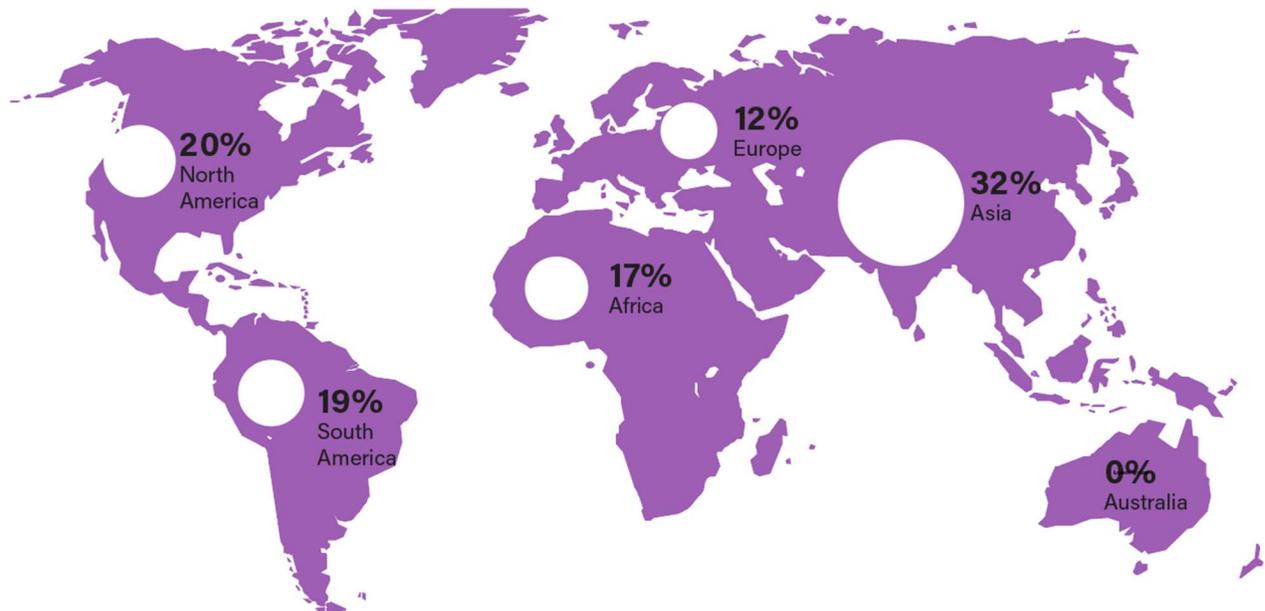
Within the CWICE programs, we recognize and celebrate the identities of service recipients. To promote a thorough understanding of identities, we recommend child welfare workers use identity-based data tools, and ask individuals and families about their immigration status, migration stories, and experiences.

Across all the CWICE service types in 2021/22, we worked with:



Continent of Origin

Clients* across brief services and child welfare services



*N = 649; 17 clients had unconfirmed country of origin

**For more information
and to make a referral
to CWICE**



Email: CWICE@peelcas.org

Phone: 905-363-6131 Ext 2222

Website: www.cwice.ca

**Thank you for supporting children, youth and
families in Canada and abroad!**

