



**CWICE ANNUAL  
IMPACT REPORT  
2023/24**



## Foreword from the CEO

It is with great pride that I introduce the CWICE Annual Impact Report for 2023/24. The past year has been characterized by considerable growth and remarkable achievements. Our organization has adeptly managed the increasing demands for our services and set new standards in advocating for the most vulnerable.

Our strides in policy development, our collaborations with key organizations, and our direct services have effectively embodied our core values and strategic vision. This report highlights our steadfast commitment to excellence and our broad impact across various areas.

I am deeply grateful to our community partners and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for their indispensable support in our efforts. Looking ahead, fueled by our past successes and the challenges we've faced, we are ready to expand our influence and deepen our impact.

Together with our partners, stakeholders, and the communities we serve, we share a commitment to fostering inclusive and supportive environments for everyone. We are excited to continue this journey, united in our mission and vision.

Mary Beth Moellenkamp  
Chief Executive Officer  
Peel CAS

# Introduction

For us, 2023-24 was a year of significant advocacy, from the individual and family levels to community and national spheres.

We're thankful to have had the opportunity to implement Ontario's new regulations, specifically 156/18, that centre identity and the importance of immigration status for children and youth. This helps us improve outcomes when individuals are in out-of-home care. Last year, families were our largest client group referred for service. We're happy to have played a key role in advancing regularization of status, often on humanitarian grounds, for entire family units. This assists in maintaining children and youth's permanency with their parents/caregivers within Canada.

**“Invisible threads are the strongest ties.”**  
– Friedrich Nietzsche

We've also continued to work alongside regional partners in Ontario planning for and coordinating multiple mass migrations. We're continuing to collaborate with agencies receiving arrivals from the Afghan Initiative, to the Ukrainian visa holders, and to the recent wave of asylum seekers.

Earlier in 2023, we published recommendations that pave the way for Canada to be a Best-in-Class Leader ensuring the rights and protection for Unaccompanied and Separated Children arriving in Canada. We maintain that this is vital work, and we continue to champion efforts to implement our recommendations.

Recently, we extended our advocacy efforts to the Senate of Canada. In December, CWICE representatives testified about the positive impact Bill S-235 would have on the lives of children and youth in out-of-home-care across Canada. To read more, and stay up to date, about the progress of this Bill, which proposes changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and Citizenship Act, please visit [www.cwice.ca](http://www.cwice.ca)

We recognize there is a lot happening globally, with wars, humanitarian needs, and climate-related issues. We recognize our collective advocacy will need to continue in coming months and years. We know we can't do this work alone and hope to work alongside you in these efforts.

*Liz Okai and Danielle Ungara*  
*Managers, CWICE*

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# Training and Outreach Impact

## CWICE Training Program

Claudia Obreque, Child Welfare Immigration Specialist/Training Lead

CWICE continues to raise awareness about the intersection between child welfare, immigration, settlement, integration, and border related issues. We know, every year, the Canadian population continues to grow due mostly to immigration. A recent report from Statistics Canada indicated that in 2023, Canada had the highest annual population growth since 1957, a notable growth of 3.2%<sup>1</sup>. Hundreds of thousands of people enter Canada every year, some as temporary residents, others as permanent residents, and we know that many new immigrants seek permanency in Canada by becoming Canadian citizens. The different types of immigration status will determine the type of access to services a person will have in Canada. In our work, we see families where each member may have different types of immigration status. These, and many other issues, such as the pre-migration and migration experience may impact children, youth, and families differently. CWICE provides training to build capacity and ensure these complexities are integrated in case planning.

## The Certificate Program for Child Welfare Sector

In June 2024, CWICE will reach its fourth year of providing the CWICE training series to the child welfare sector. The CWICE Certificate Program is an eight-course series, delivered virtually over eight months, one course per month over two half days.

Evaluation feedback:

“It is an eye opening. Before taking this training, I did not realize how their immigration situation could have an immense impact on our client's life”

I learnt “the complexity of the immigration system, the different phases people can be in, the challenges/gaps in services when people are at early stages of the process, how long the process can take, the significant challenges and barriers this creates for families as a result”

### CWICE Certificate Program (Course List)

Introduction of the Canadian Immigration System & Intersection with Child Welfare

Refugees Part 1: Asylum Seekers & Denied Claimants

Refugees Part 2: Unaccompanied and Separated Children

Humanitarian & Compassionate Grounds Applications for Permanent Residence

Refugees Part 3: GARs and Privately Sponsored Refugees

Placements Across Borders, Family Sponsorships and Economic Immigration Streams

Temporary and Unresolved Immigration Status

Creating & Ensuring Equitable Outcomes in Child Welfare

## Certificate Training Program Highlights

- ◆ This fiscal year, total **attendance reached 373 child welfare professionals** for the CWICE Certificate Program, the highest attendance to date.
- ◆ Three classes graduated from the CWICE Series Certificate Program.
- ◆ Ten child welfare organizations across Canada attended the CWICE certificate series, including participants from four provinces: Ontario, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan.
- ◆ The CWICE Series Certificate Program had an **88%** evaluation response rate, including:
  - **96%** indicating the training provided a better understanding of the intersection of child welfare & immigration;
  - **96%** found the trainers knowledgeable about the subject matter;
  - **93%** found the information provided in the training relevant to their role; and
  - **92%** reported the information provided was easy to understand.

The 2023 /2024 training data shows module 101 was the most attended, with 175 total attendances. The data also shows that 24% of participants continued to attain higher education with 12% taking all 8 courses and graduating from the program. We have heard from participants that the lack of training funding within their agencies is the main obstacle preventing them from continuing with the training certificate. At the same time, training feedback continues to highlight the importance of CWICE trainings to enhance capacity building in the child welfare sector, including:

*“Excellent training, this should be mandatory for everyone involved in direct service in child welfare”.*

*“This is a very important course that helps us as child protection workers assist families to navigate through their immigration process and ask the right questions at the beginning of our interactions with families”*

## Leadership Highlight

CWICE has been providing training to child welfare professionals since June 2020. This year, we welcomed York Region Children’s Aid Society’s (YRCAS) entire staff group to the first module of the CWICE series. York region has seen an increase in their immigrant population. The agency’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team graduated from the CWICE Certificate program previously and understand the importance of the CWICE training series. YRCAS has taken a leadership role in ensuring this training was available to all of their staff, with the aim to increase their knowledge in response to the issues they are seeing as service providers. Their staff shared the following feedback:

Evaluation  
Feedback

*“This is essential information, given the demographics in our community and how much it continues to change over time.”*

*“Information was helpful in understanding the wider impacts, as well as the specific challenges within York Region and our demographics.”*



## Foster Caregiver Training

We recognize and honour the important role Foster Caregivers play in the lives of children in out-of-home care. This year, CWICE provided the CWICE Foster Caregiver course to participants across Ontario. We were happy to welcome participants from two agencies for the course. Foster Caregivers continued to share positive feedback, with an 80% response rate in the evaluation, including:

*“The training was very helpful”*

*“Very informative”*

*“Training was very interesting, information was very helpful, and I have gained experience in different status of immigration”.*

## New Course Launched for Service Providers Outside Child Welfare

In CWICE, we know we cannot do this work alone. This year, a new curriculum was developed for professionals working in other social services sectors, particularly those who collaborate regularly with child welfare professionals. As service providers, we are all working towards achieving equitable access and outcomes for clients. This can often be achieved through building networks, creating partnerships across all sectors, so we can improve service delivery and ensure families, children and youth are well supported to be able to integrate and thrive in our society.

### Building and Bridging Together: A Focus on Child Welfare, Immigration and Settlement

In February 2024, CWICE launched the first training designed specifically for professionals working in settlement, health, education, legal, and other social service sectors. This course introduces the intersection between child welfare, immigration, settlement, and border-related issues. With a focus on collaboration, this module offers opportunities to build and foster relationships and partnerships across sectors, while promoting the need to achieve equitable outcomes for all children, youth and families.

In the first course offered, nine organizations participated, representing the settlement, legal, education, housing, immigration, and mental health sectors. Participants attended from three provinces: Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan. Attendees shared their feedback, including:

*“Staff should understand that we could help our clients (especially new immigrants) better when we understand their pre-migration, migration, and post migration experience”*

Evaluation  
Feedback

*“The knowledge gained in the CWICE training is very important. I would encourage everyone to take this training”*

*“We need this, as the dynamics of immigration of refugees is continuously changing, as [we are] living in the Prairies where there is limited funding and information for refugees and people who work with them”.*

## Training Summary

The chart below outlines the total attendance per training course/program, number of training event sessions provided, and total hours of facilitated training this past year. In comparison to last year, which was already a successful and voluminous year, nine more sessions were added involving 64 more hours of facilitated learning to an additional 58 attendees.

<b>April 2023 to March 2024 CWICE Training Summary Data</b>			
	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Sessions</b>	<b>Hours</b>
<b>CWICE Series (101 to 108)</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>Foster Caregivers</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Building &amp; Bridging Together</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>19 organizations participated in the CWICE trainings from 5 provinces: Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan</b>			

Chart 1

Attendance is calculated on successful attendance during entire training hours (2-half day sessions totaling 6 or 7 hours depending on course)

Combined with the previous three years, since we launched the training program, the chart below outlines the total impact of training across the last four years.

<b>June 2020 to March 2024 CWICE Training Summary Data: 4 Year Totals</b>		
<b>Training Attendance</b> <b>1438</b>	<b>Training Sessions</b> <b>104</b>	<b>Training Hours</b> <b>724</b>
<b>24 organizations across 6 provinces have attended CWICE trainings: Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island &amp; Saskatchewan</b>		

Chart 2



## CWICE Outreach Program

Ghezal Wallid, Data & Research Coordinator & Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

This past year, the team provided **50** presentations in person and virtually, to **2163** individuals. Most presentations focused on providing an overview of CWICE services, although several specialized presentations were provided. Highlights from the year include:

- ◆ Testifying at the Senate of Canada regarding Bill S-235 to amend the citizenship act
- ◆ Speaking at N4’s *Unveiling the Invisible: Exploring Intersections in Child Welfare and Immigration* webinar
- ◆ Hosting two community and legal roundtable discussions with Senator Mobina Jaffer
- ◆ Speaking to settlement providers and researchers across Western provinces & territories
- ◆ Participating as panelists at *From Precarity to Security: Navigating Pathways to citizenship for Children & Youth Involved in Child Welfare – Border(ing) Practices Forum*
- ◆ Speaking at Peel CAS’ March Mingle event
- ◆ Hosting a webinar on Voluntary Youth Service Agreement trends with the Office of the Children’s Lawyer
- ◆ Speaking at the Child Welfare League of Canada’s national webinar
- ◆ Speaking at CUIAS’ settlement providers event regarding unaccompanied and separated children (CUIAS: Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Services)

Audiences included refugee families, child welfare professionals/workers/supervisors, Canada Border Services Agency officers, social work students, and various non-child welfare staff including settlement workers, health, education, legal, community professionals and researchers. We were also able to speak to Senators from across Canada. The chart below outlines the audience engaged in specific regions across Canada, from the various outreach presentation provided.

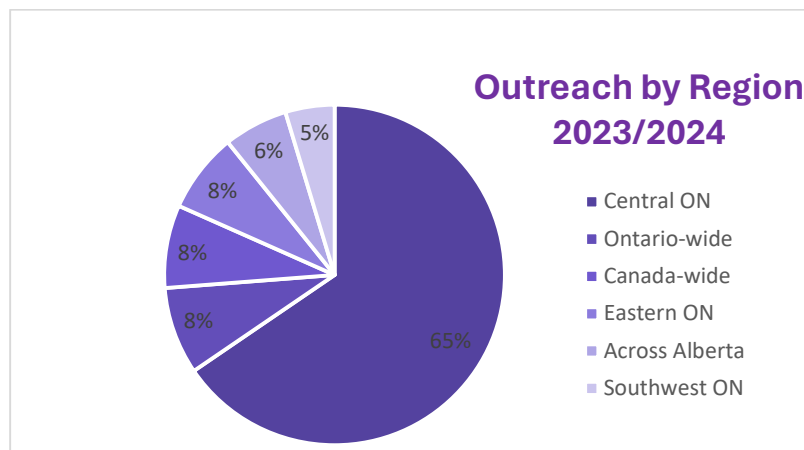


Chart 3

As the end of this fiscal year marks the close of the sixth fiscal year, we can reflect on the impact CWICE team members have had over the years. Between 2018 and 2024, in total, we’ve now provided **over 200 presentations** to an incredible **8919 individuals**.

## Measuring Outreach Impact & Success

This year, we received feedback from a survey sent to outreach presentation recipients.

Highlights of the feedback include:

- ◆ 88% of respondents shared:
  - The information provided was both understandable and beneficial.
  - They gained a clearer comprehension of CWICE services.
- ◆ 84% would contact CWICE when working with a client with immigration status issues.
- ◆ 76% felt the information presented was useful in their role.

Though not generalizable, due to response rate under 20%, the feedback is consistent with evaluations from previous years, when response rates were higher.

In the comments sections, a few responses requested more guidance when supporting youth turning 18 because respondents recognized refugee claims and citizenship processes may continue beyond this age. Other notable comments include:

Evaluation  
Feedback

"The presentation was very informative, thank you"

"Great service and great information shared during this session"

"Thank you for providing us info on such a great and much-needed service".

"I hope to see this one day in Manitoba"

"CWICE has provided great expertise with case consultations, and has answered all my questions"

"CWICE is a valuable resource for child protection workers!"

### Outreach Success from Reception Centres

Rosario Elmy, Child Welfare Immigration Specialist

CWICE continues to deliver presentations in collaboration with Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, for the refugees they support in Peel Region. During our presentations, we highlight information about child welfare and social services in Ontario. We also engage in discussions with settlement staff and families. Our approach is to work alongside settlement workers, providing a more integrated approach for families.

When we attend reception centres, we also remain on site to complete assessments. This includes advocacy on behalf of families to ensure they access the services they need. One of the barriers we've seen over the past year is that families are remaining at the reception centres much longer than anticipated due to a lack of affordable housing. We've also seen an increase in families arriving with children who have disabilities, health, complex, and special needs. At times, these families require more services coordinated in the first month of arrival for their children. Families have told us that they find this to be a helpful dialogue as they begin settling in Canada. As we move into the upcoming year, CWICE will continue delivering presentations both in person and virtually, supporting and guiding newly arrived families.

## Communications & Connections

Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

This year, we continued to share information on the website with the goal of building greater awareness: [www.cwice.ca](http://www.cwice.ca). The website offers background information on the Centre of Excellence, news articles from the team, publications including data and reports, training information and registration, resource centre, and a web form to submit referrals. More recently, we've added a page for our upcoming conference in June 2024 entitled: *Global Horizons in Child Welfare and Immigration: Bridging Borders and Building Futures*. With funding from Peel Children's Aid Foundation, we aim to engage multiple stakeholders at this event.

[Conference \(cwice.ca\)](http://www.cwice.ca)

As well, CWICE has continued to share information through its monthly e-newsletter *Across Borders*. Over the past year, we've implemented a sign-up for our newsletter on the website and have also increased our reach from 1,118 individuals in April 2023 to 1514 individuals at the close of this fiscal year. Of note, we've only had 7 individuals unsubscribe during the past 12 months. We've also seen an increase of 10% in newsletter opening rate, from April to the close of end of year, and will look to further increase engagement rates next year.

## Partnership and Research Impact

Liz Okai, Manager, CWICE

As partnerships and collaboration continue to remain key and important features in the work of CWICE, we continue to leverage opportunities for better outcomes not only for the children, youth, and families we serve but also for capacity building both within and outside child welfare.

In 2023, we met a new partner, the National Newcomer Navigation Network (N4), which provided us a national platform to provide a webinar to professionals from different backgrounds and organizations across Canada. We all share a common goal of ensuring that Canadian newcomers have equitable experiences navigating health and social services during their settlement process.

CWICE had the opportunity to bring the intersectionality of child welfare, unresolved immigration issues, and settlement to many, who otherwise have not contemplated these ideas. Additionally, the network offers capacity-building initiatives and training opportunities for service providers to enhance their knowledge, skills, and cultural competence in serving newcomers. This includes training on trauma-informed care, anti-racism, diversity and inclusion, and intercultural communication. Due to this partnership, N4 has welcomed CWICE's Co-Managers, Danielle Ungara and Liz Okai, into its esteemed membership of reputable and knowledgeable professionals.

## Research Updates

Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

This past year we finalized a research project, in collaboration with Toronto Metropolitan University and the Rights for Children and Youth Partnership. This research is part of a larger project entitled *Immigration, Child Protection Processes, and the Best Interest of the Child*. The research explored children and youths' experiences when involved with the immigration and child welfare systems in Ontario. The findings relate to interviews with 14 individuals and one focus group consisting of six professionals in 2021, across child welfare, settlement, legal, and social services. The research team is currently exploring opportunities to disseminate findings this upcoming year.

Managers Liz Okai and Danielle Ungara, and Data & Research Coordinator Ghezal Wallid, continued to be on the Research Advisory Committee for the Border(ing) Practices project. This is a multi-year project, funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, between University of Toronto and University of Victoria. Following its completion of phase one policy analysis, the team hosted a policy forum event successfully held in March 2024. Currently in the second phase of research, the research team has conducted over 40 interviews with people who work in child welfare, and other sectors, across Ontario and British Columbia. While analysis is occurring, the team has started recruiting those with lived experience to participate in the project and new interviews are underway. Recently, the team created a resource, entitled *Children with Precarious Status Fact Sheet*, because they heard feedback that folks doubted children were in Canada with precarious status.

In January 2024, we embarked on a community-based research project with partners Peel Newcomer Strategy Group and Peel Multicultural Council. Funded by Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada, this project is titled *Digital Equity and Inclusion in Settlement Services for Newcomers in Peel Region*. Recognizing the transformative shift to digital service provision for all our organizations in the last several years, this project aims to comprehensively explore digital access, identify barriers, and examine perceptions and experiences. CWICE has been collaborating internally with Trailblazer Youth Centre to explore a Research Assistant joining the research team. The project recently received ethics approval from the Community Research Ethics Office, and the research will begin this spring/summer. We aim to ensure this project contributes to inclusive enhancements to settlement services, with wider application for all service providers, and ensure services align with the diverse needs of new immigrants in the digital age.

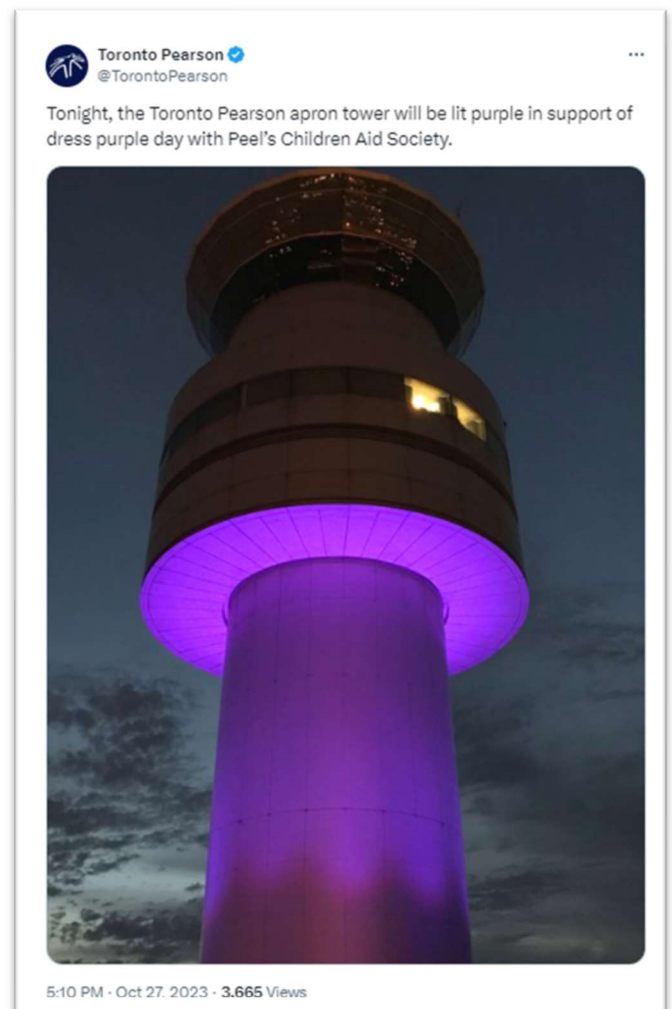
Last, but not least, CWICE was recently invited to join an upcoming national research project being led by a research team at Dalhousie University. We look forward to the opportunity to join this new, multi-year, national project.

## New Non-service Requests

Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

Over this past year, CWICE managers have had an incredible opportunity to meet many new service providers, policy makers, and professionals. Unrelated to service requests, we've received 198 new non-service requests in 2023/24. Selected examples include:

- ◆ Requests to develop seamless processes for other agencies to apply for passports for children/youth;
- ◆ Funding requests - to offer letters of support or collaborate on funding submissions including for research projects;
- ◆ Interview requests from media;
- ◆ Data requests including information related to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) among others;
- ◆ Invitations to events;
- ◆ Consultation with MCCSS on legislation review;
- ◆ Hosting a meeting of the Interagency Working Group on Minors with CBSA and the Unaccompanied and Separated Minors Coalition, of which CWICE is a member.
- ◆ Requests to participate in, or promote, research within our networks;
- ◆ Student placement and learning opportunity requests;
- ◆ Meeting with new organizations and looking for opportunities to collaborate;
- ◆ Consulting with agencies as stakeholders during their strategic planning;
- ◆ Coordinating with agencies around practices and processes to better support UASC;
- ◆ Endorsements for groups/organizations' advocacy, policy, and legislative positions;
- ◆ Attending meetings to coordinate services for newly arrived asylum seekers; and
- ◆ Liaising with Toronto Pearson International Airport for Dress Purple Day (pictured).



**We remain grateful for the opportunities to connect with so many during this busy year!**

# Service Impact

Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

As a unique Centre of Excellence, CWICE professionals are deeply imbedded in service. This enables us to have an ‘on-the-ground’ understanding of service needs and trends, then use the observations and knowledge to inform training, policy development/consultations, partnerships, and research initiatives. This year has been a groundbreaking year, and for the first time, we received over 700 referrals.

In 2023/24, we collectively responded to **779 referrals**, and provided a range of child welfare and brief services to **1,340 individuals**. This represents an 18% increase in our services year-over-year. Since our launch in 2018, we’ve now responded to **3,342 referrals** (chart 4 below).

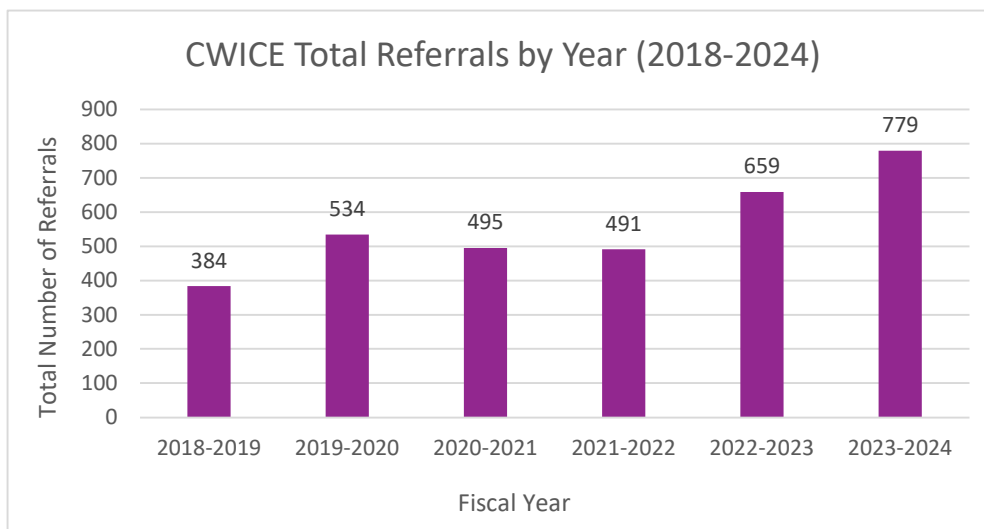


Chart 4

## Successes: Ring the Bell Moments

Ghezal Wallid, Data & Research Coordinator

Over the past year, CWICE staff have celebrated 30 ‘ring the bell moments’. More than twice a month, we collectively ring a bell celebrating successful outcomes. Inspired by colleagues at Global Affairs Canada, each ringing of the bell marks a significant achievement in our work to support clients' journeys, often years in the making, toward successful immigration outcomes. Through careful preparation and expert guidance, CWICE team members navigate the complex immigration process and provide tailored solutions for our valued clients.

Notably, CWICE was directly involved at the time when 15 individuals finalized their pursuit to obtain citizenship. We also celebrated the securing of permanent residency for 5 additional individuals/families and celebrated 4 individuals/families’ positive decisions at their refugee hearings. Furthermore, within this timeframe, CWICE facilitated additional notable achievements - two youths were awarded educational scholarships, one successfully repatriated to Canada, and another was repatriated/reunified with their parents. Another achievement included our participation in media interviews, including a CBC radio interview of Liz Okai and French Press interview of Danielle Ungara and Loubna Zouggari.

While our work is far reaching, and many folks achieve success after we close their files, we know we’ve helped along the pathway to success for many others. At times, we hear back from those individual and ring the bell for them. For example, one client conveyed appreciation through a heartfelt letter, acknowledging CWICE's invaluable support in settlement matters and helping them address their mental health challenges. These accomplishments highlight CWICE's inclusive approach to addressing diverse immigration needs with sensitivity, our effectiveness, and these examples underscore CWICE's commitment to comprehensive advocacy and personalized client support.



## Child Protection Services

Liz Okai and Danielle Ungara, Managers, CWICE

Over the past year, child protection workers at CWICE have continued to provide service across Peel Region. Often complex and multi-layered intersectional work, this year we responded to **152 new referrals**, providing direct service to **523 individuals**.

Today, most of Peel Region's residents were born outside Canada<sup>2</sup>. According to Statistics Canada, nearly 1 in 4 people across Canada were born outside the country<sup>3</sup>. Although our team cannot provide service to all children, youth, and families with intersecting immigration and settlement needs at Peel CAS, our wider team consisting of Child Welfare Immigration Specialists offer consultations to Peel CAS staff and wider networks of child welfare professionals across Ontario.

This year our referral sources were public health (24.5%), law enforcement (23%), community organizations (14.5%), parent-self referrals (10.5%), child welfare professionals (8%), CBSA (6%), GAC (5%), Education professionals (4.5%) and settlement agencies (4%).

The top 3 reasons for CWICE involvement were due to intersecting settlement needs (49%), immigration status issues (22%), and requests related to cases abroad/repatriations (19%). At the time of referral, the main child welfare needs related to requests for assistance including consultation and prenatal services (31.5%), requests for counselling (17%), risk of separation of child/youth from parent/caregiver (16%), risk of harm by omission/neglect (12.5%), and concerns related to caregiver capacity (12.5%). Other concerns related to risk of emotional harm, family conflict, and risk of physical/sexual harm (totaling 10% combined).

The intersecting service needs were as diverse last year, as was our client's identities. This year, we continued to support clients with a

### Child Welfare, Settlement, and Housing Success Story

Mohamed Shaw, Child Protection Worker

The Society began providing services to a family after receiving a call from a shelter counselor. The mother and children had fled intimate partner violence in another region of Ontario. After my initial meeting with the family, I met with the shelter worker to discuss collaborative strategies to help the family find safe and more permanent housing. The mother expressed multiple barriers to accessing services, including challenges as a new immigrant family and a lack of knowledge in navigating inter-regional systems. Additionally, the mother did not speak English.

Together, we assisted the family in applying for subsidized housing across Peel and four other regions in Ontario. We provided a supporting letter to be attached to their application and advocated for its prioritization. While awaiting approval, I continued to meet with the family to discuss their needs and support them further. About five months later, we learned that the family's housing application had been approved, requiring a move to a new region. We had prepared for this transition, and I met with the family the month they moved. The mother was overjoyed to be moving into her own home, a place where she could prepare their preferred foods and truly begin their settlement in Canada.



range of immigration status, outlined in chart 5 below. The largest group of service recipients were asylum seekers.

Immigration Status – Child Welfare Service Recipients  
(N=523)

Immigration Status at Child Protection Opening	Percentage
Refugee Claimant (Asylum Seeker)	25%
Canadian Citizen	22%
Permanent Resident	18%
Temporary Resident - Visitor Visa	11%
No Status in Canada	9%
Temporary Resident - Work Permit	4%
Convention Refugee	3.50%
Unconfirmed	2%
Denied Refugee Claimant	2%
Temporary Resident - Student Visa	2%
Not yet in Canada/Left Canada	1.50%

Chart 5

**Child Welfare, Immigration, Health Care Success Story**

Gillian Tennyson, Child Protection Worker

The Society began providing services to a family after a nurse at the hospital referred a mother caring for four children on her own. All were newly arrived in Canada. The nurse indicated that the family could benefit from various supports, as the mother was battling advanced cancer. With no family in Canada to care for her children, she was making plans for their future. Over the next few months, I collaborated with the hospital, hospice, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), social housing in Peel Region, schools, and a shelter to ensure comprehensive support for this family. Our goal was to ensure they had access to the necessary community supports.

This mother is strong, hopeful, an excellent parent, and truly inspirational. Despite undergoing chemotherapy, radiation, and managing her pain while receiving discouraging news from doctors, she remained hopeful and fiercely advocated for herself and her children. The children attended school regularly and they are a very close-knit family; all while settling into life in Canada.

The family was granted priority housing and ODSP benefits. One child was connected to a hospital for ongoing medical treatment, and all the children received therapy from the hospice. Together, they began planning for their future in Canada. We are pleased to report that the family received a positive outcome at their Refugee Hearing seven months later, which was a joyful experience for them. Observing the mother's journey – filled with strength, pride, and unwavering hope - has been profoundly educational for me. I am privileged to continue supporting her and her family on their journey, celebrating their achievements and admiring their resilience and strength.

# Consultations

Alicja Grabarczyk and Yvonne Dewornu-Keys, Child Welfare Immigration Specialists

This year, we managed the intake process for **627 consultation requests**, over 15% increase from last year. The vast majority of referrals (71%) came from 31 child welfare agencies across Ontario, which is also an increase from 27 agencies last year. The main reasons for CWICE consultations included: Immigration inquiries (51%), cases abroad (12%), citizenship inquiries (12%), and settlement needs (12%).

More than ever, we are observing an international dimension in our daily work. What happens around the world impacts us here, and our centralized consultation center has truly become an international hub as we close our sixth year. This past year, we've received a significant number of calls concerning children abroad. Examples include a parent abroad concerned about their child's care while studying in Canada, an aunt worried about their nephew in foster care abroad, and a grandmother seeking to bring her grandchildren to Canada after they were placed in foster care abroad.

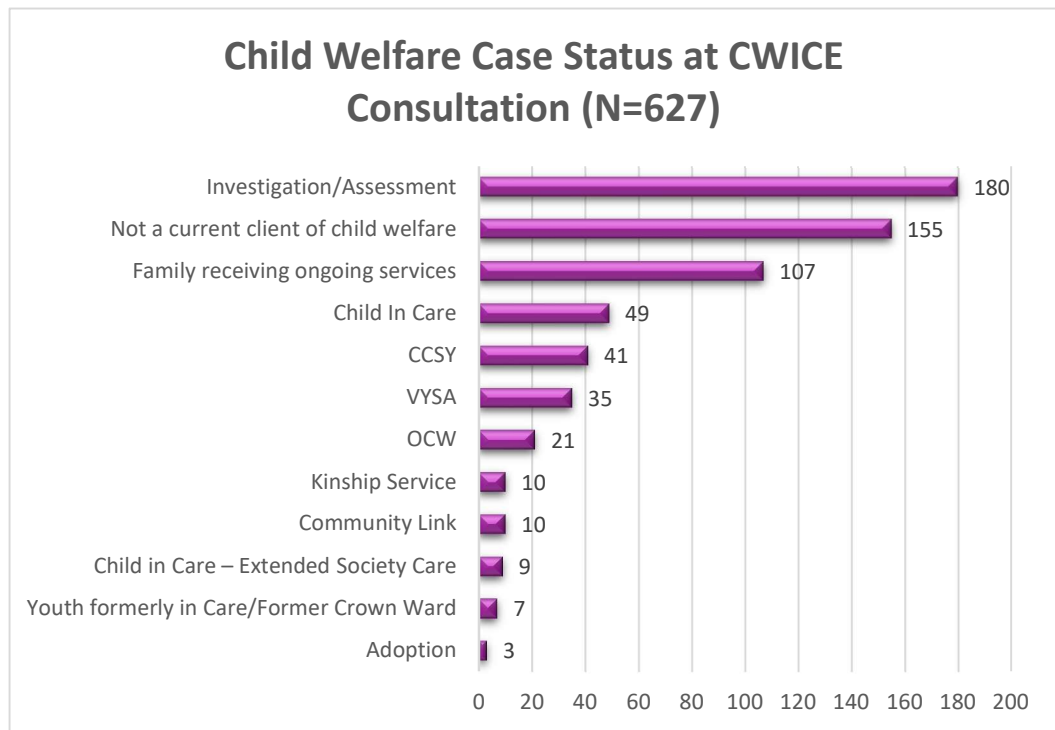
Additionally, we encounter a diverse array of issues in the requests we receive. Sometimes individuals contact us directly for assistance due to their own family situations. For example, a father called us concerned about his children's welfare after his deportation. He explained that he is the primary caregiver and must leave Canada in a few weeks. Other urgent types of requests involve unaccompanied and separated children. One instance involved a 13-year-old arriving in Canada to seek asylum, with a family member meeting them at the border. The child's parent was believed to be already in Canada, and planning for reunification was necessary.



Many children, youth, and families supported are living in the community.

Over 75% of our referrals include those with no involvement in child welfare and those receiving voluntary service. (chart 6).

In this upcoming year, we're looking forward to expanding our consultation responses and including digital booking system.



## Brief Services

Ghezal Wallid, Data & Research Coordinator and Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

Immigration Status – Brief Service Recipients  
N=817 (chart 7)

Immigration Status at Brief Service Opening	Percentage
Permanent Resident	24%
Canadian Citizen	24%
Refugee Claimant (Asylum Seeker)	20%
No Status in Canada	8%
Temporary Resident – Visitor Visa	6%
Temporary Resident – Work Permit	4%
Convention Refugee	4%
Denied Refugee Claimant	3.5%
Unconfirmed	3%
Temporary Resident – Student Visa	2.5%
Not yet in Canada/Left Canada	1%

Consultations can take a few days to a few months. Of the 627 consultation requests outlined in the previous section, hundreds required further service. This year, **381 brief services** were opened to support children, youth, families, child welfare professionals and agencies across Ontario. On average, brief services this year remained open for approximately 10 months until a

pathway was established to fulfill the original request. The work of the Child Welfare Immigration Specialists resulted in support offered to **817 individuals**, with diverse immigration status (see chart 7 above).

## Service Evaluation

At CWICE we regularly evaluate the effectiveness and impact of our services. After closing brief services, participants are sent a survey and may provide feedback. This year, we had a 16% response rate which means the feedback, while valuable, cannot be generalized. We observed an increase in the feedback directly from clients this year, representing 17% of our respondents, while the rest are child welfare professionals. Child welfare organizations, and more specifically lawyers and supervisors, played an important role in identifying when staff needed to consult CWICE. The main reasons for referrals to CWICE included immigration status inquiries, followed by requests for information about citizenship.

All respondents (100%) affirmed that CWICE Child Welfare Immigration Specialists demonstrated proficiency in managing their requests. Similarly, all respondents (100%) acknowledged that the CWICE team promptly responded to their inquiries, and 96% agreed that CWICE services were beneficial to them. The overwhelming majority (97%) would recommend CWICE to their colleagues, demonstrating a high level of satisfaction with the service. While one respondent indicated they might recommend CWICE to a colleague, respondents expressed interest in staying connected to CWICE through attending training session and would like to see more presentations and receive e-newsletters.

Most significantly, and importantly, all respondents (100%) indicated that CWICE made a significant difference to children, youth, and families in various ways. Examples provided were facilitating reunification, providing access to resources/information, supporting individuals obtain permanent residency or citizenship, connecting individuals to legal representation, obtaining government IDs, letters and advocacy for unresolved issues, and mitigating risk of deportation.



## Service Feedback Highlights:

"Excellent service, very knowledgeable and helpful staff, thank you."

"I am very grateful that you exist as it is such a complex process that I know very little about."

"The child is thankful for the help and guidance."

"Both [children] obtained their PR card, then citizenship. One was extremely happy to register for driver's ed"

"We were able to obtain necessary documents so the youth could work, attend college, and attend a family trip out of the country"

"It was helpful to have a worker who was knowledgeable in this area connect directly to my client and the guidance that was provided to me on how to best support the family"

"CWICE support made a HUGE difference to 4 little children who love their father very much and did not want to see their father deported due to unresolved criminal issues. A father's relationship with his children was not severed due to the support/advocacy from CWICE!"

"Definitely made a difference. [Child] was excited and proud to know he is now a Canadian citizen"

### International Borders and Reunification Success Story

Rosario Elmy, Child Welfare Immigration Specialist

CWICE received a referral to assist a mother of four, all of whom are Canadian citizens. Two of the children were living in Canada with their father, who was financially supporting his family both in Canada and abroad. However, after becoming critically ill, he was no longer able to continue this support. His wife attempted to apply for a visa and renew her children's Canadian passports but faced significant difficulties navigating the system abroad over several months.

During this time, CWICE was contacted by a child welfare worker to assist the family. CWICE coordinated with Global Affairs Canada and IRCC to renew and obtain the travel documents needed to reunite this family. Without CWICE's support, it is very likely that the mother and older siblings living abroad would not have had the opportunity to see their spouse and father during this critically important time.

We are happy to report that all four siblings and their mother have reunified and continue to support one another and the father's healthcare needs.



# Service Projects

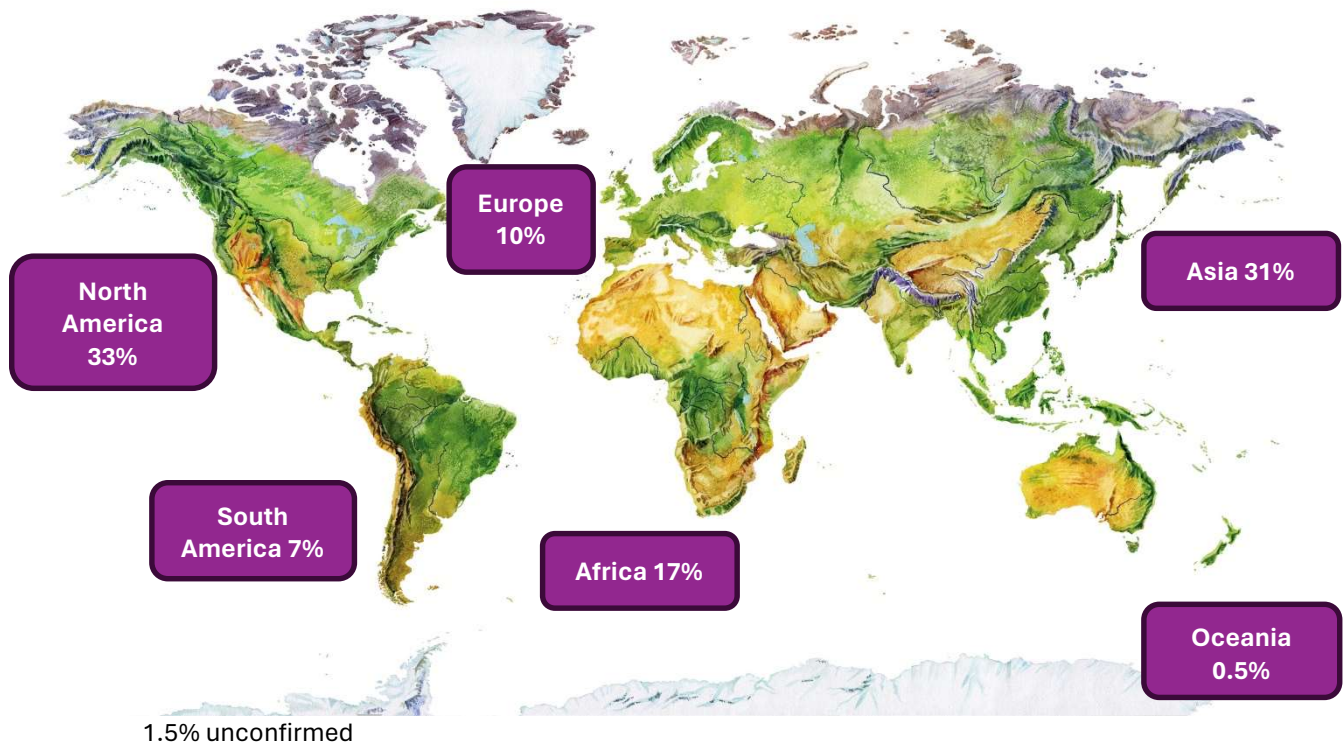
## Immigration and Citizenship Identities

Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

This year, CWICE clients totaled 1340 individuals receiving child protection and brief services. Our clients were connected to a **record-breaking 92 countries across 6 continents**.

### CWICE clients by continent of origin, 2023/24

N=1340



## Immigration Status Project

Celistine Frampton and Fatima Mukai, Child Welfare Immigration Specialists

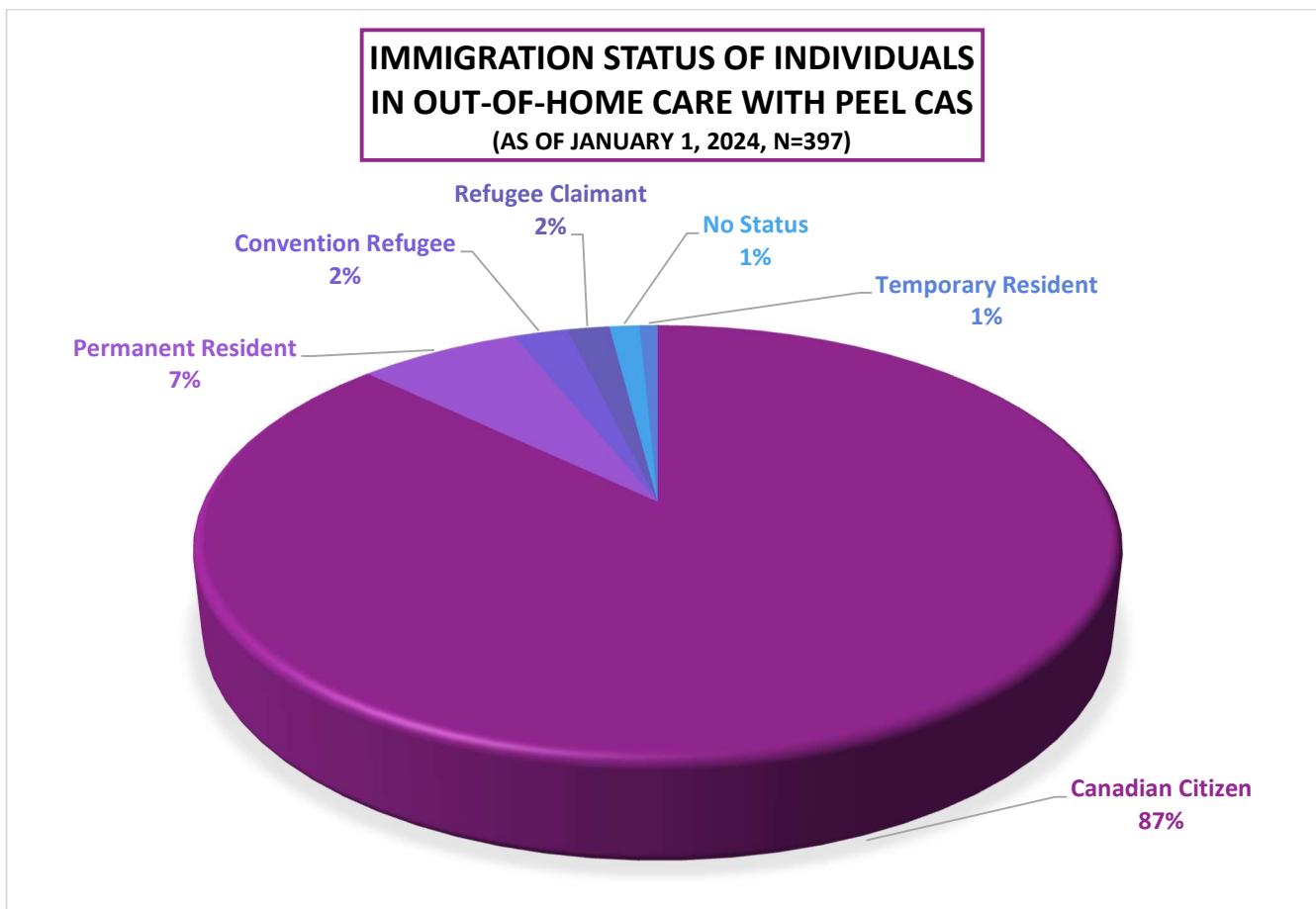
As CWICE commemorated its 5<sup>th</sup> year, the new *Ontario Quality Standards Framework to Improve Quality of Care for Children and Young Persons in Care* came into effect. This was a significant milestone for the child welfare system in Ontario. We are proud to report that Peel CAS has consistently been ahead of the curve. Since CWICE's inception, we have annually gathered and analyzed information related to the place of birth, immigration status, and citizenship of every child and youth in out-of-home placements.

Our point-in-time analysis continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of this ongoing commitment. It is crucial that every child and youth in out-of-home placement has a plan for

resolving any unresolved immigration issues – a requirement now codified in the regulations. Similar to last year, the Immigration Status Project this year again identified a small number of children and youth (less than 1%) experiencing precarious status in Canada. We are pleased to confirm that they have a plan in place to resolve issues, in line with Ontario Regulation 156/18, which mandates that Societies take appropriate steps to obtain identity documents and regularize a child’s immigration status within specific time frames.

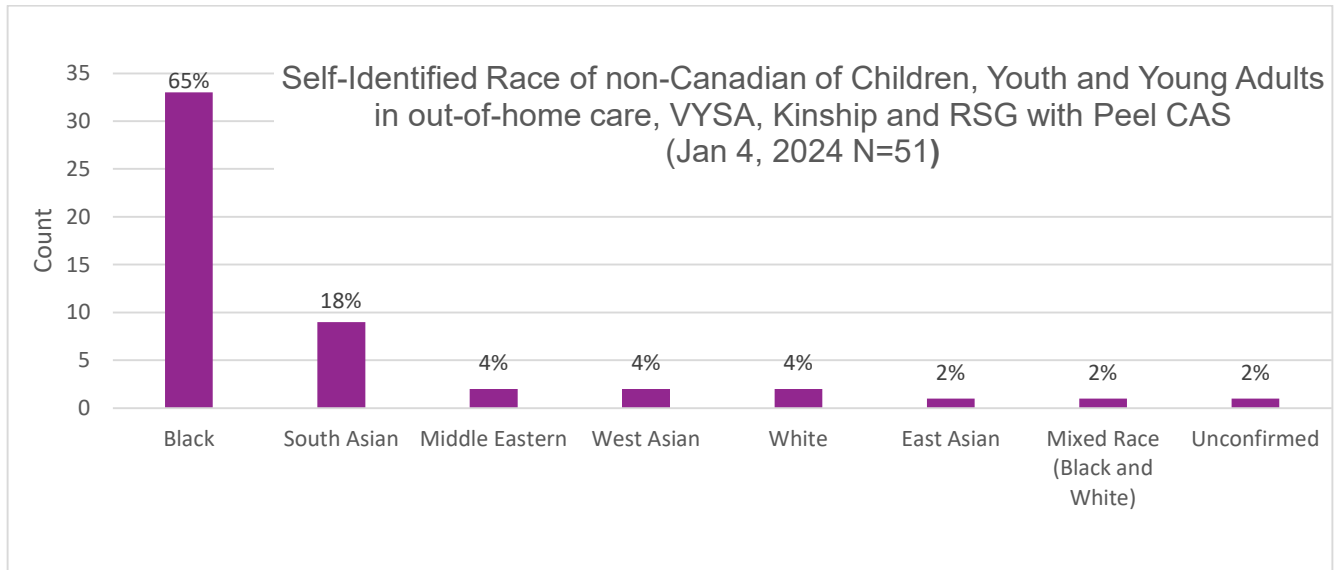
We continue to urge our colleagues across the province to accurately document and review the immigration status of the children and youth in all out-of-home placements. Resolving immigration status issues can significantly enhance their access to services, education, and future professional opportunities.

Each year at Peel CAS we analyze immigration status of each individual living in out-of-home care. Last year, our point-in-time analysis based on data available on January 1, 2024, included 34 youth receiving Voluntary Youth Service Agreements (VYSAs), 103 children/youth in kinship service placements, 129 children in care, and 131 individuals received Ready, Set, Go<sup>4</sup> (formerly Continued Care and Support for Youth). Our review revealed that 87% are Canadian citizens, 7% are permanent residents, 2% are protected people (ie. Convention Refugee), 2% are asylum seekers, 1% are temporary residents, and 1% have no status in Canada (chart 9 below).





Additionally, we discovered that among the individuals who are not citizens, 51% identify as boys/men, 47% as girls/women, and 2% as gender non-conforming. We also conducted a review of the self-identified races of each non-Canadian citizen receiving out-of-home services with Peel CAS, as detailed in chart 10 below.



At Peel CAS, we remain committed to regularizing immigration status and embrace citizenship as integral to permanency planning. Over the years, we have developed and refined our processes concerning obtaining and storage of identity documents. We continue to collaborate and innovate in these areas. Currently, we are in consultation to develop ID clinic to ensure ongoing support for the children, youth, and young adults we serve. Additionally, we have integrated processes and procedures that bolster this commitment.

### Citizenship Success Story

Celistine Frampton, Child Welfare Immigration Specialist

This year, I eagerly awaited the opportunity to ring the bell for a young woman named J, who had finally been granted Canadian citizenship. She was previously in care and one of our first clients at CWICE. Now, I know what you might be thinking: Did it really take almost six years from the time we started working with her to the point she was granted citizenship? No. J is one of four siblings, all of whom are now Canadian citizens and were supported by CWICE. Initially, J shared that she was not mentally prepared to proceed with citizenship. However, by 2022, she felt ready for personal reasons and became very invested in the process.

J is resourceful and stayed in contact with me over the months following her application submission, and she regularly requested updates. She had hoped to be granted Canadian citizenship much sooner than what transpired. In our final weeks working together, J began to monitor the status of her application on the IRCC's website and eventually contacted IRCC directly, which led to her receiving a date for her oath ceremony. She continued to keep in touch, eagerly anticipating her citizenship certificate, and soon after, she obtained her passport. During this period, J worked tirelessly, even contacting me after hours due to her eagerness to join her family living abroad. I could sense how much she needed this to happen quickly. Within a few days, she had her passport in hand and immediately sent me a photo. She thanked me for my help, for being patient when she was persistent, and for assisting her in a timely manner. I'll never forget the text she sent me:

**"I am a citizen, girl. It only took me 10 years."**

### Summary of Bill S-235 & CWICE role

Danielle Ungara, Manager, CWICE

In early 2022, Senator Jaffer proposed Bill S-235 in the Senate of Canada. We have long advocated for incorporating citizenship into permanency planning for children and youth. We are proud of the many children, youth, and young adults we have helped obtain citizenship over the last six years, and we recognize that there is still more work to be done. This Bill gives us hope that we will be able to support all referred individuals more swiftly in the future. Liz and I were pleased to consult on this important Bill with Senator Jaffer’s team and UNICEF Canada in May 2023.

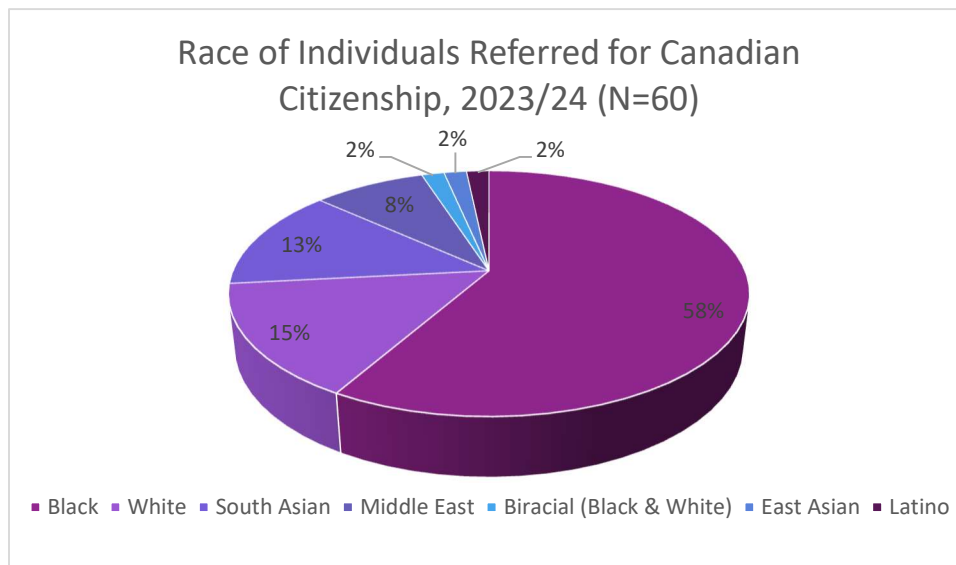
In September 2023, Peel CAS’ CWICE co-hosted two highly productive roundtable discussions with Senator Jaffer and invited experts. Bill S-235 aims to amend the Citizenship Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to facilitate seamless access to citizenship for individuals formerly in foster care. CWICE team members Fatima Mukai, Alicja Grabarczyk, Rosario Elmy, Liz Okai, and Danielle Ungara shared their knowledge and experience at these discussions, along with other invited subject matter experts.

In December 2023, Peel CAS CEO Mary Beth Moellenkamp and CWICE team members Liz Okai, Fatima Mukai, and Danielle Ungara formed a panel and testified before the Senate of Canada’s Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology in support of the proposed Bill. We highlighted its potential positive impact on the children, youth, and young adults we serve. The Bill continues to make its way through the Senate. For more information, please visit [SenVu \(parl.gc.ca\)](https://www.parl.gc.ca)<sup>5</sup>

### Citizenship Project

Abimbola Fajobi and Abimbola Oyeyinka, Child Welfare Immigration Specialists

In 2023-2024, CWICE received **60 new citizenship inquiry referrals** from 13 agencies across the province. Of these, nearly 48% were for individuals under 18 years old, while just over 52% were for those over 18 years of age. The individuals supported by Child Welfare Immigration Specialists predominantly self-identified as girls/women (71%), while 27% were boys/men, and 1.5% were gender non-conforming. In terms of race, 58% of those referred identified as Black, followed by 15% as White, 13% as South Asian, 8% as Middle Eastern, 2% as Bi-Racial (Black & White), 2% as East Asian, and 2% as Latino (see Chart 11).



The CWICE Citizenship Project continues to explore the best ways to support children, youth, young adults, and those formerly involved with agencies across Ontario. We receive referrals from Ontario's child welfare agencies, as well as community professionals, and individuals who need assistance navigating their citizenship process.

Since April 2023, most individuals supported by CWICE have successfully completed their citizenship knowledge tests, attended interviews to verify documents, and participated in oath ceremonies. For all cases where the oath ceremony was completed virtually, the affirmation of citizenship was immediately facilitated and sent to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). As a result, Citizenship Certificates are available for download within 2 to 5 business days.

Since CWICE's inception in 2018, we have responded to a total of **236 requests to support** individuals seeking Canadian citizenship.

We aim to continue supporting individuals through their citizenship processes, recognizing that these can sometimes be quite complex. Challenges that may extend the process often include the absence of original identity documents, ongoing criminal matters, or complex emotional/physical health needs. In our work, we continue to collaborate with community partners to overcome these barriers with the ultimate goal of individuals obtaining citizenship, which we promote as part of the permanency planning for children and youth.

#### Citizenship Success Story

Celistine Frampton, Child Welfare Immigration Specialist

I began working with A when I first became a Child Welfare Immigration Specialist. Unfortunately, A did not have proper identification and faced difficulties obtaining them due to COVID-19 restrictions. A is a young woman who had been in care and had recently given birth to her first child. I was patient and worked at her pace, committed to doing everything possible to ensure she was granted Canadian citizenship, for which she was eligible. She expressed gratitude for the support received.

We encountered several hiccups along the way, and sometimes, obtaining her citizenship was not her top priority. Whenever possible, I stepped in on her behalf to keep the process moving.

We finally reached the last step, and I felt some relief for her. A few days before she was scheduled to attend her virtual oath ceremony, A informed me she was expected to give birth soon. When I asked if she wanted to reschedule the ceremony, she insisted on attending as planned. She successfully completed the oath ceremony. Shortly after, her newborn fell ill, and she needed to tend to them. Acting quickly—because the oath form needs to be submitted within 24 hours—I notified Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, who accommodated her situation. A was able to focus on her newborn and achieve her citizenship. We are all delighted with this outcome, and she is now a proud Canadian citizen.

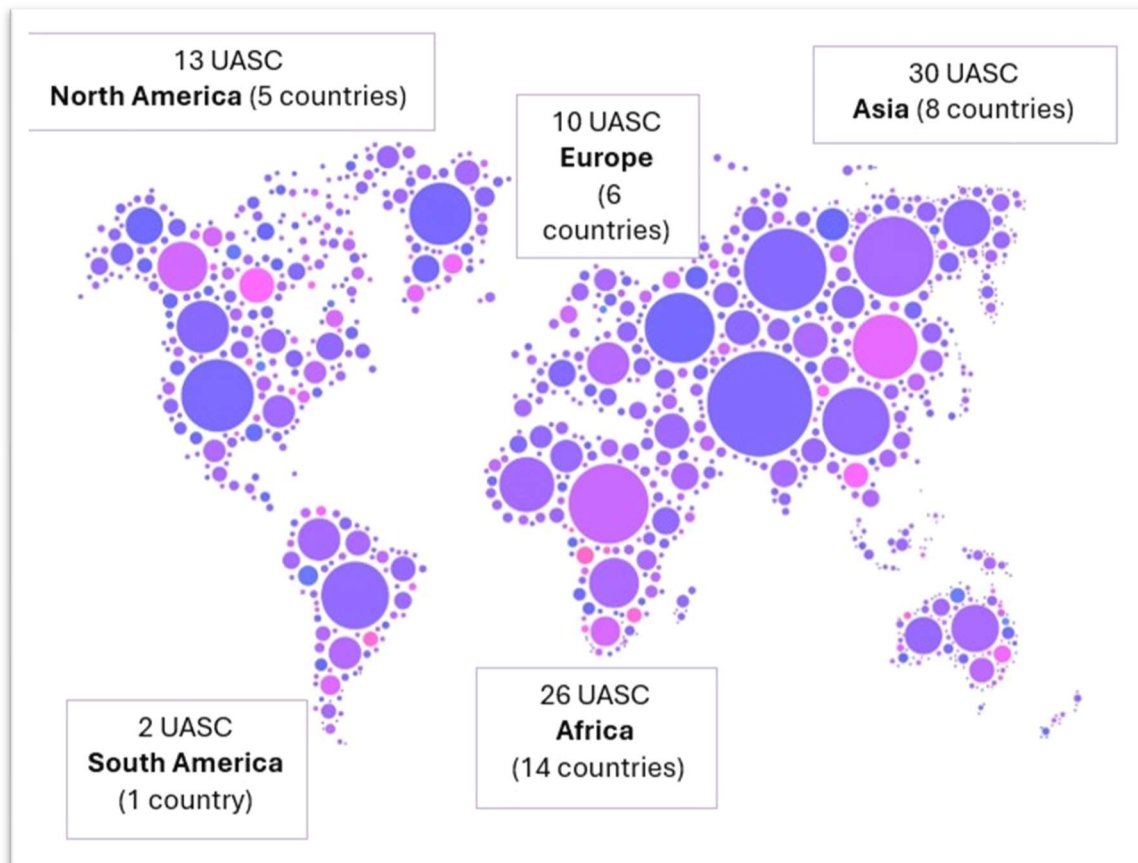
## Unaccompanied And Separated Children (UASC) Project

Mandisa Sifelani and Loubna Zougari, Child Welfare Immigration Specialists

This year, we observed trends indicating an influx of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) from Africa and Asia. This can be attributed to the ongoing wars and conflicts in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Afghanistan. Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, we received **100 referrals for UASC**. Although this number is lower than last year, we continue to believe it does not fully reflect the total presence of all UASC in Ontario, as many remain undetected by service providers and are not captured in our data. Nonetheless, our data remains the only benchmark in Ontario.

Just over half of the UASC self-identified as boys/men (56%), while 37% identified as girls/women, and 1% each identified as intersex and other (5% did not wish to disclose their gender identity). Nearly half of the UASC were asylum seekers or refugee claimants (45%), followed by permanent residents (12%), citizens (7%), and CUAET visa holders (5%). We also worked with several UASC who had no status or were temporary residents. As outlined in previous reports, UASC represents a particularly diverse group. Beyond their immigration status in Canada, the individuals we supported this year originated from **34 countries across five continents**.

### Unaccompanied and Separated Children: Continent of Origin 2023/24 (N=100)



(19 unconfirmed)

Additionally, the UASC supported by CWICE represent a diverse range of racial backgrounds. Thirty one percent (31%) of referred UASC identify as Black, 19% as South Asian, 11% as White, 8% as Latino, and 6% as Middle Eastern. Additionally, we had a small percentage, under 5%, identify as West Asian and East Asian. Over the past six fiscal years, CWICE has now responded to referrals to support **over 406 UASC**. We continue to explore ways to support and streamline services for UASC.

## Repatriations and Reunifications Project

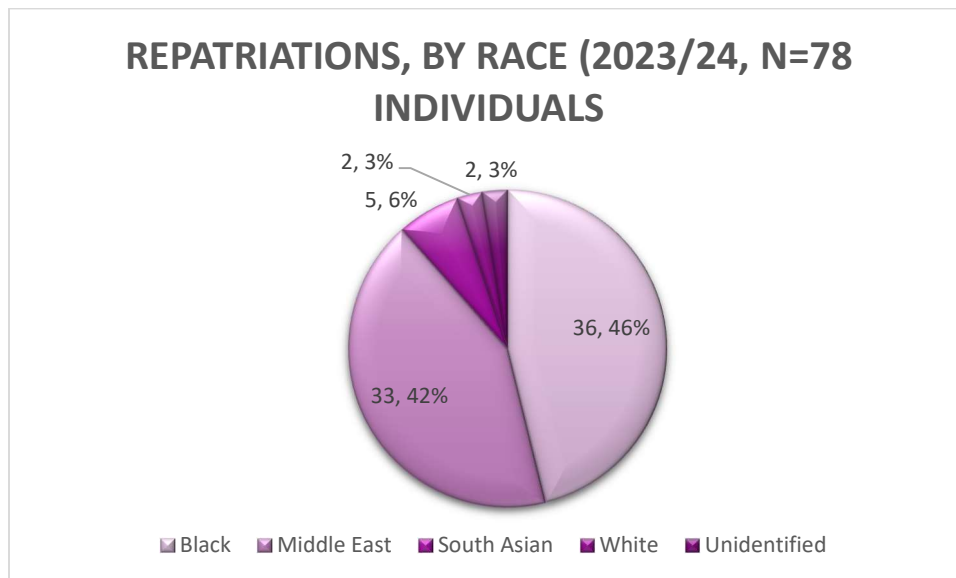
Thomas Abraham and Zrinka Buric, Child Welfare Immigration Specialists

CWICE has been working collaboratively with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) for the past ten years<sup>6</sup> to ensure the safe return of children, youth, and families who find themselves in unsafe circumstances abroad. In 2022, CWICE became a consultant to GAC, and throughout 2023/24, we continued to work closely to facilitate smooth transitions for those arriving at Toronto Pearson International Airport.

CWICE offers comprehensive pre-arrival, arrival, and post-arrival planning services. Together with GAC, we also coordinate with other partners, such as Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA). To support post arrival needs are met for children or youth and their families, CWICE liaises with community and other child welfare partners. Post-arrival services include securing education, health care, identity documentation, and housing, which are essential for integrating into life in Canada.

The global context is a critical factor in our work. In the spring of 2023, unrest and armed conflict in Darfur, a region of Western Sudan, led to a significant number of referrals from GAC concerning families planning to return to Canada. Almost half (44%) of the referrals this last year involved families returning from Sudan. Upon their arrival, CWICE supported 13 families at the airport. In addition to families arriving from Sudan, we also provided post-arrival support to families arriving from other countries, including one family escaping family violence.

Of the **38 referrals this year**, most related to families however **21% involved individual children or youth needing to return to Canada alone**. Out of these, three children/youth were repatriated, while others found safety with alternative caregivers outside Canada. In total, CWICE's support in 2023/24 helped **78 individuals**. These individuals were connected to two primary regions: Africa (47%) and the Middle East (32%). Of the 78 people referred this year, just over half (56%) identified as girls/women and 42% as boys/men. To further understand identities, we collected data on their racial backgrounds (chart 12 below).



The staff at CWICE centre uphold principles of diversity, equity and inclusion in all our services. We recognize the extensive connections Canadian citizens and residents have overseas. This year, we’ve seen conflicts, wars, and climate change-related issues impact many people, necessitating the repatriation of individuals from various regions around the world including Israel, Gaza, and Haiti. The CWICE team is proud of the collaborative relationships we’ve maintained with GAC, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), and child welfare agencies across the country.

Over the last five years, since 2019, **we’ve supported 86 repatriation referrals**. We continue to tailor our services to meet the needs of diverse service recipients. As we move into the next fiscal year, we will persist in providing support and expertise in helping Canadian families - especially children and youth - escape potentially dangerous situations abroad, ensuring they are well supported in their communities upon their return to Canada.

#### Repatriation Success Story

Rosario Elmy, Child Welfare Immigration Specialist

CWICE successfully assisted a 15-year-old permanent resident with her repatriation to Canada. Although this type of work typically involves Canadian citizens, in this case, the youth was taken abroad by her family without being fully informed of her situation. She was left without her identity or travel documents and was unable to return to Canada on her own. Fortunately, she reached out to her school, which then contacted a child welfare agency. This agency, in turn, connected her with CWICE for assistance.

Thankfully, she had extended family members who were able to travel to her location and care for her temporarily, as she did not possess the necessary travel documents to meet exit control requirements. Leveraging our ongoing relationship with GAC, CWICE began the pre-arrival services. With the collaborative efforts of CWICE, ISS Canada, GAC, and CBSA, this young person has now successfully returned to Canada.



## Settlement Project

Danielle Ungara and Liz Okai, Managers, CWICE

This year, we continued to participate in the Service Delivery Network in Peel Region to coordinate settlement and integrated services.

As community partners, we have developed a community hub map (attached), in efforts to streamline information for those needing services.

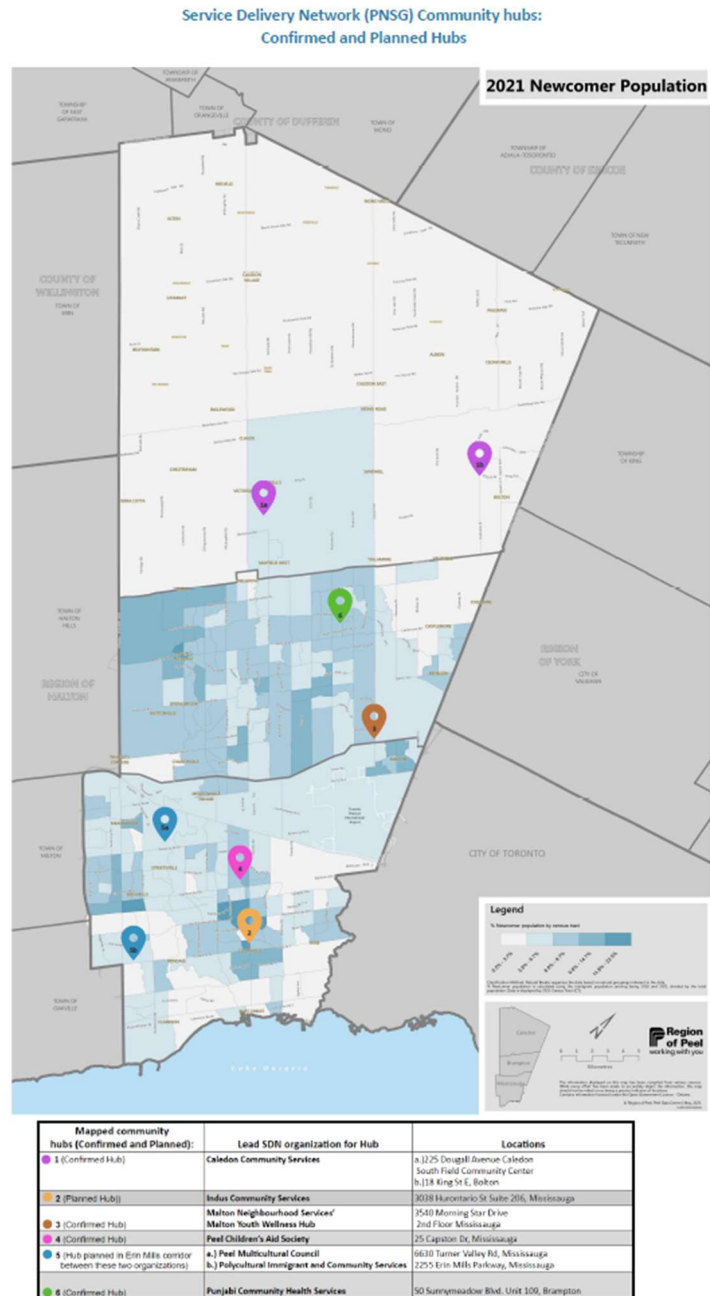
Also, we continue to be members of the Regional Resettlement Planning Table.

This group, of over 40 organizations across the Greater Toronto Area, meets monthly to discuss and coordinate services across Ontario.

Like situation tables, this group can mobilize to meet more frequently and has, at times, met weekly.

The focus throughout much of 2023/24 has been to support asylum seekers as many municipalities needed to coordinate services with one another, with provinces, and with the federal government.

Examples of this work include coordinating services when asylum seekers moved as a group from Montreal after entering at Roxham Road, to Ontario and needed temporary housing in hotels across the province.





## Closing Summary

Prasad Nair, Director of Youth Success and Innovation

As the Director of CWICE, reflecting on the past year fills me with immense pride in our collective accomplishments and the profound impacts we have made. Our team has met a record number of referrals and driven significant advancements in policy and practice within the child welfare and immigration sectors. Through our innovative training programs, vital partnerships, and unwavering advocacy, we have fortified our foundation and broadened our reach, ensuring that children, youth, and families have the robust support they require to navigate their complex realities.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to advancing our mission and enhancing our services to meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve. We are determined to continue this critical work, aiming for a world where every individual can thrive in safety and dignity. In my own words,

"Every child and youth we work with carries a unique story across borders and cultures. At CWICE, we dedicate ourselves to ensuring their rights and dreams are respected and nurtured, bridging the gap between worlds to build brighter, inclusive futures."

Together, we strive for a world that embraces every story and nurtures every dream.

## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (2019). *Report on Peel Newcomers*. Retrieved from [pnsg\\_2019-report-on-peel-newcomers\\_v1-6\\_interactive.pdf](https://peelnewcomer.org/pnsg_2019-report-on-peel-newcomers_v1-6_interactive.pdf) (peelnewcomer.org)
- <sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada (2022). *A Portrait of Citizenship in Canada from the 2021 Census*. Retrieved from [A portrait of citizenship in Canada from the 2021 Census](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98-646-x/2022001/article/00001-eng.htm) (statcan.gc.ca)
- <sup>4</sup> Ontario Newsroom (2023). *Ontario Connecting Youth Leaving Care with Supports to Succeed*. Retrieved from [Ontario Connecting Youth Leaving Care with Supports to Succeed | Ontario Newsroom](https://www.ontario.ca/news/ontario-connecting-youth-leaving-care-with-supports-to-succeed)
- <sup>5</sup> Senate of Canada (2023). *Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology*. Dated December 6, 2023. Retrieved from [SenVu](https://www.sen.vu.ca/sen-vu/parl.gc.ca) (parl.gc.ca)
- <sup>6</sup> Ungara, D. (2024). *A 25-year journey: CWICE History*. Retrieved from: [A 25-year journey: CWICE History](https://www.cwice.ca/history)

### **Additional documents used for reference:**

CWICE Annual Reports:  
[Publications \(cwice.ca\)](https://www.cwice.ca/publications/publications-archive)  
<https://www.cwice.ca/publications/publications-archive>

Data Standard Tools:  
[Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/page/anti-racism-data-standards-order-council-8972018)  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/anti-racism-data-standards-order-council-8972018>

