

Strength to Change Lives

Children's Aid Foundation of Canada
Strategic Plan 2020-2025



YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVISORY COUNCIL 2019-2020

“I believe there are four words more powerful than ‘I love you,’ and those are ‘I’m here for you.’ I’m not just a client or a number; I’m a human and I need to be cared about.”

- Former youth in care and recipient of support from Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada

CONTENTS

Strength to Change Lives	1
About Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada	2
Kate’s Story	3
Our Priority Populations	4
Strategic Vision and Priorities	9
The Future Starts Now	17
Board of Directors	17

Strength to change lives

For over 40 years, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada has been at the forefront of the intersection between philanthropy and social impact.

Driven by a shared vision to improve the lives of the most vulnerable young people in our country – those involved with the child welfare system – our ever-growing community of donors, child welfare agency partners and stakeholders has worked tirelessly to help empower hundreds of thousands of children and youth with the resources they need to thrive.

Over the decades, we have witnessed the true potential of generosity and partnerships to ignite change – for the youth we serve, for public awareness and for the system as a whole. But there is still so much work to be done.

In 2020, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is at a pivotal point in its history. Now a national charity with scope and impact across Canada, we are poised to leverage the power of philanthropy, innovation and collaboration in ways that will permanently transform the lives, experiences and outcomes of young people involved with the child welfare system – from coast to coast.

On the heels of our successful \$60 million national campaign for child welfare, Stand Up for Kids, we have now identified the strategic priorities that will guide us through the next five years and beyond with focus, direction and determination.

Our newly defined priorities all share a singular goal: to ensure that every young person involved with the child welfare system in every part of Canada has every opportunity to thrive.

Just like the young people we serve, our strategic priorities will evolve, grow and shift with the changing landscape of the child welfare sector. We are committed to regularly revisiting them, adjusting as we go to maximize our impact for Canada's most vulnerable children and youth.

None of this work would be possible without the enduring compassion, dedication and generosity of our donors and stakeholders. Thank you for being by our side on this journey, every step of the way.



Valerie McMurtry

Valerie McMurtry, CFRE
President & CEO



Daniel Barclay

Daniel Barclay
Chair, Board of Directors



Gordon G. Raman

Gordon G. Raman
Past Chair, Board of Directors

About Children's Aid Foundation of Canada

Our vision

- To create a future, together with our donors, partners and stakeholders, in which the children and youth we serve have the strength and resilience to build a lifetime of their own unstoppable success.

What we believe

- We believe that every young person in every part of Canada deserves every opportunity to thrive.

What we do

- Through the transformative power of philanthropy and partnerships, we help young people involved with the child welfare system go from surviving to thriving.

Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is our country's leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth involved with the child welfare system. We raise and grant funds and design and deliver a wide range of high-impact programs and services in partnership with [over 100 child- and youth-serving organizations](#) across the country – including the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, our founding partner and North America's largest board-governed child welfare agency.

Recognizing that vulnerable children and youth require supports that extend well beyond what government funding can provide, we are committed to creating access to the tools and resources young people need to move confidently forward and create a bold vision of success for themselves.

Only together can we help empower kids involved with the child welfare system to break the cycle of abuse and neglect and achieve their greatest potential.

Kate's story

At just 10 months old, Kate was hospitalized for congestive heart failure – a result of being severely malnourished due to the extreme neglect she was experiencing at home. Behind on most of her developmental milestones, she was unable to even hold her head up.

Kate was removed from her family home and placed in foster care until her mother was able to take her back. Then, when she was four years old, her mother left the family and Kate came into the permanent care of the child welfare system.

During her time in care, Kate lived in three different foster homes. Although she had positive experiences in care, she says that she always struggled to find her place in the world.



“The biggest challenge for me was feeling like I didn’t belong,” says Kate. “People know you’re not adopted, but they don’t really understand your situation. It was a struggle of identity for me.”

Eventually leaving foster care to live on her own at the age of 15, Kate says that she faced judgment and stigma from her community and the people in her life. “Living on your own as a teenager is interesting: people look at you differently, like you did something bad,” she says. “There are so many stereotypes placed on you, which impacted my confidence and identity even more.”

Despite the obstacles she faced, Kate was determined to build a better life for herself. With scholarship funding from Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada to support her academic goals, Kate was able to focus on graduating from high school and enrolling in university. In June 2020, Kate graduated from Brock University with her Bachelor of Science degree in medical sciences. This fall, she will be attending Lakehead University to pursue her BSc in nursing, with a goal to become a nurse practitioner and eventually work with underserved populations.

“The Foundation’s funding and the programs it offers really help us have the same opportunities as other kids to build our support networks and grow,” says Kate. “Yes, it’s money that helps us financially, but it’s so much more than that.”

ERINE, TROY, ELI AND SAMIDHA, FORMER YOUTHS IN CARE AND MEMBERS OF CHILDREN'S AID FOUNDATION OF CANADA'S YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVISORY COUNCIL



Our Priority Populations

Who are the young people we serve?

Together with our stakeholders – donors, child welfare partners, youth advisors, government partners and peer non-profit organizations – Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada is committed to improving outcomes for young people involved with the child welfare system.

The young people we serve represent three distinct priority populations facing unique and complex challenges and needs.



Children and families at risk

- Nationwide, 235,000 children and youth living with their families are considered at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment and are under the close watch of child protection agencies.¹



Children and youth living in government care

- 63,000 young people across Canada are living in foster homes, institutional settings or with extended family as a result of abuse, neglect or abandonment.²



Youth transitioning out of care

- Each year, approximately 2,300 youth “age out” of the child welfare system, suddenly confronted with navigating life on their own – sometimes as young as 18.³

By leveraging the power of philanthropy and partnerships, and through strategic investments in evidence-based programs and resources, we are helping to empower the young people we serve to move forward with strength, health, resilience and hope for a brighter, bolder future.

Children and families at risk



We believe that children should be raised by strong and resilient families, not the government.

When child welfare agencies remove children from their families and place them in government care, it is always to protect them from abuse, neglect or abandonment and ensure their health and safety. Yet without the unconditional and ongoing love and support of a family to call their own, children and youth who grow up in care are more likely to experience poor academic, social, employment and health outcomes compared to their peers.

We know that children do best when raised in loving, caring forever families. Unfortunately, too many families across Canada are struggling with complex issues and circumstances that are putting the well-being of children at risk. Poverty is a leading factor contributing to family instability, with low-income households more likely to experience food insecurity, mental health challenges, substance use issues and domestic violence.^{4,5}

Together with our community of donors and partners, we are committed to helping vulnerable families find stability and thrive - ensuring that fewer children and youth grow up in the care of the child welfare system.

WHAT DO WE FUND?

- Early intervention programs that aim to support family strength and permanency and prevent or address family challenges such as domestic violence, intergenerational trauma, parenting skills, mental health issues, substance use and more
- Access to emergency support for basic necessities
- Support for health, wellness and enrichment-related needs
- Financial support for vulnerable families living in poverty to help them provide resources for their children, such as tutoring, school supplies, camp and other extracurricular activities

- Access to identity-based programming that aims to strengthen Indigenous families by helping children, youth and caregivers re-connect with their culture and traditions, and develop new life skills.

IMPACT

Stronger, more resilient families and a nation in which fewer children and youth enter into or grow up in care.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Journey to Zero

Co-designed by Children's Aid Foundation of Canada and Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Journey to Zero is an innovative early intervention program that aims to reduce the number of children growing up in government care.

With a goal to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable families to provide nurturing care and build healthy, sustaining relationships, Journey to Zero is delivered through unique partnerships with George Hull Centre and YouthLink -- leading community-based agencies working directly with children and their parents.

The program offers family partnership meetings, intensive in-home supports for adolescents, access to early engagement teams and other targeted approaches that help to empower families with the tools and resources they need to stay together. It includes a robust evaluation component to enable the partners to monitor its impact and potential for scaling.

Journey to Zero was developed in partnership with Generation Capital and is supported through the collaborative efforts of private and government funders.

Children and youth living in government care



We believe that children and youth in care should graduate from high school at the same rate as their peers and pursue lives of unlimited opportunity.

Right now, over 63,000 children and youth across Canada are living in foster homes, institutional settings or with extended family. These young people have experienced abuse, neglect or abandonment and have been removed from their families to protect their safety and well-being.

While Canada's child welfare agencies do everything in their power to help the young people in their care thrive, children and youth who grow up in care are significantly more likely to experience adverse outcomes compared to their peers – particularly when it comes to their education. For example:

- Just 46 per cent of young people in care graduate from high school, compared with 83 per cent of the general population.⁶
- As many as 82 per cent of children in care have been diagnosed with special needs.⁷
- On average, a child living in foster care will move five times – with each move uprooting them from their school, friends, activities and communities.⁸

Without a high school diploma, and struggling with the impacts of instability and trauma, these young people face a lifetime of lost potential, underemployment and low income – a reality that has a ripple effect across the Canadian economy.

Together with our community of donors and partners, we are committed to helping kids in care access the tools, resources and supports they need to overcome the odds stacked against them.

WHAT DO WE FUND?

- Tutoring support
- Alternative school programs

- In-school and community-based mentoring
- Access to opportunities and supports that help with school success like technology, eyeglasses, transportation to school and educational assessments
- Enrichment programs supporting physical and mental health and well-being so that young people can focus on doing well in school
- Extracurricular activities that help young people build skills and stronger connections to their peers and communities, supporting their overall academic success

IMPACT

More children and youth from care graduate from high school and have the confidence to move forward in pursuit of their goals.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: HSBC Bank Canada National Transformation Project

The HSBC National Transformation Project is a special fund that provides a range of wraparound education supports for young people involved with the child welfare system. At the primary and secondary levels, the program helps young people in care access intensive tutoring and coaching, homework clubs, school supplies, advocacy, access to physical and mental health supports and other resources critical to their success in school.

With a goal to break down barriers to academic advancement and improve rates of primary and high school graduation, ultimately leading to post-secondary enrollment, the HSBC National Transformation Project is helping to empower Canada's most vulnerable young people with the tools they need to realize their greatest potential.

6. Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2014 . | 7. Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2011. |

8. Ontario Looking After Children 2018 Provincial Report.

Youth transitioning out of care



We believe that young people leaving care should have every opportunity to overcome the barriers they face to education and employment, develop meaningful community connections and achieve independence.

Each year, approximately 2,300 youth in care “age out” of the child welfare system – some as young as 18, depending on their province – and must leave government care.

Suddenly confronted with navigating life on their own, young people leaving care are expected to assume adult responsibilities like finding employment and a place to live, paying rent and cooking meals – often without a high school education or a support network of any kind. For many youth in transition, these significant challenges are further exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of childhood trauma.

Feeling isolated, alone and ill-equipped to manage life on their own, too many young people leaving the care of the child welfare system are simply unable to find the stability they need to create lives of their own making. For example:

- Youth from care are nearly 200 times more likely to experience homelessness compared to their peers.⁹
- Young people raised in care enroll in post-secondary institutions at half the rate of the general population.¹⁰
- Compared to the average Canadian, youth from care will earn an average of \$326,000 less income over the course of their lifetime.¹¹

Together with our community of partners and donors, we are committed to empowering youth in transition with the supports and resources they need to successfully navigate independence and establish meaningful, fulfilling lives after care.

WHAT DO WE FUND?

- Employment-readiness, internships and job placements and skill building programming

- Post-secondary scholarships, bursaries and graduation awards
- Other education-related needs, including support for short-term courses, textbooks, school supplies and application fees
- Life skills development, such as literacy, cooking and nutrition
- Mental health supports and resources
- Housing supports, including a housing navigator, furniture and rent support
- Programming focused on developing positive relationships, social supports and cultural identity

IMPACT

Stronger, healthier and more resilient young people transitioning out of care who have access to meaningful education and employment opportunities, are supported by nurturing relationships and feel equipped to navigate life on their own.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Youth Works

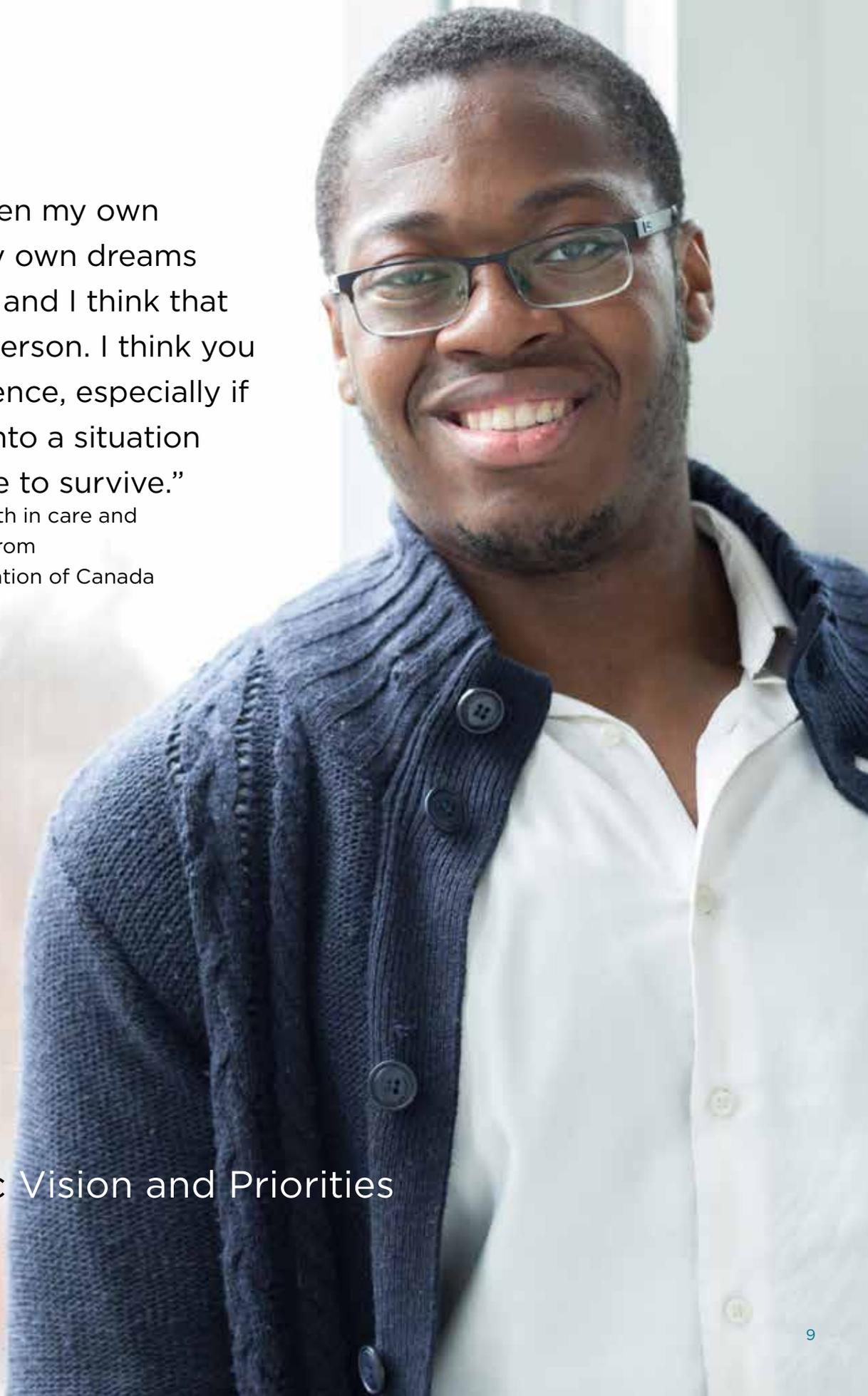
Youth Works is a pre-employment development program that helps youth in and from care transition to independence and find meaningful employment.

Developed by Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada and currently being delivered in partnership with six youth-serving organizations across Canada, Youth Works offers three integrated components: enhancing employability skills such as resume development and completing job applications; support for securing internships and job placements; and employment training supports to help young people secure key credentials needed for entry-level roles in their field.

Youth Works is generously supported by lead sponsor RBC Future Launch and Employment and Social Development Canada.

“I’ve always been my own person with my own dreams and ambitions, and I think that I’m a resilient person. I think you can build resilience, especially if you’re forced into a situation where you have to survive.”

- JUSTIN, former youth in care and recipient of support from Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada



Strategic Vision and Priorities

Strategic vision and priorities 2020-2025

As we look ahead to a future of unprecedented impact in partnership with Canada's philanthropic community, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada has identified five key strategic priorities that will sharpen our focus, empower us with financial strength and flexibility, deepen our local, provincial and national partnerships and advance our impact on our three priority populations.

Ultimately, our strategic priorities will enable us – always together with our donors, volunteers, partners, youth advisors and stakeholders – to create a future in which Canada's most vulnerable young people have the strength and resilience to build a lifetime of their own unstoppable success.

We did not arrive at these priorities on our own. Celebrating and recognizing the invaluable insights and contributions of our community, we reached out to donors, child welfare agency partners, peer non-profit organizations, academics, members of government and, most importantly, young people with lived experience. We conducted in-depth consultations with these groups to better understand the role we play, identify our strengths and weaknesses and gain perspective on our areas of greatest potential.

What we heard – and what we know – is that now is our time.

The strategic priorities we have identified will serve as our roadmap as we embark on a bold new chapter as a national organization with national scope, impact and influence. Along the way, we will carefully evaluate outcomes and measure our progress against our goals, adjust course when needed and never stop seeking feedback from our community.

Because community – and the vision we share for young people in every part of Canada – is at the heart of everything we do. Only together can we help Canada's most vulnerable kids recognize and harness their strength, resilience and inherent power to realize a brighter future.

Thank you for being by our side on this journey.

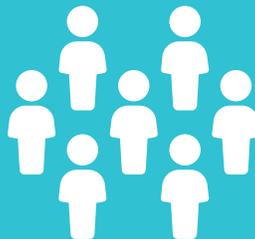
Our strategic priorities



1. Grow unrestricted revenue for financial strength and sustainability



2. Support and develop evidence-informed programs to maximize impact



3. Address the issue of overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system



4. Strengthen our capacity and impact as a national organization



5. Be a leading influencer of child welfare issues in Canada

Grow unrestricted revenue for financial strength and sustainability

To achieve our ambitious vision in support of young people involved with the child welfare system, we must first secure the long-term financial sustainability of our organization.

Through a focus on increasing undesignated funds, we will strengthen our ability to deliver on our mission, build operational resilience and have the flexibility to quickly respond to the evolving needs of the children and youth we serve.

We know our team and Canada's philanthropic community are up to the challenge. Over the past five years, our fundraising revenues have grown by 41 per cent – a direct result of the generosity and compassion of Canadians who believe deeply in our mission and vision.

But we must not stop now. By working together to achieve the strongest possible financial position for our organization, we will ultimately ensure that vulnerable young people across Canada have access to the supports and resources they so urgently need to thrive.

Key Activities 2020-2025

- Increase undesignated funds by attracting donors committed to investing in our mission through campaign activity, targeted asks to corporate and individual donors, community and annual giving programs and new fundraising initiatives.
- Launch a new campaign to rally Canada's philanthropic community around our shared vision and increase revenues across all channels.
- Engage community, philanthropic and business leaders as key volunteers to support our fundraising efforts.

- Invest in our planned giving program to attract new donors and deepen commitments from existing donors.
- Secure additional government funding by identifying new grant opportunities and building relationships with key stakeholders.
- Pilot new fundraising programs in the community to increase brand visibility and build our donor base.
- Attract social impact investors by piloting innovative models for investing in social change in child welfare.

Measurements of Success

- Dollars raised and percentage of funds raised against target per year and over the course of the new campaign.
- Percentage increase of undesignated funds year-over-year.
- Successful achievement of \$75 million national fundraising goal.
- Percentage increase in donor retention year-over-year.
- Percentage of revenue from new sources or programs year-over-year.
- Number of new donors year-over-year.

Support and develop evidence-informed programs to maximize impact

As Canada's leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of our nation's most vulnerable young people, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is uniquely positioned to respond to gaps in services for the children and youth we serve by creating, testing and evaluating innovative new programs in partnership with child- and youth-serving organizations and philanthropists who share our vision to improve outcomes and create sustained impact.

Working in collaboration with our donor community and our network of child welfare partners and government stakeholders, over the next five years we will focus on opportunities to co-create new programs and solutions that are evidence-informed (or demonstrate promising results) and aligned with the needs of our priority populations.

Through this work, which will leverage the extensive knowledge and expertise of our staff and leadership, we will ignite deeper engagement with our mission among existing and new donors.

Key Activities 2020-2025

- Develop and launch innovative new programs and services in partnership with child welfare and government partners.
- Create strong evaluation methodologies and outcome measurement frameworks.
- Attract lead funders to invest in the launch of innovative new co-design programs.
- Seek advice and insights from young people with lived experience to ensure co-designed programs are as strong and effective as possible.

Measurements of Success

- Co-designed programs developed and launched in partnership with child- and youth-serving organizations.
- Number of people with lived experience engaged throughout program design process.
- Number of new and existing donors and government partners engaged to invest in development and launch of co-designed programs.
- Assessed value of outcomes data to child welfare sector, as established through independent third party evaluations.

Address the issue of overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system

As a result of systemic racism and intergenerational trauma rooted in Canada's history of colonialism and slavery, Black and Indigenous youth are dramatically overrepresented in the child welfare system.

In Canada today, over half of young people living in government care are Indigenous despite representing just eight per cent of Canada's child population. In some provinces, that figure is even higher: in Manitoba alone, Indigenous youth represent 90 per cent of kids in care.

Black children are similarly overrepresented in care. In Toronto, for example, although just 8.5% of the city's population is of African descent, Black children represent 40 per cent of kids living in government care.

Together with our partners, donors and youth advisors, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is committed to developing and supporting targeted strategies that address the specific needs of Black and Indigenous children, youth and families involved with the child welfare system as a result of systemic barriers to well-being. Our ultimate goal is to reduce the number of young people from these populations coming into and growing up in care.

Key Activities 2020-2025

- Align the Foundation's grants and programs with initiatives being delivered by our child welfare agency partners that specifically address the unique needs of Black and Indigenous children and youth.
- Co-design new programs with select child welfare partners to specifically address the systemic issues that lead to the overrepresentation of targeted populations in child welfare.

- Engage all Foundation stakeholders in ongoing education and learning to enhance knowledge and awareness of issues of social equity and justice.
- Develop advisory groups or committees to inform our strategies to address the underlying conditions that lead to overrepresentation of Black, Indigenous and other populations of young people within the child welfare system.

Measurements of Success

- Dollar amount and percentage of total grants directed to programs and initiatives targeting overrepresented populations.
- Number of and percentage change in number of young people served from these communities.
- Number of new partnerships established with experts and organizations committed to addressing the needs of overrepresented populations.
- Successful launch of an Equity and Inclusion Community Council and number of learning and training opportunities rolled out to staff and Board members as part of our continuing journey of reconciliation.

Strengthen our capacity and impact as a national organization

Since 1979, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada has been a leading advocate for the health, well-being and success of vulnerable children and youth. Originally serving the Toronto community before evolving to have province-wide impact, over the past five years we have transformed into an organization with national scope, impact and influence.

As we grow into this next chapter, we are focused on understanding how to best align our efforts to support our three priority populations with the unique needs of communities at the local, provincial and national levels.

Through this work, we strive to complete our evolution as a national leader with national impact for child welfare organizations and young people in every part of the country.

Key Activities 2020-2025

- Build and grow partnerships with child and youth-serving organizations and government stakeholders in key provinces and territories.
- Diversify fundraising models to include focus on raising funds from donors and government partners in other provinces and territories.
- Develop an operating structure that supports and strengthens our national impact.
- Design granting strategies that support our national child welfare agency partners, specifically through program co-design opportunities and calls for proposals.
- Build diversity at the leadership level to ensure effective representation of diverse populations being served nationwide.

Measurements of Success

- Number of strong relationships achieved with child welfare agency partners and government representatives in key provinces and territories, measured through progress toward shared goals, distribution of grants and development of formal operating agreements
- Dollars raised and granted in provinces and territories across the country
- Percentage of national child welfare agency partners that report a strong and positive connection with the mission of Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, as measured through an annual survey
- Strong reputational scores among the public and other key stakeholders

Be a leading influencer of child welfare issues in Canada

With decades of experience and expertise in addressing the complex needs of young people involved with the child welfare system, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is ideally positioned to deepen our influence on child welfare issues at the local, provincial and national levels.

Working together with our child welfare partners, government stakeholders, senior volunteers and donor community, over the next five years and beyond we will take our place as Canada's leading philanthropic voice for child welfare.

Key Activities 2020-2025

- Develop and execute awareness-building campaigns that educate and inform Canadians about key issues related to the child welfare system and vulnerable young people.
- Invest in innovative solutions to critical issues
- facing the child welfare system to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.
- Disseminate key learnings from the Foundation's
- strategic granting and program activities to our child welfare partners and academic and government stakeholders.
- Leverage fundraising and philanthropic
- partnership opportunities to encourage innovative collaborations between our agency partners and government stakeholders.

Measurements of Success

- Number of annual media impressions (both earned and organic) and quality scores.
- Number of external opportunities for Foundation representatives to share thought leadership, evidence and impact findings (roundtables, conferences, seminars, etc.).
- Number of new collaborations developed and/or launched between agency partners and academic and government stakeholders.
- Ongoing reputational assessments to monitor key benchmarks of success such as awareness, positive regard and intent to donate.

The future starts now.

From the day we were first founded by a group of philanthropists committed to a shared vision – to help empower vulnerable young people to realize their greatest potential – Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada has been driven and guided by the experiences and insights of the children and youth we serve, and by the compassion and generosity of people from every walk of life.

As we embark on our next chapter with our donors and partners by our side, we are inspired by the possibilities of what can be achieved at that intersection of philanthropy and social impact. The world has changed, and so too has philanthropy. More than ever, there is a need and desire to innovate, collaborate and imagine new solutions for the challenges that continue to be faced by young people involved with the child welfare system.

We are ready. Together with our dedicated and ever-growing community, we are committed to achieving a future of bold national impact for the young people we serve through the pursuit of our newly defined strategic plan. And we are committed to taking our place as a leading philanthropic voice for child welfare in Canada – as an advocate and champion standing alongside every young person in need.

The future starts now, and we can’t do it without you. Let’s get started.

Valerie McMurtry, CFRE | President & CEO

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“There’s so much that goes on that youth can’t bear by themselves. I have a big heart, and if I can help just like the Foundation does, I hope to do that one day. Thank you so much to the Foundation.”

- CHRISTINA, former youth in care and recipient of support from Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada



Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada is our country’s leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth growing up in the child welfare system. We raise and grant funds, and deliver a wide range of high-impact programs and services in partnership with over 100 child- and youth-serving agencies across the country that support more than 19,300 vulnerable young people and 4,200 families annually.

Stand Up for Kids is our national public movement uniting caring Canadians in changing the futures of our nation’s most vulnerable kids - those who have experienced abuse and neglect. We know that by helping these young people to overcome their trauma and break the cycle for future generations, they gain the strength and resilience to create a lifetime of their own unstoppable successes.



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