

# 2024-2025 Post-Secondary EDUCATION YEARBOOK



Immanuel and Emily,  
Scholarship Recipients



“

Your support reignited my hope and determination to continue pursuing my dreams.”

—2024-2025 Scholarship Recipient

# A Message of Gratitude



It is a joy and privilege to share our **second annual Post-Secondary Education Yearbook** with you and to celebrate the remarkable impact of your generosity.

As a dedicated supporter of **Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada’s Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Program**, your philanthropy is making a tremendous difference in the lives of young people with lived experience in the child welfare system.

Through your support of young people across Canada, we see firsthand how access to the right resources shapes opportunities for success. Without the family networks and guidance many students rely on, navigating applications, securing housing, and managing the costs associated with post-secondary studies can feel overwhelming. For many young people leaving government care, covering the rising costs of college or university is simply out of reach.

**At Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada, we believe every young person deserves the opportunity to pursue their education and reach their greatest potential. With you by our side, we are removing barriers so young people can access the resources, stability, and encouragement they need to pursue their academic and career goals with confidence.**

During the 2024-2025 academic year, your generosity helped us award an incredible **\$2 million to 588 students** from across Canada. Yet the need continues to grow. Between the 2021-2022 and 2025-2026 academic years, we have seen a **48% increase in applications** for support. As we continue evolving our program to reach more young people in the most impactful ways possible, your generosity fuels both our efforts and the ambitions of students across the country.

In the pages that follow, you will meet several young people whose post-secondary journeys were made possible in the last academic year through your support. Their stories reflect the determination, talent, and promise of young people from care, and the difference your support is making in their lives.

Together, we are building pathways to opportunity, belonging, and prosperity for young people from care across Canada. As we look ahead, we remain committed to deepening the partnerships that make this work possible and continuing to learn alongside the young people whose voices guide our efforts.

Thank you for your partnership and for helping expand what’s possible for young people from care.



**Jeffrey Schiffer, PhD**  
President & CEO  
Children’s Aid Foundation  
of Canada



# A Look Back on Your Impact in 2024-2025

With your generous support, hundreds of young people connected to the child welfare system were able to pursue their post-secondary education and take important steps towards their academic and career goals. Let's look back at the impact you helped create!



**\$2 million** awarded to  
**588 students** across Canada



**318 scholarships**  
awarded



**87 bursaries**  
awarded



**111 graduates**  
received Graduation Awards



**154 individual students**  
supported with  
**195 grants**  
from the Youth Opportunity Fund



Students attended  
**104 different schools**  
across Canada representing  
**nine provinces**



## In the spotlight

During the 2024-2025 academic year, 111 students completed their studies and were recognized with donor-funded Graduation Awards.

Each of these graduates represents not only a personal milestone, but the collective impact of a community that believes in their potential.

- 45 graduated from university
- 58 from college
- 8 from a career college or trade school
- 8 completed graduate-level degrees, including master's, doctorate, or Juris Doctor programs

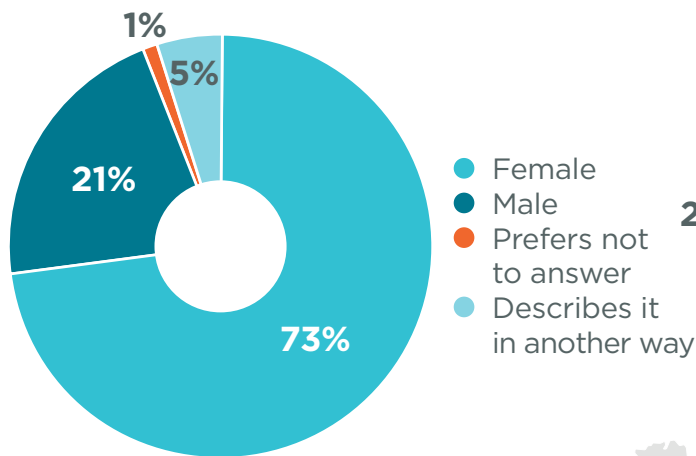
**Congratulations to all graduates!**

In **2024-2025**, young people receiving **post-secondary education support** from Children's Aid Foundation of Canada represented **diverse identities, ages, genders, locations, and lived experiences.**

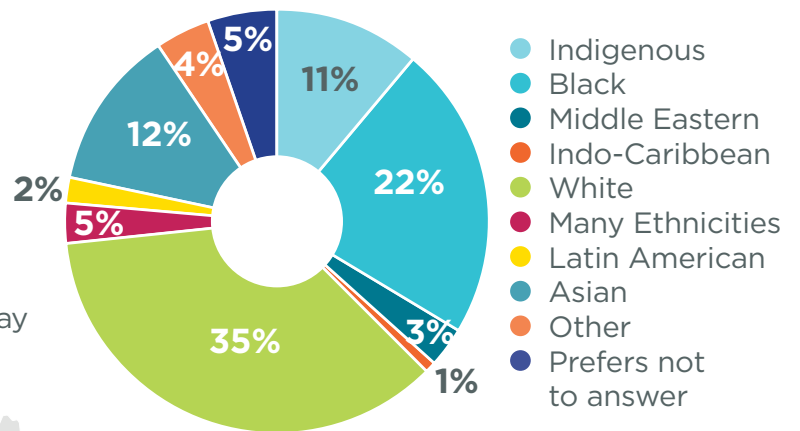
## Our Reach

In 2024-2025, young people receiving CAFC post-secondary education supports are represented by:

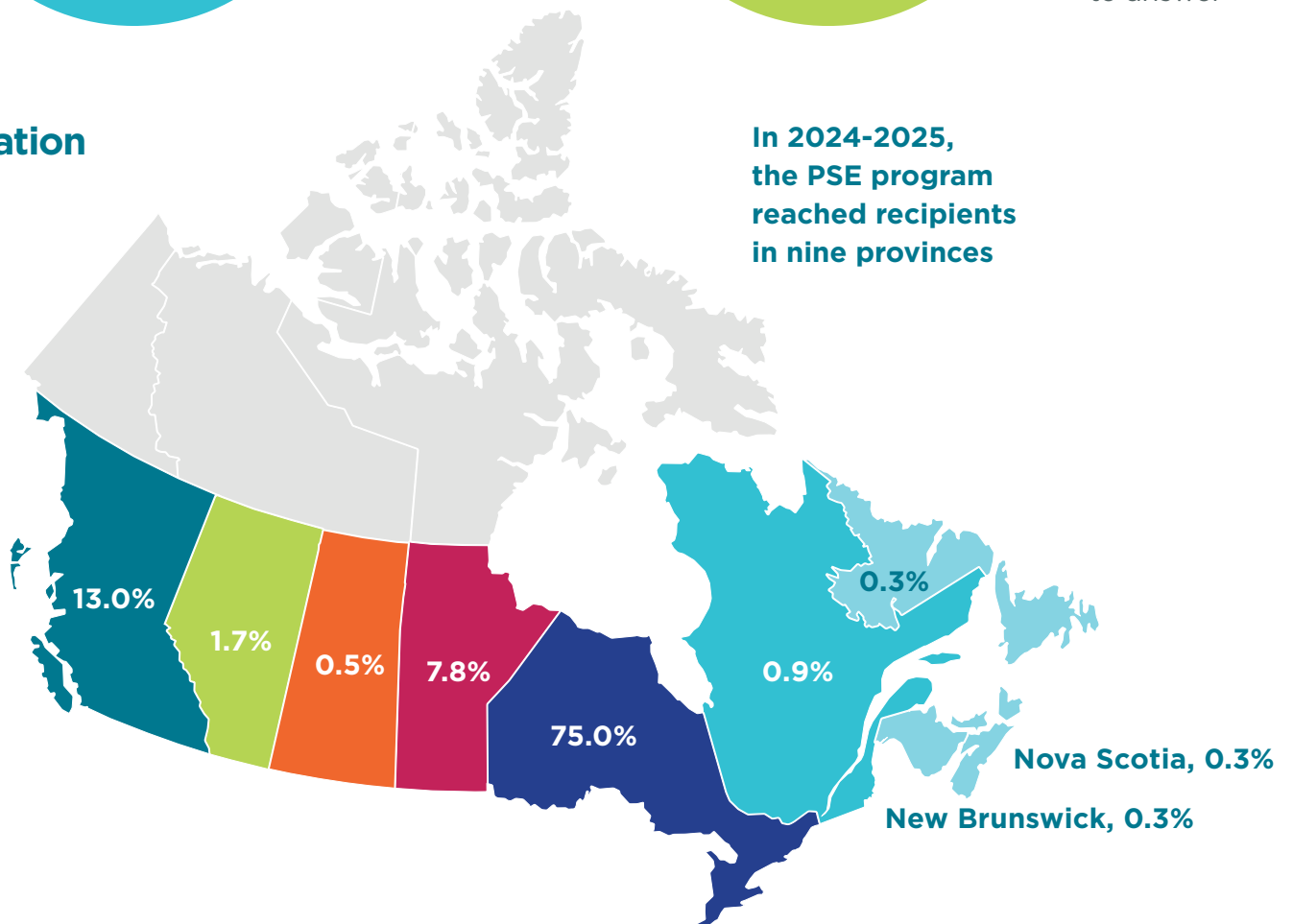
### Gender Identity



### Ethnic Identity

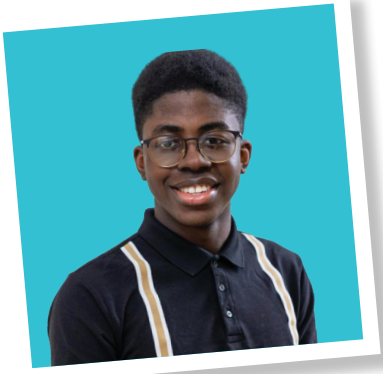


### Location



# Immanuel

Integrated Biomedical Engineering & Health Science  
McMaster University



“ Thank you so much for your support. Your generosity is allowing me to pursue the future and career I have always dreamed of. It truly means so much to me.”

## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

To me, this scholarship shows that other people are inspired by the accomplishments I have put so much effort into, and as a result, want to invest in my future. It means youth like me who were in the foster care system are not limited by their experiences, and instead are given a platform to show how their experiences shaped them into the people they are today.



## Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?

The pursuit of education is a never-ending journey of knowledge and new experiences, and it's a way to discover things about yourself you may not otherwise have found out. But what truly motivates me is the person I know I will become after I graduate.

# Hanna

Sciences Infirmières (Nursing Science)  
Université de Saint-Boniface



“ I'm motivated to become someone who provides competent, compassionate, evidence-based care and helps people feel safe, respected, and understood, especially those who are often overlooked.”



## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

It means stability and momentum. It reduces financial pressure so I can stay focused on my clinical learning, and it reminds me that people believe in my future. In a demanding program like nursing, that support makes a real difference in motivating me to show up consistently and move toward graduation.

## What are your goals, dreams, and aspirations after you graduate?

My immediate goal is to begin working as an RN and continue building strong clinical skills while also practicing as a paralegal. Longer-term, I'm interested in advanced practice pathways like Nurse Practitioner or Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. I'd like to serve communities with high needs through compassionate, evidence-based care, and I have a budding interest in pursuing medical school.



“ I plan to launch my own videography business and build a creative career doing what I love.”

### **What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?**

Receiving this scholarship felt like a fresh start. When I was younger, I struggled to focus in school; after high school, I stepped away from my education for a few years. At 28, I made the decision to return and had to upgrade my high school courses to qualify for college admission. It was a long and challenging journey, but I persevered and was eventually accepted. CAFC supported me every step of the way throughout that process.

### **What are you most proud of accomplishing at school this year?**

This year, I directed two major projects as part of my program: a 15-second commercial for a friend's clothing brand and a heartfelt documentary about a local Legion that hosts wrestling events to stay open. Beyond the projects themselves, I am most proud of proving to myself that I was capable of returning to school and succeeding.

### **Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?**

For a long time, I didn't see the value of pursuing further education. Eventually, I found myself in a job with no long-term vision or career growth, which was discouraging. While school is not the only path for everyone, it provided me with direction, purpose, and the opportunity to build a future I am excited about. That sense of growth and possibility motivates me every day.

### **What advice would you give to future students?**

Take a risk on yourself. Don't let fear hold you back. While it's important to think about future job opportunities, it's equally important to pursue something you're genuinely passionate about. We all face challenges, but education can be a powerful step toward building the life you want.



# Alexandra

Honours Psychology  
University of Guelph



## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

It means everything to me. As a student from care, I have been financially independent throughout my degree, relying on loans, part-time work, and careful budgeting to stay in school. This scholarship reduced that pressure. It also means that someone chose to invest in my education. That kind of support gives me the confidence to believe in myself.

## What would you like donors to know about the impact of their gift?

I would want donors to know that their gift created space for me to flourish. Receiving this scholarship has allowed me to step away from my part-time job and redirect my focus toward school. I've now been involved with three research labs, two academic conferences, and multiple professional development opportunities that have directly shaped my future career in psychology.

## Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?

There was a time in my life when I did not know if I would graduate high school, let alone be accepted to university. School did not always feel like a guarantee because it became last on my priority list during the most painful time of my life. Pursuing my education is, in many ways, a reflection of the growth I have fought for despite the adversity I've faced. It reflects my resilience, and the belief that my circumstances did not define my future.

## What are your goals, dreams, and aspirations after you graduate?

After I graduate, I plan to pursue a master's degree in psychotherapy and continue building toward a career working with children and families who have experienced adversity. My long-term goal is to become a licensed child and family psychotherapist and eventually open a practice that provides trauma-informed care, particularly for youth involved in the child welfare system.



Your support gives me the confidence to believe in myself, reinforcing that youth from care can succeed in post-secondary spaces and are deserving of opportunity.”



# Tobias

Social Work and Literature/Creative Writing  
University of Manitoba



“ My goal in life is to help others find their voices and empower them to destroy the barriers they face.”



## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

It means a lot to me. It means that I can become more than a stereotype due to my label as a youth from foster care—that I can achieve my dreams of receiving a post-secondary education just like any other young person.

## Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?

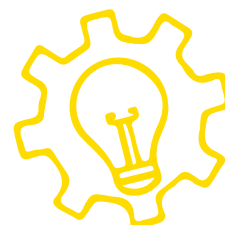
It's one of the most important things in my life at the moment. I want to make a difference in this world, and going to school to obtain my social work degree is one way I can do so. I want to help youth just like me one day, and my biggest motivator is telling my younger self that we have come so far, and only have further to go from here!

## What extracurricular activities do you enjoy doing?

When I am not in school, I love to do art in many mediums, including writing and painting. Art has been a way for me to regulate my emotions and connects me with my culture as well. I also love volunteering at non-profits dedicated to helping youth from care. I host workshops with young people and volunteer as support staff when they need extra hands.

## What are your goals, dreams, and aspirations after you graduate?

I want to be a registered peer support worker and professional advocate for youth from foster care and/or adults living with disabilities or mental health barriers. As someone who is and has been part of these communities, I have seen the damage of hard-to-navigate systems and barriers first-hand. I believe a mentor with lived experience can be one of the greatest supports to have in life.



# Jeannine

Developmental Service Worker  
Canadian Career College



No matter what has happened in your past, you can't let it define you. Let your past challenge you to do better and make a better future for yourself."

## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

It means I can give myself a proper education and a positive future for my family and myself. It shows my daughter that no matter what your past was, you can always change it if you keep your mind to it, and that education is the key to success.

## What would you like donors to know about the impact of their gift?

I was with the same foster family from six months old. My life had many obstacles, including being born with a rare disorder called Fetal Dilantin Syndrome; I wasn't expected to live past two hours. Thanks to my wonderful foster parents, William and Linda, and the support of CAFC, I got a chance at life. I broke all the odds against me, I have a stable environment, I try hard in school, and I have the life that I do now.

## Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?

None of my biological family went to school so I am the first generation to do so, overcoming all the odds against me and growing up to achieve success. My foster parents are also a big motivation to me, and my 12-year-old daughter is my biggest motivator. I want her to know and see how important an education was to our family and that she can do anything she puts her mind to it.

## What are your goals, dreams, and aspirations after you graduate?

I want to work with individuals with dementia, because my foster father has been living with dementia for many years now. He is my best friend, and dementia has robbed him of witnessing my accomplishments. I would also love to one day work for the Children's Aid Society to give back to the agency that helped me become who I am by placing me with my foster parents and giving me a wonderful chance at life.



# Alexander

Bachelor of Global and International Studies  
Carleton University



## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

Receiving a scholarship has consistently meant that my effort has been seen and given me confidence in continuing my journey to education and improvement. This has been extremely important, particularly in helping to navigate the barriers to education that are faced by former youth in care such as myself—barriers that can stop us from completing our education.

## Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?

Going to school means everything to me. I want nothing more than to better myself and be the first one in my family to get a master's degree and eventually a PhD. To me, education is an opportunity to be more than a former youth in care or a recipient of aid; it's an opportunity to be a highly contributing member of Canadian society. By studying international relations and political economy, I hope to understand how to better the lives of Canada's most vulnerable in terms of policy and action.

## What are your goals, dreams, and aspirations after you graduate?

I would like to work for the government with a focus on global politics. In the short term, I plan to apply to a master's program and would like to continue pursuing public speaking and advocacy work for young people.

## What's one thing about school life that surprised you?

Something that surprised me is how many great opportunities for meaningful and lifelong friendships there are at university. If I knew I would get to have friends like this as a kid, things would have been a lot easier and more hopeful.



I am motivated to become someone who is able to effect positive change for current and former youth in care, but also for all Canadians more broadly.”



# Marie

Applied Bachelor of Arts  
Okanagan College - Kelowna Campus



I want to share my story to inspire other foster children to go after their dreams and have the confidence to believe in themselves.”

## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

I was ecstatic when I found out I was receiving a CAFC scholarship. It means I do not have to struggle financially or split my focus from my studies. It means I can spend my time working on my goals and dreams without the worry of whether I can afford textbooks or the campus parking pass. It means I can just enjoy my time as a student, which is a relief beyond words for me.

## Why is going to school important to you? What motivates you?

I have dreamed of getting my doctorate since I was a child. I just never knew a foster child like me would be someone who could work towards it. What motivates me every day is my desire to show my children that it is okay to strive for your dreams, no matter how big they are. I am also motivated by a passion for learning and research. I get to spend my days reading and in lectures, gaining knowledge every day, and it is beyond my wildest dreams.

# Emily

Professional Communication  
Toronto Metropolitan University



My dream is to work in nonprofit communications or public service and contribute to campaigns that help marginalized communities, particularly BIPOC, queer, and health initiatives.”



## What does receiving a scholarship from CAFC mean to you?

It means being able to focus on school and do the best I can without being worried as much by the financial burden of education. Not only does my likelihood of success increase, but I feel a sense of pride and self-confidence knowing that someone believed enough in me to invest in my degree.

## What are you most proud of accomplishing at school this year?

This year, I am most proud of getting accepted into a mini-exchange course in Germany focused on creative sustainability and social innovation. I'm hoping to use what I learn back in Toronto and add value to my community.

# Your Generosity Removes Barriers to Education



As a supporter and champion of the PSE Program, you are fuelling transformative change for young people with lived experience in the child welfare system.

Many of these young people face complex and overlapping barriers on their path to education. As a result of these challenges, we know that in Ontario alone, just 46% of young people graduate from high school and of those, only 27% go on to pursue college or university.

Access to the right supports that address their needs makes all the difference.

**We believe that post-secondary education should be accessible to every young person wishing to pursue it. With your generosity, we are increasing the resources and support needed to reach youth across Canada.**

## About Our Post-Secondary Education Strategy



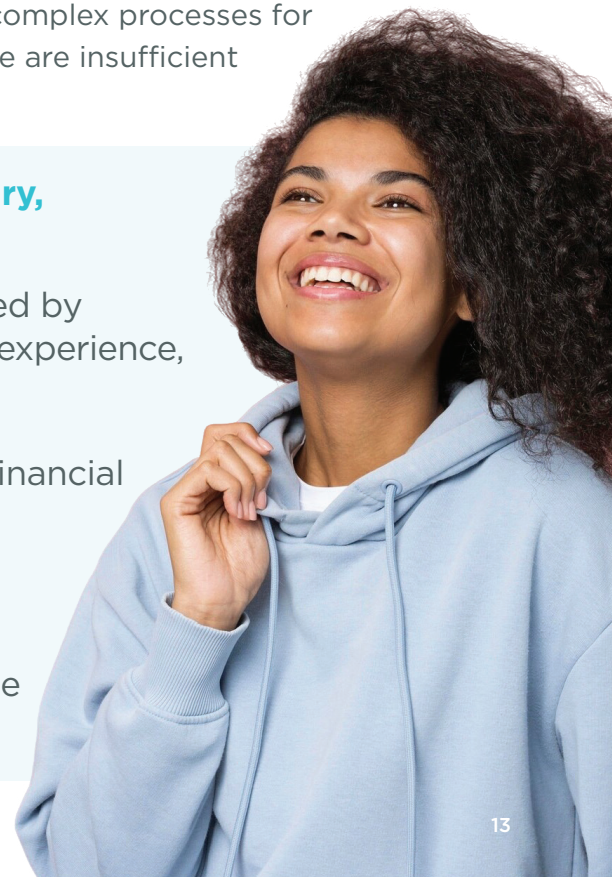
Thirty years after launching with just nine students in Toronto, the PSE Program has grown into a national initiative supporting hundreds of youth each year. During the 2024-2025 academic year alone, we awarded \$2 million to 588 students across Canada and demand is constantly rising: **between the 2021-2022 and 2025-2026 academic years, applications increased by an incredible 48%.**

We continue to believe that our renewable scholarships, which are between **\$2,000 to \$5,000 each**, are filling an important need.

However, in response to surging demand, data on early exit from post-secondary programs for youth facing multiple barriers, and the added challenge of complex processes for accessing existing financial supports, we know our awards alone are insufficient to achieve our intended impact.

### That's why we have also developed a complementary, comprehensive PSE Strategy that aims to:

- 1 Enhance the PSE Program** to meet increasing need by reaching more youth, improving accessibility, user experience, and funding
- 2 Make it easier** for youth to access other existing financial resources and supports
- 3 Engage in advocacy efforts** to increase the total dollars and other needed supports available to youth from care to access, persist in, and complete post-secondary education





Today, the program offers a range of supports designed to meet students where they are:

## CAFC Post-Secondary Education Model (2026-2030)

### Objective

**More youth from care successfully start and complete post-secondary education, demonstrated by increased enrollment, retention, and graduation.**

#### CAFC Student Awards

Renewable scholarships\* and Graduation Awards for college, university, vocational training, trades school, and shorter certificate programs

#### Wrap-around and Relational Supports

Education Support Fund for:  
 Urgent education-related, mental health, and housing needs  
 PSE Coaching  
 Peer Mentorship

#### \*Scholarship Pathways



**PATH 1** Full-time in a PSE program that is one year or longer

**PATH 2** Full-time in a post-graduate degree program

**PATH 3** Full-time in a PSE program that is less than one year

**PATH 4** Part-time in a PSE program



# Driving Innovation in Post-Secondary Education

While the Foundation's Post-Secondary Education Program has helped generations of youth from care access higher education, our data highlights that persistent barriers to retention and graduation remain, reflecting the complex realities facing youth from care.

- **Financial instability is a major factor affecting whether youth from care can persist in PSE.**
- **Many students who withdraw from PSE do so within their first year, often due to interrelated factors such as financial stress, mental health, difficulty navigating the post-secondary environment, academic challenges, and limited social support systems.**
- **Youth transitioning from care may require longer periods to complete PSE than their peers.**



In response to these systemic barriers, CAFC is leading a national portfolio of education ventures designed to bring together diverse leaders and partners across the child welfare, education, philanthropic, and social impact sectors to design, test, and scale solutions that improve post-secondary outcomes for youth from care.

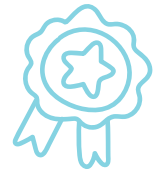
Within this portfolio, CAFC has launched a multi-year post-secondary venture as part of its broader PSE Program. The *Smart Start* initiative is a targeted innovation designed to demonstrate how scholarships, when integrated with wraparound supports, peer mentorship, and dedicated post-secondary coaching, can strengthen persistence and improve graduation outcomes for youth from care. Over three years, the initiative will engage 135 youth, generating critical evidence to inform future scale and system-level investment.

**The *Smart Start* model combines financial support with coordinated, person-centred supports, including:**

- **Renewable scholarship** designed to provide continuity and stability throughout PSE
- **Flexible financial assistance** to address urgent needs that may otherwise disrupt learning, including housing stability, mental health supports, technology, transportation, and academic tutoring
- **Dedicated post-secondary coaching** to provide individualized guidance, navigation support, and connections to employment and community resources
- **Peer mentorship** from graduates with lived experience in care, fostering connection, encouragement, and a sense of belonging throughout the post-secondary journey



# The Ron Joyce Education Excellence Awards



To mark its 30th anniversary, **The Joyce Family Foundation** has established a \$10 million endowment to create the *Ron Joyce Education Excellence Awards* at Children's Aid Foundation of Canada. This landmark endowment honours the legacy of Ron Joyce (1930–2019), the legendary Canadian entrepreneur, humanitarian, and philanthropist, who believed that potential is universal, even when access is not, and dedicated his life to expanding opportunities for young people facing adversity.

Through this partnership, this generational gift will help ensure that more youth from care have the stability and support they need to stay in school, graduate, and build the futures they envision. The Awards will provide sustained, long-term educational support, reflecting Ron Joyce's enduring belief in the power of opportunity.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of donors like **The Joyce Family Foundation**, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada has grown into a national leader in education access for young people with experience in the child welfare system.



Together, initiatives like *Smart Start* and the *Ron Joyce Education Excellence Awards*, along with our broader community of PSE donors, are reducing barriers, expanding access, and supporting youth from care through to graduation.

**This collective commitment across individual donors, strategic partners, and transformational investments is helping build a future where every young person from care has the opportunity to thrive in post-secondary education and beyond.**



# What's Next?

Canada's post-secondary funding landscape is extensive but highly fragmented, making it difficult for youth from care to identify and access the supports available to them. In response, CAFC is exploring new ways to simplify navigation and improve access to existing financial resources that support educational persistence and success.

As the program evolves, **CAFC is aiming to develop a centralized scholarship navigation resource** designed specifically for youth in and from care.

## This future initiative would:

- **Help** youth identify and access scholarships and bursaries across Canada
- **Combine** relational support with technology-enabled navigation tools
- **Integrate** peer mentorship to strengthen guidance and belonging



With the right partners and investment, this approach has the potential to reduce barriers, improve access to financial supports, and strengthen post-secondary completion outcomes.

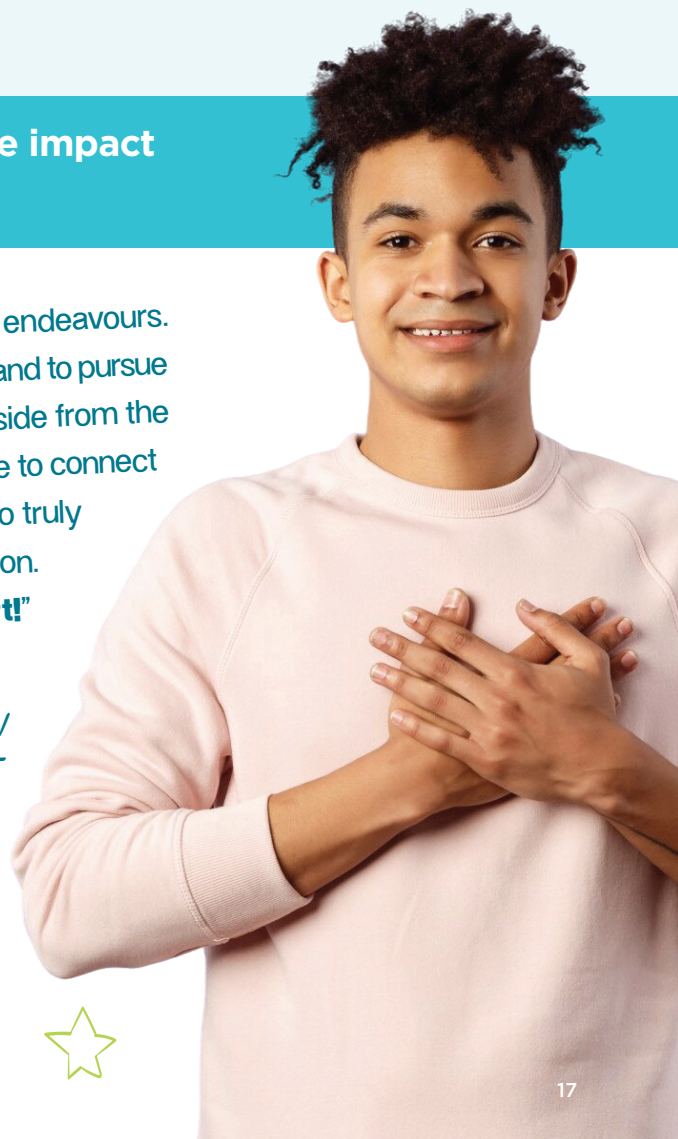
Over time, this resource could become a shared national asset for youth-serving systems, institutions, and funders.

**We look forward to sharing more details on the impact of this new approach in next year's report!**



"Thank you so much for your support of my academic endeavours. It truly means so much to me to receive your scholarship and to pursue the future and career that I have always dreamed of. Aside from the financial burden being alleviated, your donation allows me to connect with the amazing support system at CAFC, people who truly care about my success in my post-secondary education.  
**Thank you so much for your continued support!"**

*"THIS SCHOLARSHIP LIFTED A SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL BURDEN AND MADE RETURNING TO SCHOOL MUCH MORE MANAGEABLE. I LIVE INDEPENDENTLY AND WORK TO SUPPORT MYSELF, SO BALANCING TUITION, LIVING EXPENSES, AND ACADEMIC COMMITMENTS CAN BE OVERWHELMING. BECAUSE OF THIS SUPPORT, I WAS ABLE TO REDUCE MY WORK HOURS AND FOCUS MORE FULLY ON MY EDUCATION. DONORS TRULY MAKE A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE IN STUDENTS' LIVES."*



# Thank you!

On behalf of the entire team at Children's Aid Foundation of Canada and the young people whose lives are shaped through your generosity, thank you for your enduring support of the PSE Program.

Your investment creates meaningful opportunities for young people who have faced significant barriers, helping them pursue their education and move forward with confidence toward their goals through the power of education.



**We are deeply grateful  
for your partnership.**



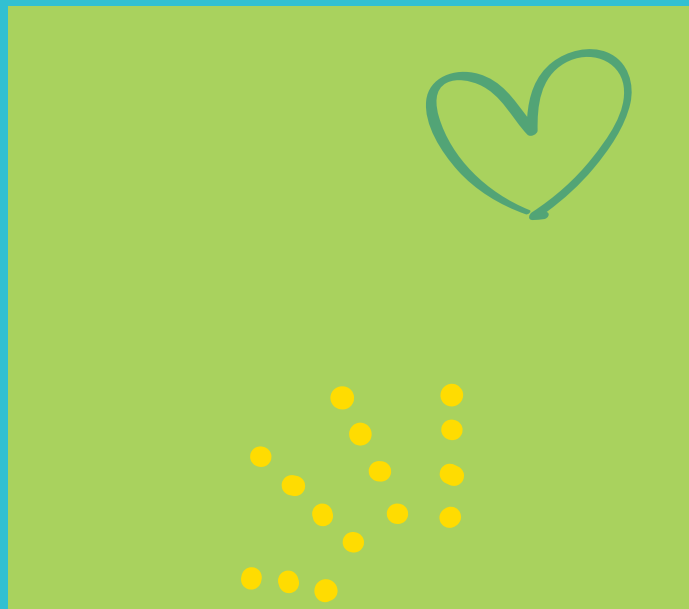
“

Scholarships...allow youth like me to feel seen and valued. This is an example of an opportunity that lets us know that we matter, that our futures are invested in and that we are being rooted for.”

—2024-2025

Scholarship Recipient





Children's Aid Foundation of Canada is our country's leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system. Together with our donors, child-protection agencies, community organizations, and lived experts, we remove barriers that limit children and youth's potential and improve their outcomes by providing access to resources that help them succeed and thrive.