

CWICE

Child Welfare Immigration
Centre of Excellence

Annual Impact Report

Executive Summary

2020/21



Reflections in Conversation



Liz Okai, MSW, RSW

This has been a year unlike others and despite the unexpected curve with the global pandemic, our relatively new program expanded and evolved in both scope and breadth. We wanted to provide our perspectives about leading CWICE this past year.



Danielle Ungara, MSW, RSW

Spearheading CWICE with you, Liz, has been an exciting journey. Although we worked remotely to provide service across Ontario, in many ways the use of technology seemed to narrow the distance between staff in the province.

Indeed Danielle. Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, we saw collaboration and innovation. For example, our child welfare staff joined Peel CAS Foundation staff, who volunteered to turn their vehicles into meals on wheels to support children, youth and families struggling with food insecurity. This year we needed to maintain a focus on equity.

Developing equity practice was central in our minds as we launched our certificate training series for child welfare staff. We promote equitable access to services, that families (or children/youth) should receive similar approaches from child welfare professionals across Ontario, and child welfare professionals should feel equipped with knowledge and supports. We remain encouraged by the interest in Ontario and across Canada, with over 250 participants joining from three provinces.

I am truly proud of our collaboration, accomplishments, and of our staff who are creative and innovative, adapting their practice and service to meet the needs of families during the pandemic. From staff assisting families with technology devices to submitting immigration applications online. Another proud moment is recognition and endorsement by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services of CWICE as an example of child welfare modernization. The accompanying funding for CWICE sent a message to our dedicated teams and the sector that addressing immigration status, settlement, and integration issues contribute to the wellbeing and permanency of children and youth.

As well, I continue to be impressed by the service delivered by our teams. We have had small, quiet successes and big, public successes this year. We hear positive feedback from those receiving services, attending presentations or trainings. These responses are humbling and inspiring - it is clear we are continuing to build a network of professionals across Canada.

This year is a testament to individuals, organizations, and sectors working together. We are firm in our belief child welfare professionals have an opportunity to make a significant and positive difference in the lives and trajectories of families for generations. Child welfare redesign is currently underway in Ontario, and we are proud to be part of the vision.

This year, a young man told our teams he fell through the cracks of the child welfare system as a youth. His voice and story has remained in our minds as we work. His perspective has been echoed by the experiences of others receiving child welfare service. When we celebrate our accomplishments, we also recognize the work ahead, and we are ready for it.

As border restrictions change worldwide, we see many changes on the horizon. We will continue to assess trends, share our work with you, and be accountable and responsive in our services. We ask you to remain steadfast in your support of us, because we cannot do this work alone.

CWICE Training Series

CWICE developed an innovative eight-module training series in 2020. Designed and led by Danielle Ungara and Claudia Obreque, the training series explores how issues related to immigration, settlement, citizenship, and border-related concerns may appear within the child welfare system.

This unique, comprehensive, and in-depth training is transformational for the child welfare sector.

The training aims to raise awareness and develop knowledge of the intersectional identities of the individuals and families receiving service. Currently, 1 in 5 people in Canada was born outside Canada.¹ This is significantly relevant for child welfare professionals and policy makers across Canada.

Understanding access to service is often connected to immigration status in Canada has a direct impact on assessments and service planning. Child welfare practitioners benefit from learning about the systems and processes that impact immigrants, refugees, temporary residents, people with unresolved status, and those with permanent residency status (or Canadian citizenship) that lack identity documents.

Throughout the series, CWICE integrates data which demonstrates Canada's reliance on immigration for population growth. Statistics Canada has found Immigration accounts for 80% of Canada's current population growth.²

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive and confirms the need for training across Canada.

In evaluations of the training in 2020/21, 97% of participants found the information learned was relevant to their role and 98% indicated the training provided a better understanding of the intersection of child welfare and immigration. A full training evaluation is currently underway.

For information about the training, please [visit our Eventbrite page](#).

1 Statistics Canada's Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada report, 2011

2 Canada's population estimates, first quarter 2019

Learning Objectives: raise awareness of the issues, build knowledge in equity-focused practice, and promote equitable outcomes for children, youth, and families across the spectrum of child welfare services. Each module has specific objectives and specialized focus:

CWICE 101: Introduction to the Canadian Immigration System & Intersection with Child Welfare

CWICE 102: Refugees Part 1 - Asylum Seekers & Denied Claimants

CWICE 103: Refugees Part 2 - Unaccompanied and Separated Children

CWICE 104: Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds Applications for Permanent Residence

CWICE 105: Refugees Part 3 - GARs and Privately Sponsored Refugees

CWICE 106: Placement Across Borders, Family Sponsorships and Economic Immigration Streams

CWICE 107: Temporary and Unresolved Immigration Status

CWICE 108: Creating & Ensuring Equitable Outcomes in Child Welfare

“I would definitely recommend this training to other workers because immigration is not something that is common knowledge or taught in school”
Samantha Jensen, Child Protection Worker, Government of Saskatchewan

“The best practice framework that I have taken away from this training is the need to focus on the client's migration and settlement story as part of their social history during the assessment process. Various international and national systems of oppression have impacted these families' lived experiences and lead to involvement with the child welfare system.”

Debra Musgrave, Anti-Black Racism Practice Integration Lead, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton

Capacity Building Impact



Research and Partnerships Impact

We could never do our work successfully alone. We are proud to have built some incredible partnerships over the years. Here is what our partners say about collaborating with us!

“The exceptional generosity of the Peel Children's Aid Society is of enormous assistance to the Government of Canada”

*The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne,
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
(then Minister of Foreign Affairs)*

“Peel CAS and Indus have worked together to provide culturally sensitive services in the child welfare sector. We look forward to continuing to build our partnership with programs like SAATH and MASSI. The programs we offer are one of a kind and offer support to those who need it most, especially with CWICE where we can help clients navigate through complex immigration and settlement issues. Together we are proud to be doing crucial work to support our vulnerable communities”

*Harinder Malhi, Director,
Indus Community Services*

“The investment in the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence is a part of Ontario's plan under the new child welfare redesign strategy to strengthen supports for children, youth, families and communities, and create a more efficient and sustainable child welfare system”

*The Honourable Jill Dunlop, Associate Minister of
Children and Women's Issues*

“Since 2018, the Rights for Children and Youth Partnership project has collaborated with CWICE to increase knowledge surrounding the intersection of child protection and migration. The partnership with CWICE is incredibly important in order to identify policies, procedures and practices that enhance or diminish the quality of services provided and work towards strengthening the services provided to children, youth, families, and stakeholders provincially”

*Dr. Henry Parada & team,
School of Social Work, Ryerson University*

Consultations and Services Impact

Province-wide Consultation Centre

Established in June 2018, the CWICE provides a centralized consultation centre in Ontario. CWICE supports child welfare organizations on cases involving unresolved immigration status, settlement, or border-related issues.

Over the past year, and throughout the pandemic, CWICE continued to develop and evolve, and even expanded in scope. Our current role includes:

- Assisting the child welfare sector in understanding the impact of unresolved immigration or settlement issues on children, youth and families involved with the child welfare system;
- Ensuring children, youth and families have pathways to permanent immigration status;
- Collaborating on research and identifying trends; and
- Providing sector-wide capacity building initiatives such as training.

Our knowledgeable CWICE Immigration Specialists provide consultation and brief services, in addition to sharing information, and developing resources and trainings. This year, there was volume growth in the total requests for consultations and also notable growth in the complex nature of requests from across Ontario.

Aligning service responses to changing service needs during COVID-19

Our CWICE child welfare workers found families' needs changed because of the pandemic. As a result, our welfare staff spent focused time on:

- Educating families to navigate the new virtual realities – how to obtain information, participate in meetings/schooling/work, and how to maintain networks/social supports;
- Problem solving and supporting families to access food security assistance; volunteering to deliver donations to families;
- Advocating with families facing evictions, canvassing rent assistance programs, and referring to affordable housing/programs available;

- Liaising with border officials about trends/issues, staying connected with Public Health regarding quarantine requirements, and coordinating services with quarantine facilities;
- Completing visits and check-ins with families, and connecting more frequently with other supports/professionals.

CWICE Service Projects

We work on a range of service projects, including: Unaccompanied & Separated Children (UASC), Family Reunification & Repatriations, Citizenship Project, and a project regarding the Immigration Status for Children & Youth in Out-of-Home placements. Together with our partners, we were able to effectively support children and youth despite public health measures impacting international borders. Our collective services included helping those who may have been separated from their parents, others requiring assistance returning to Canada, and several more that applied for citizenship.

- We supported 47 unaccompanied and separated youth (2020-21)
 - In our first three years, we've provided service to 130 unaccompanied and separated youth
- We responded to 30 new requests for support around citizenship (2020-21)
 - In our first three years, we've been asked to work on 87 requests for citizenship; and 33 individuals have obtained citizenship
- We received 24 new requests to support individuals or families repatriating to Canada (2020-21)
 - In the past two years, we've supported 28 requests for repatriation to Canada

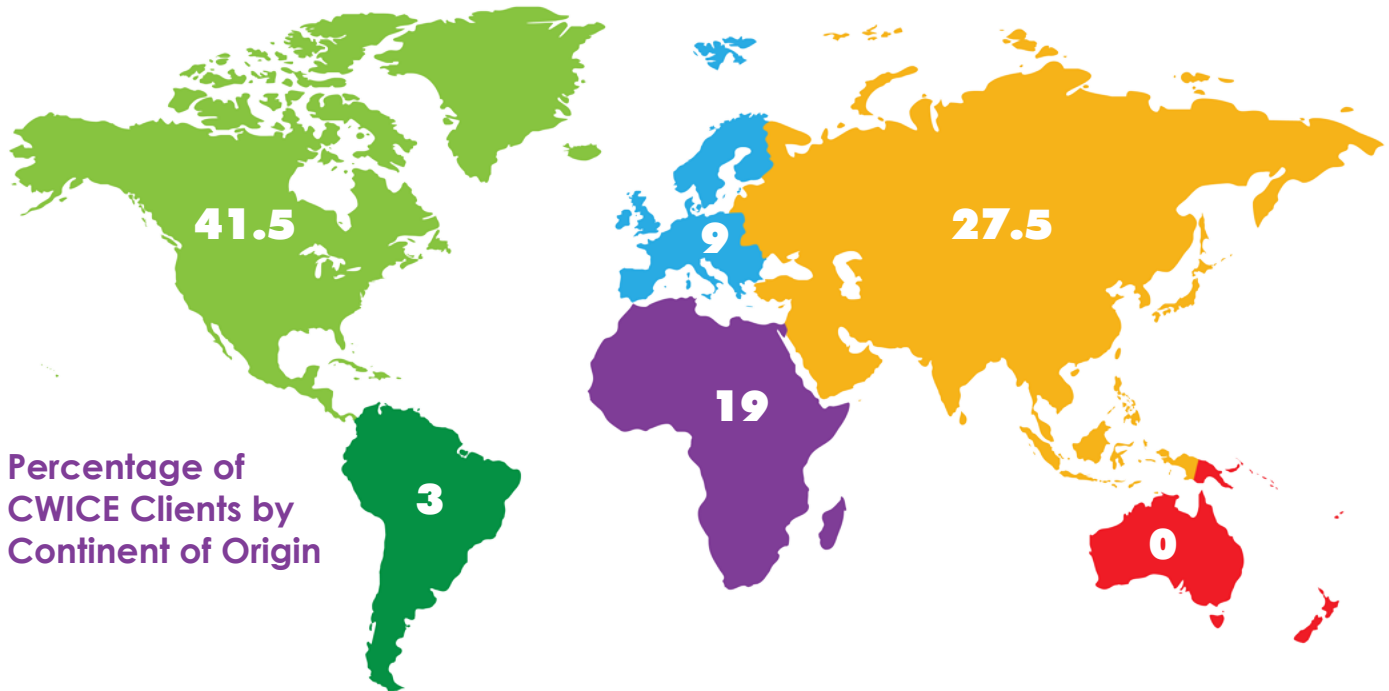
Through our immigration status project, we promote understanding identity-based data to help us develop the best services possible for children and youth. It is important that child welfare staff across the country identify the country of birth, immigration status, and citizenship of children, youth, and families involved in child welfare services. This understanding is key to planning and developing pathways for children and youth to obtain permanency in Canada as soon as possible.

Who We Serve

CWICE services are available for any child, youth, young adult, or family receiving child welfare service in Ontario.

Referrals in 2020-21

This past year, we responded to **495** referrals and provided service to **911** individuals from **76** unique countries of origin, across **5** continents.



Percentage of CWICE Clients by Continent of Origin

Survey Results

Following brief services, we asked for feedback. We received a 52% response rate for our survey and feedback was obtained from child welfare workers, children/youth/families, and community professionals.

Respondents shared that CWICE had a positive impact in connecting children and families to culturally appropriate resources, we were supportive of family reunifications, assisted with citizenship applications, and provided referrals to legal supports.

One respondent shared the service they received was a "collaborative approach between worker, family/youth/child and CWICE" and another respondent shared they were "impressed with the knowledge and expertise on immigration-related matters."



95%

found CWICE helpful and were satisfied with response time

97%

agreed the CWICE team was knowledgeable

Success Story

A family was referred for child welfare services after a single parent was detained by Canada Border Services Agency, following being involved in a car accident. At the time of immigration detention, the parent asked a friend to care for their two children, however the friend could not care for them long-term.

The parent requested support from child welfare as the children were about to be without a parent/legal guardian, until the mother in detention was able to obtain bail. The children were temporarily brought to a place of safety and upon their mother's release from detention, they were reunified.

After obtaining legal services, it was determined the family was eligible to pursue permanent residency on Humanitarian & Compassionate grounds. The family, and CWICE staff, worked with a lawyer to gather the necessary information and submit the family's application to Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada.

The family faced several needs as their temporary immigration status in Canada had



expired, and they were living with unresolved status until their application was approved. CWICE worked collaboratively to build supports around the family within the community.

The family was recently accepted as Permanent Residents (PR) and shared they are ecstatic and overjoyed in hearing the news that they received their PR. Now, the family has access to provincial health care and other services enjoyed by Canadians.

CWICE Youth Group

CWICE developed a new Youth Group this year, to support refugee, immigrant, and repatriated youth, aged 14-21, as they settle and integrate in Canada.

The group offers opportunities for youth who are involved with a child welfare agency in Ontario to make new friends, learn about Canada,

engage with mentors, hear from inspiring speakers, and practise English skills in a safe space, while developing leadership and life skills.

Virtual meetings are the third Thursday of each month. To join or refer a youth, please email: CWICEYouthGroup@peelcas.org



About CWICE

CWICE is a provincial service and training centre, recognized nationally for its leadership and innovation.

CWICE's foundational values are the safety, wellbeing and permanency for individuals and families within child welfare.

CWICE promotes early and pro-active child welfare practices, grounded in anti-racism and anti-oppression, to remove barriers in unresolved immigration, settlement and border-related issues. CWICE raises awareness of opportunities and creates permanency pathways for children, youth and families.

To make a referral:

Email: cwice@peelcas.org

Phone: 905-363-6131 ext. 2222

www.cwice.ca

For more information

[Read our publications](#), including the following:

- [2020/21 CWICE Annual Impact Report](#)
- [National Dialogue executive summary](#)
- [National Virtual Dialogue executive summary](#)

[Check out our upcoming training modules](#)

To view archived webinars from 2020/21 please visit [OACAS' member's site](#). There were four webinars part of the [CWICE Issues & Trends webinar series](#):

- Trends impacting clients due to COVID-19, such as housing issues (May 2020)
- Issues facing international students who are parents (November 2020)
- Partnering with community organizations to offer culturally safe services to Black newcomer and immigrant families (February 2021)
- Introducing Global Affairs Canada (March 2021)

Special Thanks

Thank you to Peel CAS for the continued support of CWICE, and those across the province, including OACAS, who have remained part of our growth. We would also like to take the opportunity to recognize and thank our dedicated CWICE team members:

Mary Beth Moellenkamp, Service Director

Liz Okai, Team Leader

Abimbola Fajobi
Abimbola Oyeyinka
Bahja Nassir
Gillian Tennyson
Mandisa Sifelani
Mohamed Shaw
Yvonne Dewornu-Keys

Danielle Ungara, Team Leader

Alicja Grabarczyk
Celistine Frampton
Claudia Obreque
Fatima Mukai
Natalia Valencia
Rosario Elmy
Shirley Asiamah

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