

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25





National Council of Youth in Care Advocates

Annual Report 2024-25

I.	Message From The President	02
II.	Message From The Executive Director	03
III.	About Us	04
IV.	Our Vision, Mission and Objectives	05
V.	Year In Review	06
VI.	Our Community	09
VII.	Financials	11



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members, Partners, and Friends,

This past year has been nothing short of transformative for the National Council of Youth in Care Advocates. In our first year as an independent, incorporated organization, we have begun to lay the foundation for a movement that is both rooted in lived experience and committed to systemic change.

We know that youth in and from care deserve more than a transition plan—they deserve a lifelong network of support, connection, and opportunity. This belief has guided every conversation we've had, every partnership we've built, and every decision we've made. From coast to coast to coast, our members and allies have worked tirelessly to ensure that the Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care are more than a set of guidelines—they are a promise

The journey has not been without challenges. Securing sustainable funding, navigating the realities of non-profit governance, and building our operational capacity have all tested our resilience. But the strength of our community—the collective voice of lived experience—has kept us moving forward. Together, we've influenced significant policy conversations and changes, expanded our national reach, and welcomed new voices to our Council.

As we head into our first Annual General Meeting, I'm inspired by what we've achieved in such a short time and energized by what lies ahead. Our work is just beginning, and we are determined to create a future where “aging out” is a term we only read about in history books.

Thank you to our members, our partners, and every young person who has shared their story and vision with us. Your courage is our compass, and your leadership is our future.

With gratitude and determination,

Zoe Bourgeois

President (Chair of the Board)

National Council of Youth in Care Advocates



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This year has been a landmark one for the National Council of Youth in Care Advocates (NCYICA). We have moved from being a project entity to becoming an independent, incorporated non-profit organization, ready to lead national change by and for youth in and from care.

The NCYICA is unique: we are driven by the voices and leadership of lived expertise, backed by strong partnerships with allies, organizations, and governments committed to pursuing equity and justice for the youth in care community. In 2024-25, we strengthened these partnerships, established new ones, and amplified the Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care on national and international stages.

We also faced the real challenges of establishing and building a sustainable non-profit organization – recruiting our very first Board of Directors, securing funding, formalizing policies, and ensuring our governance reflects the values we champion. With the support of our dedicated Board, committed members and allies, and visionary partners, we have built a strong foundation for growth and social systems impact.

Looking ahead, our focus is on turning our vision and mission into action - ensuring that every young person leaving care in Canada has access to the supports they need, for as long as they need them. I am deeply grateful for the trust, energy, and courage that this community brings to our shared mission.

Together, we will keep pushing for meaningful systemic change, grounded in the belief that all youth in and from care deserve nothing less than equity, dignity, wellbeing and opportunity.

With deep appreciation,

Dr. Melanie Doucet

Executive Director & Equitable Standards Project Lead
National Council of Youth in Care Advocates



ABOUT US

The National Council of Youth in Care Advocates (NCYICA) is comprised of provincial and territorial advocates with lived experience in the child protection system, Youth in Care Networks and key allies. Our membership is diverse, including 2SLGBTQIA+, Black, Indigenous, and racialized individuals as well as individuals with disabilities with lived experience from across the country.

Our intersectional work is centered on ensuring that youth in and from care are afforded equitable supports and conditions for success, so they may thrive and not only struggle to survive. We believe that all youth in care deserve ongoing and unconditional love, support, and encouragement, just as their peers who are not in the child protection system receive from their parents, friends, and communities throughout their entire lives.

Our collective work is focused on achieving meaningful change within the mainstream child protection system, and we acknowledge and recognize the sovereignty of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, their inherent jurisdiction over child and family services, and their approach to raising and caring for children in community, which has existed since time immemorial. We acknowledge that we live, work, play and meet on the territories and stolen land of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island, now called Canada.



OUR VISION

We dream of a world where ‘aging out’ no longer exists in our vocabulary, nor in child protection legislation and mandates. We dream of a society where youth in care are interdependently supported throughout their entire lives, just as their peers who are not in care may rely on their family, friends and communities well beyond the age of majority.

OUR MISSION

We seek to improve the life outcomes of young people in child protection systems across the country by ensuring they are not forced to transition to adulthood before they are ready, and before they have securely achieved financial stability and employment, accessed housing, have long-term access to health and wellness services, and connections to their culture, supportive people and communities.



OUR OBJECTIVES

- 1. Center the expertise and voices of people with lived experience and strengthen a national movement of youth in care advocates**
- 2. Build momentum and secure political support for the implementation of longstanding solutions for young people in and from care during the transition to adulthood.**
- 3. Seek a fundamental shift in how young people transition out of the child protection system, with strong adherence by government, community and private organizations, as well as front line professionals, to the Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care.**



YEAR IN REVIEW

The NCYCIA incorporated as a national non-profit organization on September 18, 2024, and established its very first Board of Directors. The organization's logo and branding was also developed, and we launched our [website](#) and social media presence via weekly posts on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter \(X\)](#) and [Bluesky](#) at the beginning of 2025. The NCYCIA also celebrated fundraising successes.

FUNDING



Remaining funds from the Northpine Foundation (\$5,276) to wrap up the Equitable Standards Evaluation Model Pilot Phase (Equitable Standards Project Phase 2) project activities were transferred from the child protection League of Canada (CWLC) to the NCYCIA in February 2025.



A 3-year grant (\$310,000) from the McConnell Foundation was obtained in March 2025 to partially support The Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care in Canada: An Accountability Framework for Policy and Service Delivery (Phase 3) project activities, enabling the NCYCIA to resume its virtual national advocacy mobilization activities.

In addition, a small grant (\$1,584) was obtained from Korryn Garvey in February 2025 for the NCYCIA to advocate for a Child and Youth Advocate in the Northwest Territories.



COALITION AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING



Identifying Collaborative
Research Priorities and
Literature Gaps in Child
Maltreatment Research

Funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) and led by Dr. Nicole Racine at the University of Ottawa, the goal of the Better Together project is to create partnerships between youth, caregivers, clinicians, and researchers to identify key research priorities to guide the future of child maltreatment research in Canada. Using a co-design research approach, the project is working with individuals with lived experience to identify and prioritize how to improve mental health and adaptive outcomes following exposure to child abuse and neglect.

In February 2025, the NCYCIA became engaged with the Better Together project Advisory Committee via Executive Director Melanie Doucet, who participated in the development of a survey focused on identifying key research priorities targeted to those under the age of 30 who experienced child maltreatment, as well as front line practitioners and caregivers who work with young people who experienced child maltreatment.



SPOTLIGHT:
Child Welfare

Spotlight: Child Welfare is a collaborative journalism project that brings together youth, families, advocates and journalists to improve media coverage of the so-called child “welfare” system. Hosted by The Tyee, this multi-year project is supported by funding from Inspirit Foundation, McConnell Foundation, and the Law Foundation of British Columbia.

In February 2025, the NCYCIA became engaged with the Spotlight: Child Welfare Advisory Committee via Executive Director Melanie Doucet, who advises on the strategic direction of the project and ensures linkages to the work of the NCYCIA.



Resilience
Research
Centre

Pathways from Child Welfare and Community Services to Stable or Precarious Living Conditions: A Mixed Methods, Participatory Action Research Approach to Understanding Diverse Young People’s Experiences

In Fall 2024, the NCYCIA became engaged as a partner in a research project proposal to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) led by Dr. Michael Ungar (Dalhousie University Resilience Research Center) and colleagues aimed at examining the experiences of housing precarity and homelessness of youth exiting care in Canada. Our Executive Director and several of our Lived Expert members are part of the proposed project’s National Leadership Committee, and will ensure the proposed project’s governance framework, research methodologies and implementation plan align with the NCYCIA’s values of meaningfully, equitably and ethically centering lived experience in all aspects of research that impacts the youth in care community. The proposal will be submitted to SSHRC for consideration in the fall of 2025.



THE EQUITABLE STANDARDS FOR TRANSITIONS TO ADULthood FOR YOUTH IN CARE PROJECT

While the NCYCIA incorporated as a non-profit organization on September 18, 2024, project activities did not begin at the NCYICA until February 2025 once our partnership with the Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) ended. In February and March 2025, our Executive Director Melanie Doucet had several meetings with government officials and staff from the Ministère de santé et de services sociaux (MSSS) [Ministry of health and social services] of Quebec to discuss the transition to adulthood for youth in care in the province and the Equitable Standards. She also presented the Equitable Standards at the Making the Shift (MTS) International Conference on the Prevention of Youth Homelessness, which took place February 24 to 26 in Toronto, ON. Our Executive Director and Jessica Knutson, one of our long time Lived Expert members, did a podcast interview about the Equitable Standards and the establishment of the NCYICA in February for the Beyond Binaries podcast hosted by one of our member organizations, Ontario Children's Advancement Coalition (OCAC), with the support of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. The podcast interview will be released later in the Fall of 2025. Our Executive Director also presented the Equitable Standards to a Community of Practice between government staff of the Government of New Brunswick Departments of Health and Social Development in March.

The Equitable Standards Community of Practice formed with our Evaluation Model Pilot Partners continued under the NCYCIA's leadership, with a meeting held in March. In addition, two of our Pilot Partners released their [Equitable Standards Action Plan](#), as part of their commitment and final step in the evaluation process. Reach Youth Services, a community-based organization in Winnipeg, Manitoba, released their Action Plan in February, and the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories (FFCNWT) released their Action Plan via their website in March.





OUR COMMUNITY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Zoe Bourgeois

President (Chair of The Board)

Zoe Bourgeois (MSW, RSW) is a social worker and long-time advocate for youth in and from care, bringing her lived experience and deep commitment to advancing equitable supports for youth in/from care across Canada. As President and Chair of the NCYICA Board of Directors, Zoe ensures the strategic plans and policies of the organization are implemented, and provides strategic guidance with respect to amplifying youth voices in social work policy and practice. Zoe has worked in both community and government roles, and was the N.B. Youth in Care Network Coordinator at Partners for Youth for five years where she became engaged with the NCYICA in its development of the Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care.



Rachel Gouin

Treasurer

Rachel Gouin (PhD) is a seasoned non-profit leader with expertise in organizational governance, fundraising, social policy, and partnership building, and a steadfast ally to youth in care advocacy efforts. As Treasurer of the NCYICA, she ensures all organization revenues and expenses are rigorously taken into account, alongside the Executive Director, and provides strategic guidance on community sector relations and the sustainability of the NCYICA. Rachel is currently the Executive Director at Le CAP: Centre d'appui et de prévention, a francophone multiservice organization in Ottawa.



Melissa Kimber

Secretary

Melissa Kimber (PhD, MSW, RSW) is a registered social worker and academic researcher, whose research and practice focuses on improving mental health care for children and youth, particularly those involved in child protection. As NCYICA Secretary, she serves as the custodian of all records of the organization, and provides strategic guidance on trauma- and violence-informed frontline practice implications, and fosters linkages to academic research partnerships, ensuring that the work of the NCYICA is grounded in evidence and equity. Melissa is currently an Associate Professor and Core Member at the Offord Centre for Child Studies within the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University, where she also holds the Chedoke Health Chair in Child Psychiatry.



OUR TEAM



Melanie Doucet

Executive Director & Equitable Standards Project Lead

Melanie Doucet (PhD) is the Executive Director, the Equitable Standards Project Lead and a founding member of the NCYICA, bringing both her lived experience in care and nearly 20 years of professional expertise in child protection research, policy, and advocacy. She holds a PhD in Social Work, is a renowned public speaker on the importance of equitably supporting youth in and from care from a rights-based and humane perspective, and is an award-winning researcher. Alongside the NCYICA, she co-led the development of the Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care and its accompanying Evaluation Model, both of which are gaining national and international recognition. Melanie is committed to ensuring that youth in and from care shape the systems that serve them, and she works tirelessly to build partnerships that advance this vision across Canada.

NCIYCA Active Members BY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY*

*as of August 20, 2025; a full list of active and alum members can be viewed on our website.

Quebec (QC)

Melanie Doucet	Lived Expert	National Council of Youth in Care Advocates (NCYICA)	Executive Director & Project Lead
Elijah Olise	Lived Expert	Holistic Afro Youth Center (HAYC)	CEO
Marcelle Partouche Gutierrez	Lived Expert	Montreal Youth in Care Alumni Student Association (MYCASA)	Director
Michelle Raposo	Lived Expert	CARE Jeunesse	Program Manager
Janis Taily-Dion	Lived Expert	CARE Jeunesse	Advocacy Coordinator
Ursy Ledrich	Lived Expert	Collectif Ex-Placé DPJ	Youth Council

Alberta (AB)

Kim Kakakaway	Ally	A Way Home Canada	Indigenous Training & Relations Consultant
Meghan Regier	Ally	Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Connector Team Lead
Ember Conway	Lived Expert	Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Team Member
Autumn Sampson	Lived Expert	Boyle Street Community Services	Youth Team Member

Manitoba (MB)

Marie Christian	Lived Expert	Youth in Care Canada (YICC)	President
Susan Russell	Lived Expert	Independent	-

Ontario (ON)

Cheyenne Ratnam	Lived Expert	Ontario Children's Advancement Coalition (OCAC)	CEO
Jadyn Hardie-Brady	Lived Expert	Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO)	Provincial Youth Council Program Assistant
Estelle Alexander	Lived Expert	Young Canadians Roundtable on Health (YCRH)	Co-Director of Policy
Francesca Tauvette	Ally	A Way Home Canada	Operations Manager
Ashley Bach	Lived Expert	Independent	—

New Brunswick

Brittany Tabor	Ally	New Brunswick Youth in Care Network (NBICN)	Anglophone Program Coordinator
Justin Pothier	Lived Expert	New Brunswick Youth in Care Network (NBICN)	Member
Jessica Gallant	Lived Expert	New Brunswick Youth in Care Network (NBICN)	Member

Prince Edward Island (PEI)

Delia Tassell	Lived Expert	Prince Edward Island Youth in Care Network (PEIYICN)	Coordinator
Anita-Jane Legge	Lived Expert	Prince Edward Island Youth in Care Network (PEIYICN)	Member

British Columbia (BC)

Jennaya Hayden	Ally	Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS) Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)	Coordinator
Justice Makier Williams	Lived Expert	Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS) Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)	Member
Jessica Knutson	Lived Expert	Independent	-
Kyle Turone	Lived Expert	Canadian Consortium on Child and Youth Trauma	Journal Watch Coordinator

Northwest Territories (NWT)

Sandra Noel	Lived Expert	Independent	-
Richard Epelon	Lived Expert	Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories (FFCNWT)	Youth Worker



FINANCIALS

These figures represent our financial standing as of our fiscal year end (March 31st, 2025). In our first year of operations, we focused on obtaining project-based revenue through grants. Further fundraising for both project and core funding will take place in the following years.

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS	2025
Project Revenue	\$116,861
Expenditures	
Operational Expenses	\$162.53
Travel, Accommodation and Meetings	\$1,293.22
Total Expenditures	\$1,455.75
Net Revenue For 2024-25	\$115,404.79





Email: nationalcouncilyica@gmail.com

Executive Director, Melanie Doucet: melanie.doucet@gmail.com

Website: www.ncyica.ca