



2023 Report

Our Journey Toward Equity

Planting the Seeds of Change



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Special Acknowledgement

The theme “Planting the Seeds of Change” was created by young people connected with us who have been leading the planning for the CCAS Pride event taking place in June. Thank you to those young people for their creativity and for inspiring us to be agents of change.



Message from our CEO

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS) began planting the seeds of change in our equity journey many years ago. We continue to do so to fulfill our mission of protecting children and strengthening families so that children and young people can remain in their own home. When a decision around the safety and well-being of a child or young person is made, there is an effort to place them with kin or kith, or culture match with a foster caregiver. Our hope is that by integrating and embedding equitable service in all that we do, we will better achieve positive outcomes for the children, young people and families in the Catholic community of Toronto.



This work is grounded in our Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO) policy that was developed in 2018. In doing so, we committed ourselves to ensure that all people associated with our agency, especially children, young people, families, communities, staff, caregivers, and volunteers, are ensured their human rights and freedoms, namely, to be free from all forms of racism, inequity, and oppression.

Systemic racism and ongoing inequities of intersectional identities have led to a significant overrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized individuals and their communities within the child welfare system. At CCAS, we recognize the adverse impact of many forms of oppression, such as anti-Black racism (ABR) and racism that leads to the disparity and disproportionality of equity-deserving families within our system. For example, while Black children and young people make up approximately 9.5% of the Toronto Catholic child population, they represent 34% investigated by our agency and 39% of children and young people in our care.

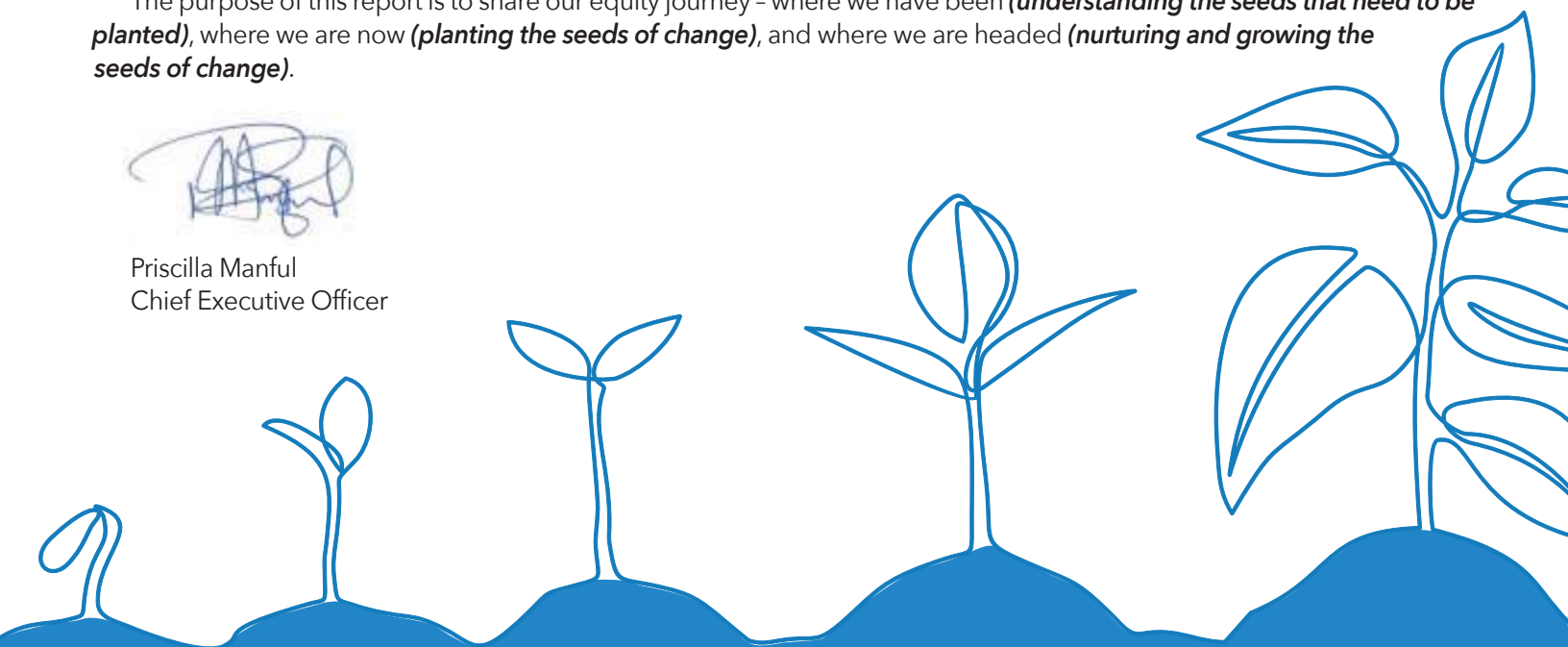
Our ABR plan is built on previous work completed at CCAS and within the field of child welfare, specifically the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' (OACAS) One Vision One Voice (OVOV) and the 11 Race Equity Practices, CCAS' current ARAO Blueprint, and CCAS' Deeper Look Report that was completed in 2017 and outlined equity recommendations.

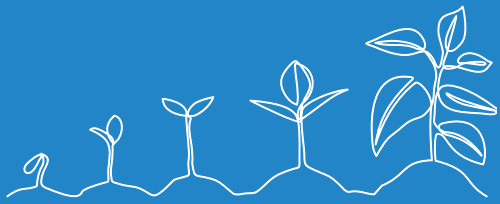
CCAS's Equity Strategy focuses on intentionally integrating equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the agency - from employees to volunteers to caregivers to the children, young people and families we serve. To help support this work, an Equity department was formed in 2022, whose vision for equity practice integration is to disrupt colonial and oppressive practices while nurturing young people, families, communities, and our own CCAS community through our ongoing work towards integrating equity into our child welfare practices. The department's primary focus is supporting staff through an equity consultation framework to promote positive outcomes for young people and families.

The purpose of this report is to share our equity journey - where we have been (***understanding the seeds that need to be planted***), where we are now (***planting the seeds of change***), and where we are headed (***nurturing and growing the seeds of change***).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Priscilla Manful'.

Priscilla Manful
Chief Executive Officer





Growing our Leaders



One of the ways CCAS is continuing its equity journey is through capacity building within its Board of Directors and Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

A mentoring relationship has been established between the Board of Directors at Taibu Community Health Centre (CHC) and CCAS' Board of Directors. Taibu CHC is a multidisciplinary, not-for-profit, community-led organization established to serve the Black Community in Toronto. This relationship will help build ABR capacity and learnings at the Board level and encourage current and future postings for new Board members to continue to develop diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In consultation with the Board of Directors, CCAS has developed five strategic priorities: Holistic Assessment and Response Pathways (HARP) - transforming the front door; Youth Readiness - transforming the back door; Clinical Development - providing high-quality, relationship-focused services; Organizational Culture - creating the best possible work environment; and Strategic Relationship with the Foundation - enabler of meaningful change to our organization, system, and the lives of families. Each of these directions is grounded in our Catholic Identity, ARAO, Trauma Informed Practice (TIP), and child welfare reform. The confirmation of these directions supports work already underway, particularly in strengthening our Catholic Identity and continuing our journey toward equity in our work.

CCAS' SLT has engaged the services of Nene Kwasi Kafele (ABR consultant), to provide individual and team mentoring and coaching along with strategic and operational advice. In 2021, all members of senior leadership were required to develop an accountability work plan for their department and a measurement matrix related to ABR and ARAO. Leaders are expected to report their equity activities and outcomes for their service areas at our Quarterly Review meetings.

In 2021, SLT, managers, supervisors, and staff participated in OACAS Equity in Child Welfare training. To underscore the importance and urgency, CCAS was one of the first child welfare agencies to engage the OACAS to facilitate the training for SLT. The OACAS then trained CCAS workers to facilitate equity learning within CCAS. This is a three-day training that is mandatory for all staff and will be completed by the end of 2023. The training will also be provided to the foster care community. To support equity learning, a knowledge-to-practice tool was piloted in 2022 to embed and integrate equity in all aspects of the work. This tool is under review and awaiting further recommendations.

To underscore the importance of equity in our work we have invested in the Equity Integration Department, which includes a supervisor, and four Equity Practice Integration Leads along with a position that leads the organization's work with respect to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) under the leadership of CCAS' Director of Service. Further, to ensure that there is ongoing dialogue about how to address equity within the context of our Catholic Identity, our Pastoral Advisor is a critical part of our Equity Integration Department.

CCAS is working towards having a workforce that is reflective of the diversity of the City of Toronto and strongly encourages applications from all qualified individuals, especially those who can provide different perspectives and contribute to the further diversification of ideas. The Human Resources Department has reviewed and made changes to job postings and has engaged the consultation services of Nene Kwasi Kafele and Kathleen Redmond (Leadership Consultant) to support this work.



Our Journey Toward Identity-Affirming and Equitable Service Delivery

Our equity journey has not always been easy and at times we did not get it right as demonstrated by our first race-based data analysis in 2011-2012 where we had an overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black children, young people and families in our system. Further, this data showed that Black children were 1.28 times more likely to be placed in care compared to their white counterparts (disparity). Our most recent data shows continued disproportionality for both Black and Latin American families; however, disparity with respect to placement in care has been eliminated for Black children and young people, with children identified as Black slightly less likely to be admitted within 12 months of investigation compared to white children investigated.

Our current journey toward equity compels us to reflect and understand how biases can influence our decision making. For example, we have seen a significant shift in the threshold for screening in Black families at the front door for staff trained in OVOV's Africentric Wraparound Model (ACW). The ACW tool allows staff to explore and analyze their biases and those of the referral sources when making decisions about who needs child welfare services, thus changing the trajectory for many Black families. Through this reflective lens, our agency takes a holistic perspective that is designed to support all initiatives within our organization, such as a clinical skills model that includes Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP), Holistic Assessment and Response Pathways (HARP), a differential response model, and Youth Readiness (preparing young people for independent living).

The integration of equity into TIP promotes healing, stability, and recovery in children, young people and families. Employees at CCAS are working to understand trauma, including racial trauma, and its impact on individuals, communities, and families, and to respond by applying trauma-informed principles to all areas of functioning within the organization, seeking to resist the re-traumatization of service recipients and staff.

The integration of equity into HARP applies a holistic assessment and a tailored service response that centres the voices of children, young people and families to create meaningful change with a focus on engagement, partnership development and education. We recognize that a "one size fits all" approach to service characterized by the forensic investigation is not matched to the needs of the majority of families referred to child welfare, many of whom are struggling with chronic needs that if left unattended to over the long-term lead to endangered development and well-being rather than placing children at risk of imminent physical harm. HARP seeks to build a flexible front door that provides services to families that are culturally safe and that continue to align with the pillars of our organization (TIP, EQUITY and Catholic Identity).

The integration of equity into the Ministry Quality Standards Framework Regulation (QSF) ensures that there is an equitable lens in the implementation of QSF which addresses inconsistencies provided to children and young people with

respect to their care. Equity integration is essential to the improvement of care and centering the voices of children and young people while holding society accountable for providing quality care to support the best outcomes for them.

The integration of equity into the Youth Readiness initiative puts young people at the centre of planning by taking a more holistic, tailored approach in identifying the unique needs of our young people; focusing on resources and service delivery grounded in ARAO, trauma informed, evidence-based practice while understanding the impact of colonialism which directly relates to the disparities and disproportionalities experienced by Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQI+ young people and those with differing abilities. Readiness focuses on supporting equitable outcomes in the areas of health, well-being and educational achievement, to name just a few.

To ensure identity-affirming and equitable service delivery, equity needs to permeate through all areas of the agency. The following sections of the report provides an overview of the key areas of focus of the CCAS's Equity Department: Catholic Identity, ABR, Indigenous Commitments, SOGIE, the Latin American community, and our dedication to equitable service which includes addressing issues of poverty, family reunification, and understanding the impact of social determinants of health on children, young people and families.

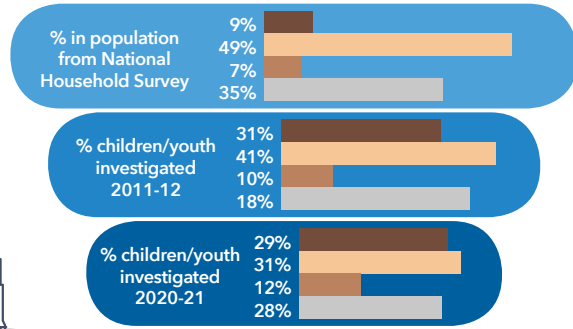


TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE EVEN MORE PROGRESS

While our data show improvements, there is still disproportionality and disparity that need our attention

INVESTIGATIONS

● Black ● White ● Latin American ● Other racialized identities



Even though Black children/youth comprise just 9% of the Toronto Catholic child/youth population, investigations are at

29%

Black children/youth are investigated at



3x

their representation in the general population

Latin American children/youth are investigated at



2x

their representation in the general population

KEY POINTS

OUR STRATEGY

With the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, we designed and launched the Africentric Wraparound Strategy and are expanding it

Engaging with our community partners and other sectors who refer to us, including police, education, and health

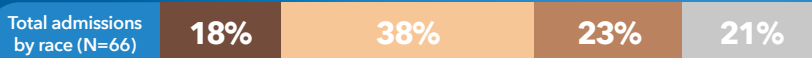
Asking about racial identity and entering this data consistently to ensure our stats are more accurate and complete

ADMISSIONS

2011-2012



DISPARITY



2020-2021

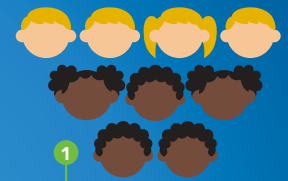
FOCUS: Continue to improve the accuracy and completeness of data. Recent analysis shows 14% of race data are missing at referral/investigation and 2% of child/youth in care data

LET'S GET TO WORK!

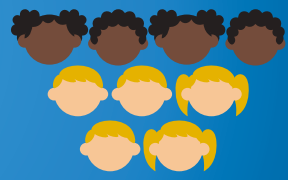
FOCUS: Work to understand the drivers of disproportionality and disparity for Latin American diaspora communities, and on reducing investigations within these communities

FOCUS: work to reduce disproportionality in investigations at the front end of our system

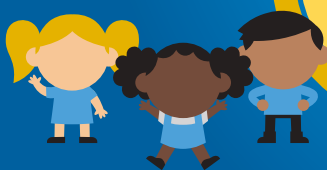
2011-12 data show that for every 4 white children/youth, 5 Black children/youth were admitted



KEY POINTS



2020-21 data show that for every 4 Black children/youth, 5 white children/youth were admitted



Our Catholic Identity: Planting the Seeds of Faith



There are many references to planting seeds in the Gospels, with the most prominent one being the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. The main takeaway from this parable is that seeds can only blossom into fruitful plants if the soil, environment, and conditions are favourable for growth. Our goal at CCAS is to provide fertile ground so that the seeds of faith may flourish in the children, young people and families we serve.

Planting the seeds of faith is synonymous with planting the seeds of change. To create the change we want to see in the world, we must first cultivate the soil by first laying the groundwork for that change to take root. If we can help provide those favourable conditions for the seed to blossom, then the Catholic children, young people and families we serve are better positioned to grow in their faith. Our role as a faith-based child welfare agency is to make sure we are doing all that we can to build that foundation of fertile ground.

In the past, our tendency was to engage our service recipients in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith when they clearly made it known to us that spirituality was integral to their lives. Planting the seeds of faith involves a shift in our approach where our services become the catalyst for faith development, instead of relying on our families to always begin the conversation. Currently, we are working on training modules for staff to better equip them with this new approach to faith delivery, so they have the confidence to initiate conversations about faith, rather than always responding to it. Other initiatives we have started this year include our Catholic Identity Youth Group and our World Youth Day Pilgrimage trip.

The Catholic Identity Youth Group provides young people an opportunity to have conversations about faith. It is sponsored

by the Adolescent Teams that noticed conflict between parents and young people over their different understandings of the faith. Our goal is to promote discussion about their faith at a youth level, so that our young people have a safe space to ask questions about Catholicism. It is our hope that these types of discussions will lead to less parent-teen conflict over issues of the faith. We use the Alpha Youth series which explores a variety of topics within the Christian faith targeted for their specific age demographic. So far, we have noticed our young people attending the group are having lots of fun and challenging us with their questions. Week after week, our young people are demonstrating to us that they are growing in their faith development.

In addition to the youth group, we also planned a trip for our older youth to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. It will be a once in a lifetime experience that we hope will change their understanding of Catholicism. World Youth Day, started by Pope John Paul II, occurs every three to four years and is an opportunity to bring Catholic young people from all over the world together to collectively practice their faith. It is a formative experience for young people that fosters faith development at a time in their lives when they are most susceptible to losing their faith tradition. Funded by the Catholic Children's Aid Foundation, we hope this pilgrimage experience will strengthen their faith. Again, with both of these projects the goal is to provide opportunities or "fertile ground" for faith development rather than waiting for families to always petition us with their faith needs. Building our service to be a foundation for faith development will allow more seeds to take root and thus grow the faith-life of our families.



Survey feedback from families regarding their Catholic Identity

% service recipients who feel Religious/Spiritual beliefs are "very important" for workers to focus on



% service recipients who attend church "once in a while" (49%) or "daily/weekly" (27%)





Our Journey with Anti-Black Racism

At CCAS we have and continue to grapple with disproportionality and disparity with respect to the Black families with whom we work. Historically, Black families did not benefit from a systemic or systematic approach to supporting them in their interactions with our system to ensure that they were receiving fair and just child protection services. Furthermore, the issue of anti-Black racism (ABR) in the child welfare sector and here at CCAS is not primarily evidenced through overt acts of anti-Blackness but rather, is deeply ingrained in the very fabric of child welfare institutions, policies, and practices that are carried out by the staff that make up these agencies.

The anti-Blackness that has led to disproportionality and disparity has been connected to the “standardized” nature of legislation and policies and how the application of such policies has disproportionate negative impacts on Black children, young people and families. However, the status quo of ABR has also been maintained, through implicit bias and the negation of the reality that much of child welfare practice, although guided by policies and legislation, does in fact require staff and leaders to make assessments and decisions, which are often filtered through a Eurocentric lens. This has often acted to further marginalize families who do not fall within the understanding of Eurocentric, heteronormative parenting practices. In response to the well documented issues of ABR, CCAS, like many other child welfare organizations, is now making genuine efforts to address this issue at an interpersonal and systemic level.

CCAS’ Equity Department was established in June 2022 after much internal advocacy, and in alignment with OACAS’ OVOV Program and its ACW model, an approach to service delivery that seeks to unpack and dismantle bias in decision-making about families through critical reflection and to provide identity-affirming services to children, young people and families of African descent. These initiatives sought to support the provincial child welfare sector in addressing ABR.

Before detailing the specific efforts and initiatives that have been made here at CCAS, it is important to acknowledge the tremendous sacrifices and contributions that Black and allied child welfare professionals, community leaders, and Elders and Activists have made to move forward the work in this area. We are indebted to such pioneers as their efforts have been instrumental in creating the current climate, where speaking about the very issues of ABR, is no longer met with harsh resistance and in a dismissive or punitive manner, but rather, is normalized, and here at CCAS, encouraged.

At CCAS, the Equity and ABR journey began in a formal capacity in 2016 when the position of an ARAO manager was created. However, prior to this, there were many individual and collective efforts made by Black staff and allies, to address this issue. It is important to acknowledge the efforts of Black staff who identified issues of ABR and worked tirelessly from multiple different perspectives and in various roles at the agency, to advocate for more racially and culturally affirming intervention supports. We at CCAS acknowledge



that this advocacy was often done during a period when there was a climate of overt resistance, that required them to do so in such a way that maintained their professional survival in the workplace.

Additionally, the It Takes A Village (ITAV) Committee, which is a committee comprised of Black CCAS staff who hold full-time child welfare roles, was struck to provide support to Black and Bi-racial children and young people in care. The dedication of these staff continues to date, as the ITAV committee continues to remain active and provide support to young people in care currently. One of the major successes of ITAV's work is evidenced through the annual Freedom Walk trip where a group of Black young people are taken on a sometimes week-long trip, to learn more about their history.

In 2016, after the creation of the ARAO leadership position, CCAS engaged a consultant to do internal work with staff to hear about the experiences of Black service recipients from the perspective of staff, as well as seek an understanding of the internal climate at CCAS with a particular focus on how Black staff experience our agency. Since that time, the agency engaged in several initiatives such the establishment of the Services to African Descent Families Committee, and subsequently the ARAO Committee.

Currently, the Equity department at CCAS has identified ABR work as a significant priority and has assigned two Equity Practice Integration Leads to champion the work under this portfolio. In addition to delivering the OACAS Equity in Child Welfare training to staff, which heavily focuses on ABR; case consultations related to Black families, agency presentations and learning events including a recently developed and delivered workshop on the critical use of discretionary power, have been carried out from a perspective that centres ABR.

With a recognition that ABR work in child welfare is uniquely connected to our intersections with other systems, particularly policing and the criminal justice system, as well as the education system, collaborative efforts are being made in relation to these two systems. The Equity department here at CCAS is engaged in the Toronto Police Service new recruits, Community Experience Program whereby we deliver an ABR focused presentation on the intersection between child welfare and policing and how to navigate this work with an ABR lens.

We have collaborated with the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) to address how these two systems engage with one another, often perpetuating ABR and causing harm to children and their families, and while there is room for improvement, we continue to have meaningful engagement with the social workers at TCDSB. Ongoing consultations are also taking place through partnership with the Chief Social Worker and Intake Services Manager.

CCAS is continuing to offer unique learning opportunities and develop specific educational/learning curriculums that can be rolled out to staff. Further, we will be engaging in agency presentations with respect to ABR-focused practice at both the team and department level to support the ongoing integration into practice. The OVOV Initiative at the OACAS continues to work on updated training materials with respect to services to African Canadian families and once this becomes available, training opportunities will be prioritized here at CCAS to ensure staff are supported in this learning. Our goal is to eradicate ABR from our organization and the broader child welfare sector, improving experiences for Black service recipients, staff and volunteers.



Our Commitment to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Communities

In 2017, the child welfare sector in Ontario publicly apologized to the Indigenous community and made eight commitments to the Indigenous community. Of the eight commitments made by child welfare, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS) has focused on reducing the number of Indigenous children in care, reducing the number of legal files involving Indigenous children and families, implementing mandatory regular Indigenous training for all staff and consulting with Indigenous communities to develop an agency-based plan to better address the needs of children and families in the community.

CCAS developed a relationship with Native Child Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) wherein the provision of racial and culturally appropriate services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) children, young people and families was addressed. To date, we have transferred over 90% of our children, young people and families with FNIM identities to NCFST for child welfare, family well-being and other services. We also supported NCFST to accommodate the receiving of children and young people that had been in the care of CCAS.

In addition, CCAS supported over 60 individuals in making their claims for compensation through the Sixties Scoop class action lawsuit brought against and settled by the federal government.

CCAS has committed to training staff and foster caregivers on issues impacting the FNIM community and has worked in collaboration with the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) to deliver

the "Becoming an Ally" training for staff. In addition, other training opportunities such as "Understanding Identity Characteristics within the CYFSA" for foster caregivers were provided.

FNIM Bands and communities have developed legislation to exercise jurisdiction under the act to ensure self-governance and self-determination. As such, the First Nations Bands and communities are reaching out to CCAS for information regarding the provision of services to children, young people and families from their Bands and Indigenous communities. To date, CCAS has received a request for information from over 12 First Nations Bands across Ontario and has hired two contract staff to mine over 1500 files in search of the information requested by the Bands.

Moving forward, the Equity Department will continue to offer our staff support in providing services to those members of the FNIM community who choose to continue to be serviced by CCAS. As well as developing relationships with the FNIM community organizations and Bands, we will continue providing training to honour our Indigenous commitments.

Indigenous Commitments

Since 2019 we have transferred to Native Child & Family Services:
30 FNIM families
18 FNIM children and young people





Embracing and Empowering the SOGIE Community

Historically, CCAS has struggled to meet the needs of the 2SLGBTQI+ children, young people and families we serve. That is not to say supports and services were not offered, but it was done on an individual basis.

In 2015, CCAS embarked on a significant change in position as a faith-based organization that recognized the needs of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and the teachings of love and acceptance from the Catholic Church. CCAS recognized the need for the development of services for 2SLGBTQI+ young people that was more closely aligned with service values and principles to protect children and strengthen families from the 2SLGBTQI+ community. This resulted in the development of a committee called Qmunity Alliance comprised of staff and young people in care, as well as the opportunity to celebrate Pride events at CCAS, and putting forth a proposal for a SOGIE Lead.

In concert with our organization's ARAO policy, we recognize that children, young people and families from the 2SLGBTQI+ community are marginalized, experience significant differential treatment, disparities and disproportionality.

Over the last year, a SOGIE Lead position was created as part of the Equity Integration Department to assist in increasing awareness of the SOGIE-related needs throughout the organization, including the importance of identity-based data collection, family rejection and its subsequent impacts, and SOGIE social determinants of health. We have also commenced mandatory SOGIE training for all our staff members. We actively continue to advocate for changes within the child welfare system and have collaboratively worked to make recommendations to the CPIN system to ensure everyone's identity can be fully and appropriately captured.

We are working with our Clinical Services and consultants such as Dr. Patel in ensuring mental health services for children and young people who identify as part of the rainbow community are made available. We are currently partaking in a research study on the utilization of a tool that will assist staff members in gaining a better understanding of familial/community supports for young people who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. As a result





of the various intersectionality within the 2SLGBTQI+ community, there are numerous opportunities for collaboration between the Equity Practice Integration Leads to ensure the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ young people are met during new agency initiatives, such as the Youth Readiness initiative and creating a one-stop shop for community resources on our website. We are in our sixth year of hosting a Pride Celebration, with young people in care taking the lead in planning this year's event. We are establishing connections and engaging with 2SLGBTQI+ community members and organizations to have a greater understanding and learning around equitable service delivery - one that embraces and supports the needs of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

We will continue to strengthen our awareness and implementation of best practices by increasing partnerships with community organizations who serve the 2SLGBTQI+ community. We recognize there are significant gaps in service delivery and are committed to strengthening partnerships with community organizations to fill these gaps. This includes specialized counseling and faith-based support services for families who engage in ambivalent/rejecting behaviours because of their faith and/or cultural beliefs. We also need to continue to build internal supports by

developing affirming faith-based initiatives to support the spiritual growth of children and young people who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, create a youth group for 2SLGBTQI+ young people, engage in caregiver recruitment efforts that enhance and strengthen the foster caregiver pool and implement screening tools that assist in identifying affirming caregivers/placements. This also includes specialized training for staff members to broaden staff awareness of the needs of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

We will continue the integration of practices and policy that consider the unique needs of the 2SLGBTQI+ children, young people and families we serve while ensuring there are appropriate supports in place for staff members who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

The work ahead is driven by our faith, the voices of the children and young people we serve, and upholding the rights set forth in the Ontario Human Rights Code; Bill 89, the Child, Youth and Families Services Act; Bill 57, Katelynn's Principle; the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Ontario Child Welfare LGBT2SQI+ Organizational Self- Assessment, the Chief Coroner's Expert Panel Report "Safe with Intervention", One Vision One Voice and CCAS' organizational policy on Equity.



Our Service to the Children, Young People and Families We Serve

At CCAS, we will continue our journey to provide the best possible service to the children, young people and families involved with our agency.

As an agency, we encountered many challenges in our journey toward providing more equitable services to the Catholic community of Toronto. We operated using a Eurocentric understanding of parenting and family dynamics. In doing so, we perpetuated a limited assessment lens and did not fully recognize the importance and relevance of one's identity and lived experience(s). This contributed to the existing disproportionality and disparity within our child welfare system. As well, internal relations, policies and learning opportunities have also been highlighted as an area of need.

It has been recognized that poverty along with other social determinants of health significantly impacts the children, young people and families we serve. The Equity Practice Integration Leads are examining the impact and related outcomes which are incorporated during the consultation process by ensuring that all intersectionalities are considered.

Social determinants of health is one of the many portfolios we are currently working on in collaboration with our CCAS Health Specialists in developing learning opportunities for our staff to build awareness of these issues impacting our communities and how these further affect them as they get involved with CCAS. We are also looking into some strategic initiatives in combatting poverty within the child welfare system as we work with children, young people and families who experience poverty. We also acknowledge the diversity within our community including the experiences of immigrant families who experience separation and reunification that has direct impact on their family relationships, parenting and overall well-being.



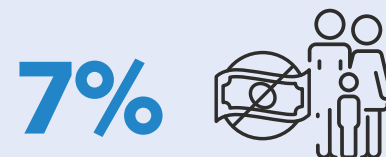
As a child welfare agency, we have a responsibility to use an equitable lens when completing assessments and overall service delivery to the children, young people and families within our CCAS community. We acknowledge that change does not happen overnight and that it is an ongoing journey. The seeds we plant now within CCAS will foster a more diverse, inclusive and equitable community. Keeping equity at the forefront, here at CCAS, we embrace the challenge and look forward to being a more supportive and inclusive child welfare agency - where all are welcome.

POVERTY STATS

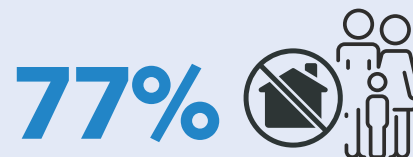
The number of investigated families in Ontario who receive social assistance/EI as their primary income



Do not have a source of income



Do not own their own home



CITATION:

Fallon, B., Filippelli, J., Lefebvre, R., Joh-Carnella, N., Trocmé, N., Black, T., ... Stoddart, J. (2020). Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2018 (OIS-2018). Toronto, ON: Child Welfare Research Portal.



Our Journey with Latin American Diaspora Communities

The dominant discourses that have worked in concert with the legacies of colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade have contributed to the disparities faced by the Latin American diaspora community in the child welfare sector among other intersecting sectors and systems such as criminal justice, education, immigration, among others. It is crucial to deepen understandings of Latin America's racial and ethno-cultural diversity. Although "Latin American" has been socially constructed as a racial category, this has posed many challenges in contributing to the negation of the nuanced experiences of the racial diversity that exists simultaneously, that gets missed if not properly identified. Diverse Indigeneity, Afro-Latin American identities, and Mestizo identities are all integral parts of Latin American identities, and pivotal to be understood to provide equitable service. Moreover, it is imperative to understand the Latin American community as one that is comprised by many countries with cultural diversity in addition to racial diversity, its two main colonial languages, Spanish and Brazilian among its multiple Indigenous languages.

Consequently, the Latin American diaspora in the North is faced with Eurocentric ways of knowing that have impacted ongoing oppressive narratives which have contributed to misconceptions of ways of being, over-sexualization of women, parenting, community, parent-child engagement, and engagement with systems. More specifically, in child welfare, and at CCAS, these communities have been provided with band-aid solutions of focusing on service provision solely centered on Spanish-speaking workers

as a way of addressing the unique experiences of intersectionality present in these communities. This strategy lacked understanding of a diverse community of individuals that are not a homogenous group, and therefore do not share the same experiences. Furthermore, it has lacked awareness of individual countries' experiences of civil war, guerrillas, anti-Black racism (ABR), anti-Indigeneity, patriarchy, among other social justice issues that are a direct result of colonialism. Lastly, it is imperative to consider the impacts of immigration that also contribute to possible re-traumatization, and further inter-generational colonial trauma of Latin American communities.

At CCAS, we have recognized that there is limited knowledge about this community, as this community requires unique service provision that understands the legacies, to be able to ensure equitable service provision. This has been further solidified as our data has shown growing disproportionality for Latin American communities in our system. A couple initiatives are currently underway in hopes of addressing the need experienced by the Latin American community:

Firstly, a deeper understanding of ABR and anti-Indigeneity existing within the community is imperative as it can impact race-based data when asking service recipients to identify with specific racial categories.

In response to ongoing disproportionality being captured through our stats of Latin American communities in our sector, the Latin American Committee was recently formed, initially led by an Investigation supervisor and worker, to



explore how the “front door” can be transformed when encountering referral sources that refer Latin American communities.

Consultations were held with Dr. Henry Parada, professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, and Dr. Bryn King, associate professor at University of Toronto, as they have collaborated on much research regarding Latin American communities.

Additionally, a partnership with Family and Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region, has been struck to develop learnings about the diverse history, diversity of identities, diverse experiences of the Latin American community, and areas to consider when providing child welfare service.

Lastly, ongoing collaboration with the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) has provided opportunities to speak about the unique experiences and social factors that must be considered when working with Latin American communities.

In collaboration with the Quality Assurance department (QA), Equity Department, and the Latin American Committee, data collection, and racial classification will be reviewed at the provincial level with hopes of appropriately capturing individuals’ racial and cultural identities. Our focus will be

reviewing current data to gain more knowledge on patterns of child protection concerns, and service provision, which will allow for recognition and awareness of the areas of discretionary power and advocacy that can be employed when servicing this community.

Our plans include:

Community partnerships:

There is a recognition that community partner agencies that provide service to Latin American communities have a unique knowledge and understanding of equitable service delivery and we will therefore be prioritizing partnerships with these agencies.

Increased collaboration:

To ensure intersectionality is being considered there will be a focus on collaboration with equity Integration Leads within the department.

Building capacity with staff:

Learning events will be developed for staff to provide specialized knowledge and awareness of the unique experiences of the Latin American diaspora.

Collaboration with Community Partners

CCAS is continuing our partnership with a wide variety of community based agencies in Toronto.

We will continue to work in partnership with OACAS and ANCFSAO to be a part of leading equity-focused practices in the province. Specifically, we will work on the following:

- ▶ **Leadership Development**
- ▶ **Environmental and Organizational Readiness**
- ▶ **Central Zone Practice**
- ▶ **OVOV 11 Race Equity Practices**
- ▶ **Equity and SOGIE Training**
- ▶ **Becoming an Ally Training**

The combination of these efforts has resulted in fewer Black families investigated by CCAS, and fewer Black children and young people coming into our care. At the same time, we have augmented our Community Links approach, connecting many more families with supports in the community so that families who require service, but who do not need child protection intervention, can receive the support they need.



Nurturing and Growing the Seeds of Change: Where We are Headed

- 1. Data:** Our data is currently aggregated by racialized identities and we use data to inform our work. We will continue to analyze our data bi-annually to access trends with a view to continuously improve outcomes for families.
- 2. Work With Referral Sources:** We have more racialized children in our system, in large part because of the high rate of referrals of racialized children, young people and families at the front door. As a result, there are significant implications for our work with community referral sources. We are asking questions of our referral sources to understand their concerns and to promote meaningful engagement with families.
- 3. Adapt the OVOV Best Practices and Promising Practices in African Canadian Service Delivery:** The Equity Practice Integration Team will provide learning opportunities for staff to achieve the best possible outcomes for families.
- 4. Enhance the ARAO and ABR Consultation Framework:** The ARAO consultation was implemented in September 2022. Through the Equity Practice Integration Leads, this model provides support to all staff at key decision points so that an equity lens is integrated into service planning decision-making. We will continue to enhance this framework.
- 5. Develop the iLearn Everything Equity Practice System:** The Equity Department has developed an iLearn Everything Equity Practice System that uses purposeful activities that transform people's beliefs and actions to support equitable practices in service delivery for children, young people and families. We will continue to provide learning opportunities throughout the agency that focuses on collecting identity-based data and the social determinants of health to name a few.
- 6. Develop Knowledge and Capacity to Serve Latin American Diaspora Communities:** Continue collaboration with learning partners and develop learning opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes for families.
- 7. Honouring our Indigenous Commitments:** We will continue to support staff in providing services to members of the FNIM community. In addition, a focus will be on developing relationships with the FNIM community organizations and Bands.
- 8. Enhance our Identity Affirming Services:** Continuing our journey towards enhancing our understanding of various identities of young people and develop service goals that are reflective of these identities.
- 9. Public Reporting:** Continue to publicly report race-based data on our website and to our community partners, including children, young people and families we serve.
- 10. Community Collaboration:** Continue collaborating and building new partnerships within our community to support the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families we serve in the Catholic community of Toronto.

To ensure accountability, we will continue to collect and analyze our data, increase collaborations and partnerships with the community, and centre the voices of children, young people and families to understand the services they want and need, and to obtain their feedback. We at CCAS are committed to providing equitable service and we will continue to evaluate and update our equity strategy.

