

2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

ADDRESSING OUR PRESENT
& PLANNING OUR FUTURE



*** MISSION STATEMENT**

The Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society is dedicated to the well-being and safety of every child by advocating for, and partnering with, our children, families and communities.

TERRITORIAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society acknowledges the sacred land upon which we are located. We recognize that this land has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples from the beginning. This is the Traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie people. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on this land. We are especially mindful of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and acknowledge that we walk upon territories and original nations of the first peoples of this land.

2021-2022

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Mr. Hugo Vega, Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

A Message from the BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The 2021-2022 fiscal year can be summarized as a period of self-reflection and transition, with a focus on establishing the groundwork for the operational and cultural future of the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society (WECAS). It has provided our Board of Directors, management team and frontline staff an opportunity to look within and identify what we can be for the children, youth and families whom we support, as well as the broader community.

This past year, WECAS embarked on a process to envision a new way forward as an agency. One that seeks to be transformational in nature through the deepening of our commitment to center Equity and Prevention, and providing children, youth and families with the tools to be their own decision makers. Over the course of several months, and through comprehensive focus groups with members of our Board of Directors, staff, community partners, foster/kin parents, youth and volunteers, as well as personalized consultations with priority equity-seeking groups, our 2022-2025 WECAS Strategic Plan was developed. It formulates a foundation to help our agency acknowledge our legacy, address our present and plan for a new future.

In the spirit of actionable reconciliation and anti-oppressive practices, our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan further represents the means by which WECAS can become a community-led and community-informed agency, through the setting of strategic and operational goals that seek to partner with, and enhance the outcomes of three communities in particular, with keen focus on addressing their overrepresentation in the Child Welfare System.

They are:

- First Nations, Inuit & Métis (FNIM) communities;
- Black African, Canadian and Caribbean (BACC) communities; and
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, and Questioning (LGBT2SQ+) communities

Through our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, we are committed to work with these communities, in particular, to implement frameworks like 'One Vision One Voice', the LGBT2SQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment, and Truth and Reconciliation Commission commitments more fulsomely. We hope that the cultural shift taking place at WECAS takes greater hold, and that the children, youth and families we support experience a noticeable difference.

As we simultaneously reflect back and look forward in what feels like a pivotal year in the WECAS



Mr. Kulveer Virk,
M. Eng., PMP
Board Chair



Mr. Derrick Drouillard
BSW, MSW, RSW
Executive Director

journey, we are reminded that the adversity faced by marginalized communities in our local and national context is not disconnected to the means in which we function as individuals in society and as a collective of professionals within an institutional system. As such, through our new Strategic Plan, we seek to establish the building blocks to earn the ability to enter into a new kind of relationship with the children, youth and families we interact with, giving them a greater voice and ownership over their own futures. That work is deepened when we commit to keep families together and when their experiences, ideas and innovation inform the ways in which our protocols, processes and policies need to change for their benefit.

These are the stepping-stones being laid in the year ahead, in what we hope becomes a perpetual cycle of growth, learning and adaptation towards lasting and generational change. With our Senior Leadership team showing bold and courageous leadership at the forefront, with the addition of an OVOV Specialist and a Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to the WECAS team, and with a framework that invites individuals, partners and stakeholders to envision a new path forward, we are choosing to be active allies vying to co-design a new future for Child Welfare in Windsor-Essex.

As we strengthen our partnerships with other community organizations, we are mindful of the rich resource that is our own Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Foundation (WECAF). WECAF launched a new three-year, \$1.5 million fundraising campaign early in the new fiscal year of 2022-2023. Children, Youth & Families – Strength for Today, Opportunities for Tomorrow is based on the principles of WECAF's Strategic Plan that was adopted by WECAF's Board of Directors. Its

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messaging and goals mirror that of the WECAS Strategic Plan. WECAF generates funds through community support for the many programs that support children, youth and families in realizing their full potential so they can embrace a bright and fulfilling future.

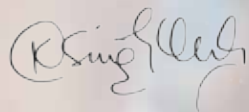
In 2021/2022, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be a significant challenge. Its impact on the whole of society, here and across the globe, is still being felt. Its lasting effects, though not yet completely understood, are likely to be generational in nature. Yet, despite the uncertainty, our staff pulled together in unprecedented ways to adapt means and methods to continue to serve our community and to uphold the wellbeing of children, youth and families in Windsor-Essex. From fulfilling our legislated child-protection responsibilities with strict compliance, to evolving public health guidelines, to enhancing access to wrap-around supports and pandemic specific benefits that helped families weather the pandemic storm, our staff have and continue to play a strong supportive role to the

front-line heroes of the pandemic. Collective efforts have been so robust, that despite the mounting and competing pressures of the pandemic, significant strides were made on the: Reduction of children/youth coming into CAS care; Increase in the number of children/youth placed in Kinship Service Homes; Reduction in the number of cases currently before the courts; and Reduction in the number of children/youth placed in OPR foster and OPR group care.

Through careful planning and efforts that upheld fiscal responsibility, WECAS was able to end the year with a balanced budget in accordance with reporting requirements from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

Finally, we would like to extend appreciation to members of both the WECAS and WECAF Boards of Directors, management, staff, foster and kin parents and caregivers, and volunteers. All of these individuals bring many talents, insight and credibility to the work we do.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mr. Kulveer Virk,
M.Eng., PMP
Board Chair



Mr. Derrick Drouillard,
BSW, MSW, RSW
Executive Director

2022-2025 WECAS STRATEGIC PLAN

Addressing Our Present & Planning Our Future

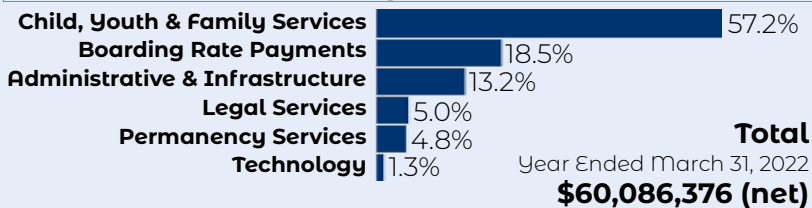


FINANCIAL summary

| | 2021-2022 | 2020-2021 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Province of Ontario | \$ 57,185,525 | \$ 57,024,900 |
| Other Income and Expenditure Recoveries | 2,055,917 | 2,436,753 |
| Total Revenue | 59,241,442 | 59,461,653 |
| Salaries, Benefits, Travel and Training | 40,151,630 | 41,116,236 |
| Boarding Rate Payments | 11,405,321 | 11,507,070 |
| Child, Youth and Family Costs | 6,309,624 | 5,367,460 |
| Administration and Technology | 4,275,718 | 4,230,156 |
| Total Expenditures | 62,142,293 | 62,220,922 |
| Deficiency of Revenue Over Expenditures | \$ (2,900,851) | \$ (2,759,269) |

* Audited financial statements available at wecas.on.ca *

*How the dollar was spent



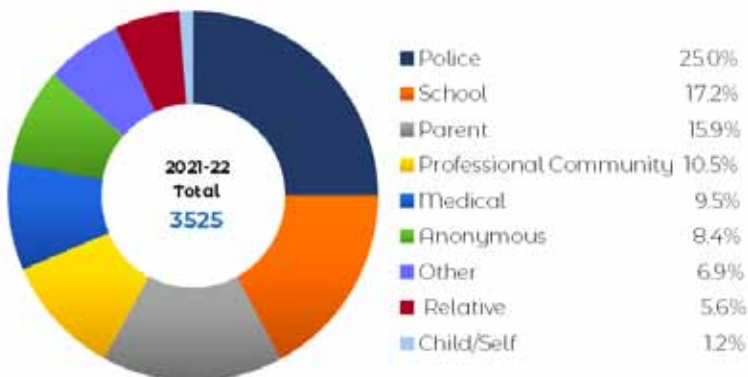
SERVICE Statistics

3460
FAMILIES SERVED IN
COMMUNITY WITH
PROTECTION CONCERNS

2261
INVESTIGATIONS COMPLETED

812
AVERAGE FAMILIES SERVED
AT ONGOING PROTECTION

REFERRAL sources



327 *full-time equivalent
STAFF

130
VOLUNTEERS

187
COMMUNITY LINKS

126
KINSHIP SERVICE FAMILIES SERVED

140
FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARE HOMES

CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVED

395 \ Children and Youth Served in Care (includes CCSY)

147 \ Youth Served Through Continued Care & Support for Youth Program

170 \ Children and Youth in Kinship Service

26 \ Adoptions Completed

2.8% Children and Youth Served in Community Admitted to Care
97 Admissions = **81** In Care + **16** Voluntary Youth Services Agreement

In the past five years, the total number of WECAS children and youth admitted into care has dropped by

57.5%



WE WILL BUILD TRUST:

Promote & Integrate Equity into our service delivery to build confidence and cultivate new partnerships.

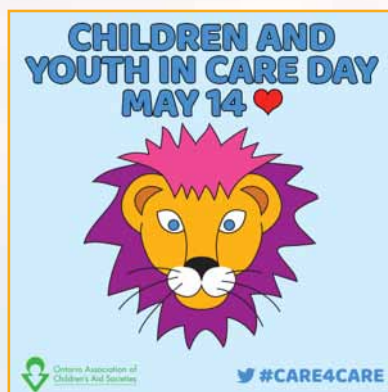
Pride Flag Raising Event

WECAS stood in solidarity with members of the LGBT2SQ+ community by hosting an outdoor Flag Raising Ceremony on Thursday, September 9, 2021, in recognition of Pride Month 2021. Pride is about celebrating diversity of all gender identities and sexual orientations, in a way that affirms

all other aspects of identity, including race, ethnicity, faith, language, nationality and ability. As WECAS continues on our own equity journey, we strive to provide services that recognize, affirm, validate and support all people in a way that honours the uniqueness, complexity and fullness of who they are.

Building upon the 2020 event, we continued to reflect on the theme of "Building Inclusion". We flew the Philadelphia Flag with the added black and brown stripes to symbolize the need for inclusion and visibility to ensure that the voices, concerns and contributions of Black and racialized communities are equally represented within Pride movements. We also flew the Trans Flag in support of members of our diverse Trans community, who continue to seek visibility, equity and inclusion. This year's ceremony again sought to honour diversity and intersectionality within Pride communities.

WECAS believes it is important that all of our children, youth, families, staff, foster parents, volunteers and community partners are recognized, valued and respected. This event is a testament to our ongoing commitment to create safe and affirming spaces for children, youth and families of all stripes. The brief ceremony included guest speakers from the LGBT2SQ+ community, followed by the raising of the flags.



WE WILL FOLLOW:

Personalize how we work with families, guided by Cultural Humility & Respect, and empowered by continuous engagement.

National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

WECAS recognizes a responsibility to learn and reflect on the many traumas experienced by Indigenous peoples because of colonization. On September 30, 2021, the first annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we invited staff to participate

in events throughout the day that provided opportunities to learn and think about the experiences of Indigenous children, youth, and families in the child welfare system.

The day began with an all staff meeting where over 200 people attended and participated in breakout discussions that included identifying actions that WECAS can take to better support FNIM children, youth, and families. Staff were also provided with information about community events led by the Can-Am Indian Friendship Center (CAIFC) and Caldwell First Nation, as well as conversation circles that were set up to be moderated by staff who work with FNIM families at WECAS.

Later in the day, many participated in a Quilting Project headed by the Indian Residential School Survivors Society in British Columbia. Quilting squares were made available to staff where they could creatively, through art, share their thoughts and feelings about "Every Child Matters". The squares were then shipped to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society to be sewn along with others received.

Feedback indicated that it was a meaningful day for staff in terms of reflection and identifying future opportunities for education and personal growth.



WE WILL SIMPLIFY:

Reduce barriers and bridge the gap between needs and services with clarity, efficiency, and transparency.

Together, with the Province and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society (WECAS) has had a rich history of celebrating the children and youth we have the privilege to serve. With funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), OACAS launched a mental health initiative, "Take5 and Talk About Mental Health" on Friday, May 14, 2021. OACAS worked alongside an advisory committee of First Voice Advocates, 20 plus community organizations and experts to create information resources, multimedia content, live workshops and events for children and youth of all ages as well as their caregivers. WECAS welcomes this impactful new tool which will be proactive in terms of promoting positive mental health amongst our children and youth.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to curtail in-person activities in 2021/22, WECAS celebrated Children & Youth in Care Day with our youth at a stay at home event. In keeping with the 2021 provincial theme of the importance of mental health, WECAS, through the arm of its dynamic Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), provided all children and youth with a family fun care package that included a "rent" a movie, popcorn, snacks and other items to promote an enriching evening for children, youth and their caregivers. As an organization embracing a holistic approach to physical, mental and social wellbeing of children, youth and families, this renewed focus from the Ministry and OACAS to put resources in the forefront for mental health is a welcome addition to all those we support.

Children & Youth in Care Day

Children and Youth in Care Day on May 14 is an opportunity to recognize the enormous contributions that current and former youth in care make both locally in Windsor-Essex as well as Ontario. It is a day set aside to celebrate the strength, bravery and resilience shown by children and youth in the face of adversity.



WE WILL LEARN:

Listen and reflect with empathy to act thoughtfully and share stories of change, healing and progress.

was born out of needs observed by WECAS Black African Canadian Caribbean (BACC) Community Advisory Committee members, Joan Simpson and Michael Brown. In their capacity as volunteer co-chairs of the committee, they found that foster parents and caregivers of Black and Biracial children needed enhanced supports to understand the unique and practical needs, as well as the cultural significance, of hair care for Black children and youth. They further recognized the importance of maintaining and strengthening the connection that Black children and youth have to their Black families, Black identity, and Black heritage while in the care of the Society.

While hair may play an important role in the lives of people of all backgrounds, for people of African descent, this role is amplified due to the unique nature of Black hair and how it has been marginalized and devalued within the dominant culture. BiM uses strength-based and historical approaches to build a healthy sense of identity, self-esteem and self-love in young Black women and girls.

During the first year of the partnership, BiM collaborated with three Black-owned hair salons and several Black organizations to facilitate workshops for WECAS Foster Parents/caregivers and members of the broader community. Several WECAS families received in-salon teaching and financial supports for hair care services and products. Participating Black women and girls also attended 'Self-love' workshops and were gifted books with uplifting and affirming messages. Future phases of the project will expand workshop eligibility to include other caregiver groups, and will have greater focus on giving voice to Black parents to share their lived experiences. Workshops that target WECAS staff will also aim to better support all caregivers in affirming Black love, Black joy and Black excellence. To these ends, BiM is also in the early stages of developing a companion program for young men and boys.

As Black communities and their allies continue to fight against the real and deep-rooted consequences of Anti-Black Racism in our society, BiM, as a Black-led organization, recognizes the need to build positive racial identity for Black children, youth and families in Windsor-Essex. WECAS is a proud partner supporting the work of BiM, and we look forward to continuing to encourage their growth and success in our community.

Beauty is Me Project

WECAS launched a new partnership with Beauty is Me (BiM), a local organization created to support and uplift Black girls and young women who are receiving child welfare services, their caregivers, and the professionals who support them. This project



YOU Can Make A Difference



Donate at wecaf.on.ca



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