

Gratitude Report

2022-2023

Ensuring all children and youth in Ottawa
can reach their full potential and grow up great.





Welcome

Within this Gratitude Report, you will learn about the incredible work that OCYI and its' partner organizations have been involved in over the past year. We are so grateful to all the frontline staff, partners, and funders for their incredible work to help support children and youth from communities all across the city.

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Johanne Levesque,
Rideauwood Addiction & Family Services
Steering Committee Co-chair

Message from OCYI Steering Committee Co-chairs 2022-2023

Spring has returned to Ottawa bringing warmer sun, new growth, and a fresh abundance of opportunities to support kids and youth in growing up great.

As Co-chairs of the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative Steering Committee, we are pleased to celebrate and share the work of our many local partners through the presentation of the OCYI 2022-2023 Gratitude Report.

In their varied professional roles, members of the OCYI Steering Committee witness the daily struggles and hardships endured by children, youth, and families across the city. Further evidence of these challenges can be found in data collected from the **2021 Child & Youth Well-being Survey**, which indicated that just three in 10 respondents reported their mental health as very good or excellent.

As the realities of the present world continue to heighten difficulties for those we serve, our partners and task groups have responded by embracing OCYI's new strategic direction, placing the mental health and well-being of children and youth at the forefront of their work.

A highlight included **OCYI's 2022 annual meeting**, a virtual Town Hall, featuring a moderated panel of Ottawa youth leading an open and authentic conversation about mental health. Follow up discussions set the tone for creating further initiatives to support staff in helping kids to connect with the information, resources, and care that they need. These learnings will remain at the heart of our work at OCYI.

We continue to be inspired by the resilience and brilliance of Ottawa's children and youth and are grateful to each OCYI partner organization, OCYI's generous funders, and to a wonderful community, committed to helping every kid to reach their full potential and grow up great!

THANK YOU.

Johanne and Kelly



Kelly Raymond,
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
Steering Committee Co-chair

OCYI Structure & Leaders

Steering Committee

- Co-chair: Johanne Levesque, Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services
- Co-chair: Kelly Raymond, Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
- The OCYI Steering Committee is composed of senior leaders from organizations that support children and youth in Ottawa and the task group chairs

Task Groups

- **Critical Hours:** brings together member organizations to support children and youth in critical hours programming, which includes before and after school programs, homework clubs, recreation, and youth drop-in centres
 - Co-chair: Carly Haydt, City of Ottawa, Recreation, Culture and Facility Services
 - Co-chair: Beth Tooley, Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses
- **Early Childhood Development:** aims to successfully support all young children (0 to 6 years) and their families in school entry
 - Co-chair: Holly Overhoff, Ottawa Catholic School Board
 - Co-chair: Natalie Rozon, Ottawa Public Health
- **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health—Education and Awareness:** brings together service providers from across sectors to increase awareness of infant and early childhood mental health and how to foster health mental health in early childhood
 - Chair: Clarissa Arthur, Education Foundation of Ottawa
- **Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support:** community of partners working together to build resilient families that can support their children's healthy development, feel empowered, and are able to cope with the ups and downs of everyday living
 - Co-chair: Mariama Aregbesola, Parent Resource Centre
 - Co-chair: Caroline Girard, City View Centre for Child & Family Services
- **Research and Evaluation:** supporting the research and evaluation needs of the other OCYI task groups as well as developing a framework for OCYI as a whole to support steps towards achieving the long-term objective
 - Co-chair: Kady Carr, Ottawa Neighbourhood Study
 - Co-chair: Erin Montague, United Way East Ontario

Members: 80+ organizational partners from across Ottawa that support children and youth, see **list on our website**

Funding:

- **Backbone support:** United Way East Ontario
- **Host organization:** CHEO
- **Additional funding in 2022-2023:** CECCE, CEPEO, CHEO, Crime Prevention Ottawa, OCDSB, OCSB, Ottawa Public Health, Ottawa Police Service

Staff

- **Project Manager:** Karen Kennedy
- **Communications Specialist:** Chloe Girvan



OCYI Strategic Direction and 2022 Town Hall

OCYI's vision is to ensure all children and youth in Ottawa can reach their full potential and grow up great! We seek to achieve this foundational vision by supporting the 80+ organizations in our network so that they can best support infants, children, youth, and their families in the work the organization is focused on doing. Specifically, **OCYI is focusing on how organizations support the mental health and well-being needs of Ottawa's children and youth, through strategies of awareness, access, and alignment.** OCYI's five task groups are working to do this by asking the task group members to bring their organization's experience, expertise, concerns, and struggles to inform the work we do.

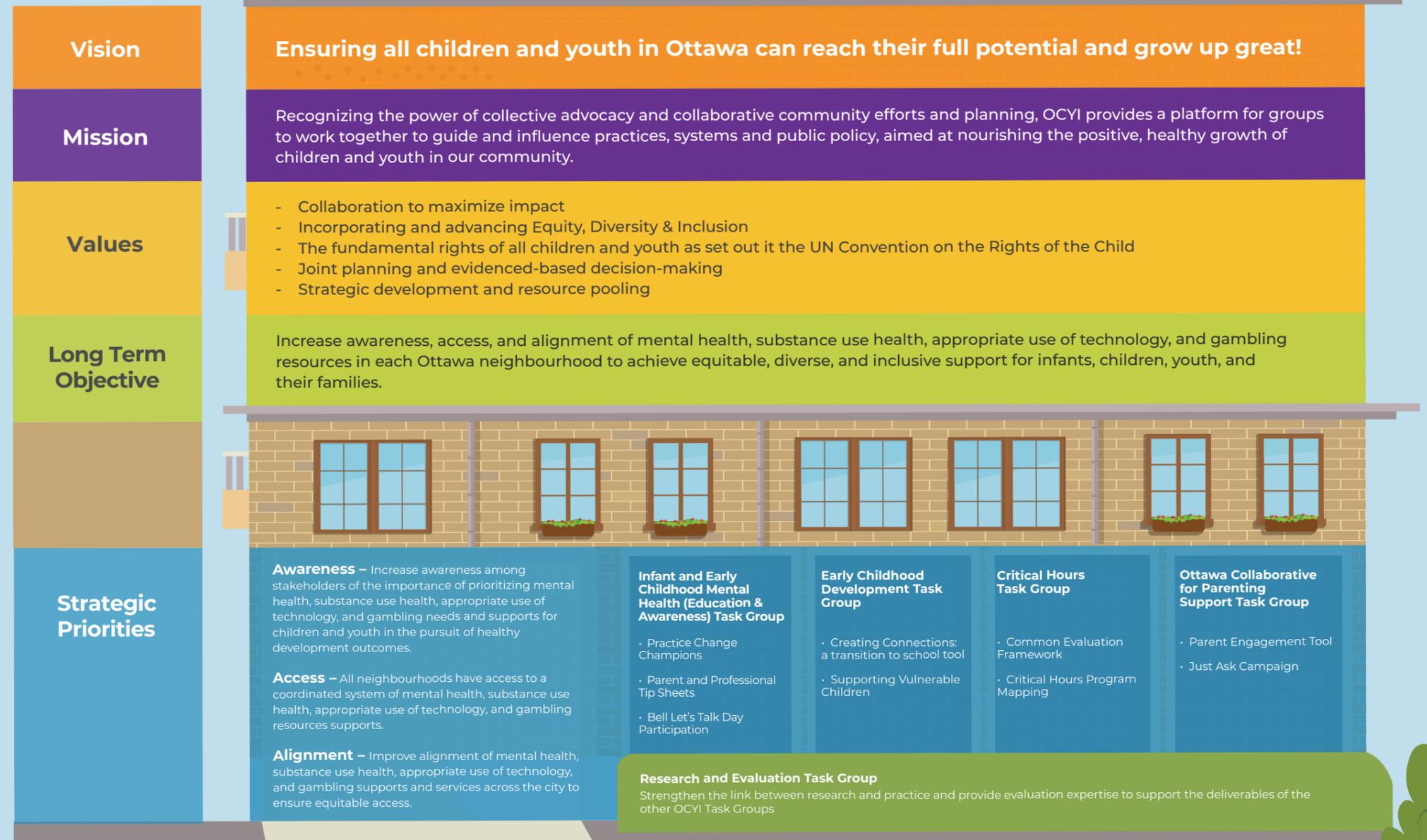
On September 14, 2022, OCYI's Town Hall brought together the voices of a youth panel to guide our work. The youth panel, moderated by Rachel Gouin, Executive Director of Le Centre d'appui et de prévention (Le CAP), featured five youth panelists: Akeelah, Alex, Angelina, Munea, and Niteesha. These youth panelists ranged in age from 15 to early 20s and were identified for participation through OCYI partner organizations. To launch our panel conversation, we used the Data Briefs from the UNICEF Canada Child & Youth Well-being Survey ([available here](#)), conducted in Ottawa in 2021. Through the panel discussion and subsequent breakout rooms, the panelists and attendees identified key takeaways that OCYI and its network of organizations should implement to better support the mental health and well-being of Ottawa's children and youth. Of note, these takeaways align with OCYI's strategic direction, and in the months following the Town Hall, the OCYI Steering Committee and Task Groups have worked to incorporate these learnings into our work and action plans. This work entails ongoing learning that continues to evolve and expand. We are excited to incorporate this work in our day-to-day efforts while simultaneously pushing for systemic changes in our community and beyond.

Key takeaways:

- Kids and youth want to be involved.
- Belonging is important to wellness and youth engagement.
- The voices of youth should be baked into how youth-serving programs operate, and opportunities to hear those voices should be available in ways that are accessible to youth.
- Even younger voices (under 12) should have the opportunity to be included in shaping programs designed for their age groups.
- “Picnic tables over meetings, motions and movements.”
- Kids/youth don't always know how to access resources and often don't know what resources are available, they want/like to hear from their peers.
- School boards need to advocate for the children and youth in their care each day.
- Youth want more early preventative health conversations.
- Advocacy is key and children and youth need to be prioritized today.
- Cultural lenses affect stigma around mental health, so support needs to be culturally sensitive.

Growing up great

The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative (OCYI) is a collaborative of community organizations and agencies with a shared commitment to promote the healthy development of children and youth.



Awareness

Increase awareness among stakeholders of the importance of prioritizing mental health, substance use health, appropriate use of technology, and gambling needs and supports for children and youth in the pursuit of healthy development outcomes.



Partner Profile Series

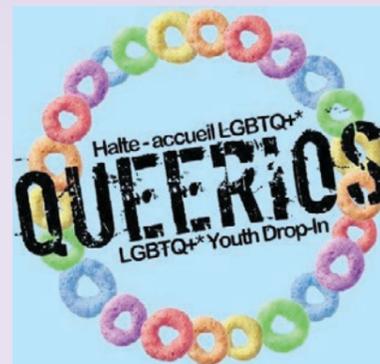
OCYI's Partner Profile Series has proven to be a meaningful way to connect with our partner organizations and learn more about how each supports kids and youth in Ottawa. Over the past year, OCYI spent time with five partners asking them about their work, the needs and challenges faced by each, and the benefits of their partnership with OCYI. OCYI hopes that the process of sharing these stories will enhance awareness of the programs and resources available to children and youth across the city.



Christie Lake Kids

"It is true that Christie Lake Kids provides excellent after school programming in the city and the magic of summer camp to vulnerable kids and youth. But it also offers so much more."

[Click here for the full story](#)



Queerios

Queerios is a drop-in program for youth 12-18, who identify as LGBTQ+, focusing on social activities, positive mental health, skill-building, and connecting youth to resources in their community.

[Click here for the full story](#)



OrKidstra

With the passionate belief in the transformative power of music and the promise of children and youth, OrKidstra has grown from a small group of 27 students to an impressive group of 650 children and youth, both in-school and after-school, from over 62 linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

[Click here for the full story](#)



Big Brothers Big Sisters Ottawa

Since 1970, OCYI partner, Big Brothers Big Sisters Ottawa (BBBSO), has been focused on creating meaningful one-on-one mentoring relationships designed to expand on a child or youth's network of social support, foster self-esteem, growth and personal pride, all while having fun.

[Click here for the full story](#)



Le Cap

OCYI partner Le CAP is a vibrant organization serving approximately 30,000 Francophone children, youth, adults and families across Ontario each year. Founded only three years ago, Le CAP was born from a decision to combine two organizations so that Ontario's French population could access services through one point of entry. Offering 20 programs and specialized services for addictions (substances and cyberaddiction) and concurrent disorders (mental health) Le CAP runs fourteen locations, including live-in treatment programs.

[Click here for the full story](#)

Communications

OCYI's website features a regularly updated and bilingual blog of stories, profiles, and individual articles from the OCYI Ovation newsletter. These images and links provide vibrant social media content intended to reach a larger and more diverse audience.

The staff of OCYI, strive to create communications opportunities that create awareness and advocate for the needs of children, youth, and families in Ottawa. The reach of OCYI's holiday initiative was bolstered by a two-week social media campaign highlighting the Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses.

OCYI continues to produce and circulate its seasonal newsletter, the OCYI Ovation, along with monthly issues of the OCYI Bulletin. With each new issue, OCYI looks for new ways to improve and enhance the impact and circulation of these publications.

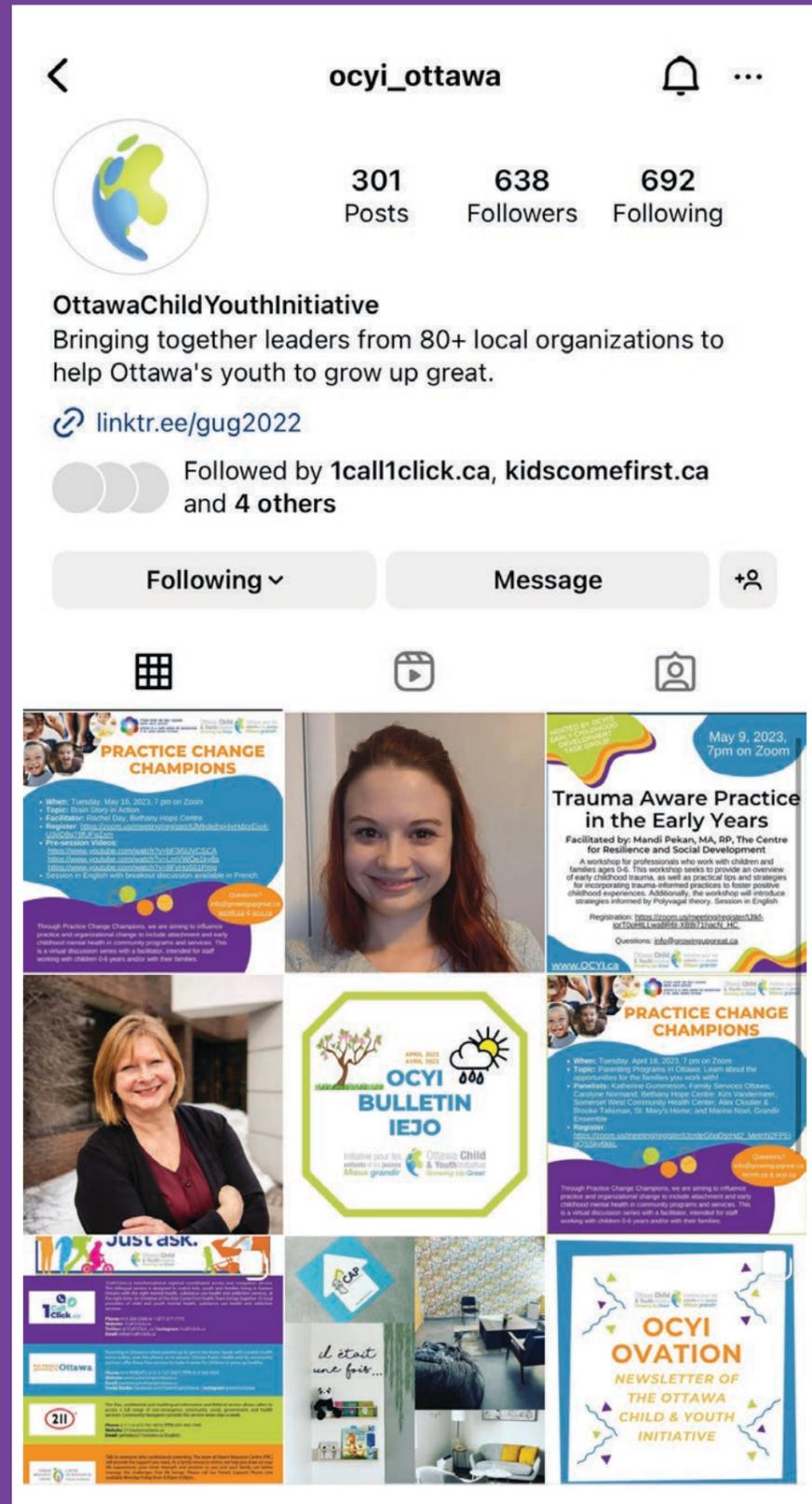
With many new and anticipated OCYI events and initiatives to promote, OCYI has found social media to be an important tool for creating access to timely information and encouraging online registration.

As part of our commitment to supporting all our partners, OCYI continuously works to share news, events and initiatives using OCYI social media platforms and publications.



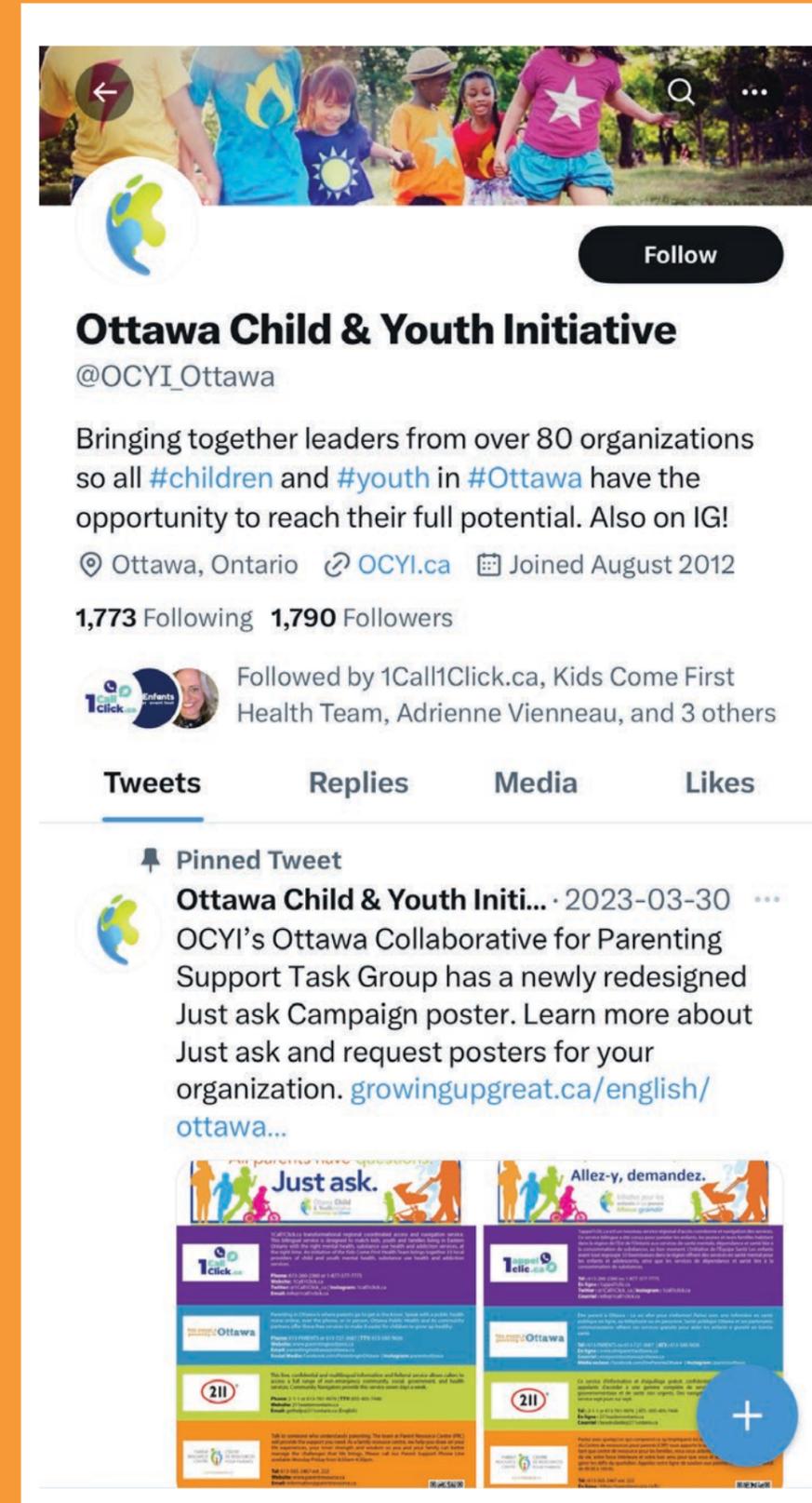
INSTAGRAM

OCYI's Instagram account **OCYI_Ottawa** has celebrated its two-year anniversary with over 600 followers.



TWITTER

OCYI's Twitter account **OCYI_Ottawa** has now welcomed nearly 900 new followers since deciding to boost communications efforts in 2020.



Holiday Fun 2022 – Gratitude on the Move!

This season, OCYI staff reached out to 16 of our partners, known together as the Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses, to see what items were needed most by the clients they serve. After a big shopping trip, OCYI staff set out to spread some holiday cheer!

[Click here for the full story](#)



Growing Up Great - Starts With Home

Everyone needs a home; to rest, play, be messy, and share in meaningful connection. But Ottawa is experiencing a housing and homelessness emergency, with 48,000 households living in housing that is unaffordable, in disrepair, and overcrowded. Thankfully, there are solutions.

[Click here for the full story](#)



The Growing Up Great Art Contest: It Really “Drew” a Crowd!

Over the summer, OCYI invited Ottawa’s kids and youth to enter the first official Growing Up Great Art Contest! Requesting that children and youth illustrate what “growing up great” means to them, the contest welcomed doodles, paintings, drawings and craft projects in two age categories.

[Click here for the full story](#)



A group of four young women are gathered around a tablet, looking at the screen with interest. The woman on the far right is holding the tablet. They are all looking down at the device. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery. The overall tone is collaborative and focused.

ACCESS

All neighbourhoods have access to a coordinated system of mental health, substance use health, appropriate use of technology, and gambling resources supports

Bell Let's Talk

The theme of 2023's Bell Let's Talk Day, held on January 25th, was "Let's create positive change". This message was chosen to highlight the mental health crisis that Canadians are facing and meant to encourage meaningful action to support the mental health of those in our communities across the country.

Prior to Bell Let's Talk Day 2023, OCYI staff worked with members of the IECMH-EA Task Group to create a series of posts highlighting local resources, offered by OCYI partner organizations, for kids, youth, and families. In total, 34 posts were shared in English, French and Inuktitut.

OCYI started the day by posting this message on Twitter, "On #BellLetsTalk Day 2023, OCYI's Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Task Group is taking action to create positive change for mental health by sharing local resources available to families! Visit iecmh.ca and follow today's tweets for more." The English version of the tweet, leading to a thread of local resources, was OCYI's Top Tweet for January 2023 and to date has been viewed 4,142 times.



Ottawa Child & Youth I... @OCYI_... · 3h ...

On #BellLetsTalk Day 2023, OCYI's Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Task Group is taking action to create positive change for mental health by sharing local resources available to families! Visit iecmh.ca and follow today's tweets for more. #Ottawa



Ottawa Public Health and 9 others

The following messages were shared along with links to each organization's site:

- OCYI's IECMH Task Group knows that it can be difficult for families to find support. Let's change that. @pleo4families is here to help parents of children facing mental health challenges find their way forward.
- Many families are unaware that EarlyON Centres offer information to support infant and child mental health. Let's change that!
- Finding mental health support for infants and children can be challenging, especially in rural areas. OCYI's IECMH Task Group wants to change this. Click for Rural Family Connections information
- Struggling with parenting questions? Need advice or information about community services? Let's change this. Parenting in Ottawa @OttawaHealth offers phone support from a public health nurse.
- Accessing the right mental health support for young children can be a struggle. OCYI's IECMH Task Group wants to help change this. @1Call1Click_ca is here to help children and youth connect to the care they need.
- Sometimes you are fine. Sometimes you are not. OCYI's IECMH Task Group wants families to know that @CounsellingConx offers free sessions. Reach out.
- OCYI's IECMH Task remembers the challenge of finding community resources with little ones nearby. @211EasternON can help to change this.
- OCYI's IEMCMH Task Group is making positive change by highlighting the Parent Resource Centre. @PRC_CRP offers programs, services and resources to help build confident, resilient families.

Chat Room Program and Workshop

Early in December, OCYI's ECD Task Group hosted a virtual lunch and learn session led by First Words Ottawa & Renfrew County program staff. The session, The Chat Room Program, offered early years professionals an opportunity to learn about supporting the speech and language development of the children they work with.

According to First Words staff member, Speech Language Pathologist, Roxane Bélanger, approximately 1 in 10 preschool children is at risk of a speech and/or language delay. The Chat Room Program (CRP) was developed by First Words to help the community and families connect on the topic of communication.

Recent discussions among OCYI's partners, including First Words and other early years serving groups, served to identify a backlog of families with concerns about their child's communication and social development who had not yet been referred to First Words services and/or were waiting for an appointment.

Knowing that early intervention is critical for a child to meet their full communication potential, the First Words team decided to revive the CRP's "train-the-trainer" module making the program available to more community agencies and thus, providing support to many more families. Says Roxane, "Partnership is at the core of our outreach work. The Chat Room Program revival was possible because of our connection and partnership with OCYI and its member organizations."

Following the lunch and learn session, attendees Liz Briggs, Early Literacy Specialist at the Youville Centre and Erin Smith, EarlyON Parent Facilitator at Rural Family Connections, collaborated to implement the program at Rural Family Connections. Using the tools and resources provided by First Words, this new team was able to

HOSTED BY OCYI'S
EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT
TASK GROUP

December 7,
2022 at noon

First Words
Premiers
Mots

The Chat Room Program

**Providing a Language-Rich Environment to
Stimulate the Preschool Child's Speech and
Language Development**

A virtual lunch and learn session led by First Words program staff for preschool and playgroup frontline staff to learn about supporting speech and language development in playgroups.

Register for the December 7 at noon event:
https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJYlc-itrDMjE9G5_2dVgnl0hXCVgb5OiwG7

Questions: info@growingupgreat.ca

www.OCYI.ca

Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative
Growing Up Great

Initiative pour les
enfants et les jeunes
Mieux grandir

prepare and offer six weekly morning sessions. Says Erin, "Having the opportunity to attend the lunch and learn for this program was extremely helpful and being provided with the resources so we could implement the program as accurately as possible was important for the success of this collaboration. The Chat Room Program provided the families with immediate language strategies to support their children, a safe place to express their concerns, guidance/resources for next steps and a sense of community. It was beautiful to see the families come together, have discussions, relate to similar experiences and provide insight into what has worked for their children so far in relation to language."

Equally thrilled with the success of this experience and collaboration, Liz noted the additional benefits of combining different experiences and knowledge. "We were able to learn about each other's agencies and programs offered which will allow for smoother referrals in the future. I would love to partner again with Erin and hope to adapt the program to meet the needs of the Child Development Program educators and young parents at my own agency and other EarlyONs."

JUST ASK Campaign Relaunch

On November 28, OCYI's Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support Task Group hosted an information session to promote the newly redesigned Just ask poster! Service providers from across the city picked up the posters for their programs and got to meet with the agencies featured on the poster. The Just ask campaign is to help families find the place to start when they have parenting questions. The poster highlights partners 1Call1Click, 211, Parenting in Ottawa, and the Parent Resource Centre, which all have resources to help families navigate supporting children and youth in Ottawa.

To request your poster, complete this request form:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QH7CYFR>



1Call1Click.ca transformational regional coordinated access and navigation service. This bilingual service is designed to match kids, youth and families living in Eastern Ontario with the right mental health, substance use health and addiction services, at the right time. An initiative of the Kids Come First Health Team brings together 33 local providers of child and youth mental health, substance use health and addiction services.

Phone: 613-260-2360 or 1-877-377-7775
Website: 1Call1Click.ca
Twitter: @1Call1Click_ca | **Instagram:** 1call1click.ca
Email: info@1call1click.ca



Parenting in Ottawa is where parents go to get in the know. Speak with a public health nurse online, over the phone, or in person. Ottawa Public Health and its community partners offer these free services to make it easier for children to grow up healthy.

Phone: 613-PARENTS or 613-727-3687 | **TTY:** 613-580-9656
Website: www.parentinginottawa.ca
Email: parentinginottawa@ottawa.ca
Social Media: Facebook.com/ParentinginOttawa | **Instagram:** parentsottawa



This free, confidential and multilingual Information and Referral service allows callers to access a full range of non-emergency community, social, government, and health services. Community Navigators provide this service seven days a week.

Phone: 2-1-1 or 613-761-9076 | **TTY:** 855-405-7446
Website: 211easternontario.ca
Email: gethelp@211ontario.ca (English)



Talk to someone who understands parenting. The team at Parent Resource Centre (PRC) will provide the support you need. As a family resource centre, we help you draw on your life experiences, your inner strength and wisdom so you and your family can better manage the challenges that life brings. Please call our Parent Support Phone Line available Monday-Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm.

Tel: 613-565-2467 ext. 222
Website: www.parentresource.ca
Email: information@parentresource.ca



Just ask is an initiative of the Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support

ALIGNMENT

Improve alignment of mental health, substance use health, appropriate use of technology, and gambling supports and services across the city to ensure equitable access.



Interview with OCYI Placement Student: Lauren Wood

Did you know that OCYI welcomes placement students? Please enjoy this interview with Lauren Wood, a student at Algonquin College who worked with OCYI during the winter term.

- 1. Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your educational background?** I am currently a third-year student at Algonquin College in the Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development program. I am also a Registered Early Childhood Educator.
- 2. Could you please share what led you to a placement with OCYI?** I have always wanted to do a field placement within an organization that provides support and resources for children and families struggling with their mental health. As someone who has struggled with my own mental health, I know how important it is to receive the best possible support and resources.
- 3. What are you hoping to bring to OCYI and what are you hoping to learn from OCYI?** As a Registered Early Childhood educator and current student, I bring fresh perspective and insight into current practices, issues and the needs of families and children within our community today. I am working to help OCYI to build its network and expand relationships with the Francophone community. Within my placement, I hope to gain valuable tools, knowledge and resources to support my future career and a greater understanding of how community organizations function independently and together.



- 4. Why do you think it is valuable to do a placement with OCYI?** I think that a placement at OCYI is valuable for students within my program, and other programs, as it provides a unique view of community organizations and the importance of collaboration. It has been a privilege to witness the level of teamwork organizations use to create projects, presentations, and tip sheets, to support those working with families and children.
- 5. Why do you think that OCYI is an important initiative in the City of Ottawa?** There are many reasons, but I think that OCYI does an amazing job of creating awareness of the need to support the mental health of young children and their families. OCYI accomplishes this by working alongside professionals who work directly with families and children to facilitate, improve practice and provide resources.

Critical Hours Training Day 2022

On November 2, OCYI's Critical Hours Task Group (CHTG), composed of staff from over a dozen critical hours programs across Ottawa, hosted their first in-person training conference since 2018.

This event provided an enjoyable day for new and returning frontline staff at before/after school programs, recreation programs, homework clubs or tutoring programs, youth drop-in programs, or other programs supporting kids and youth across the city, to come together and learn.

According to Beth Tooley, Co-chair of the CHTG and Coalition Coordinator, Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses, this day was especially important given all that has changed since the pandemic began. "As so much has happened since the last CHTG staff training event, it was important for us to provide professional development opportunities that addressed the needs of frontline staff working in child and youth programs. Building the capacity of frontline staff to be more aware of and responsive to the mental health and wellbeing of young people is a priority for the Critical Hours Task Group."

Held on the beautiful grounds of the Richelieu-Vanier Community Centre, 73 staff from 34 organizations gathered for a shared opening keynote session followed by a choice of morning and afternoon sessions. OCYI was pleased to cover the cost of the conference with the in-kind support of several funders. This meant that staff could attend at no cost, reducing barriers for many. Additional funding from Crime Prevention Ottawa ensured that 20 participants across nine organizations received staff support funds to attend the conference, increasing accessibility.



Matthew Teghtmeyer, Manager of Innovation, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, and CHTG Member, spent the day onsite greeting guests and making sure that everyone had what was needed. "It was wonderful to have so many frontline workers learning and connecting together. It felt so good to be able to convene in person again after more than two years of conferences over Zoom! The guest speakers were fantastic and the logistics ran super smooth. Thanks to everyone for a great day."

When reflecting on the day, Beth found the event to be a success and important for many different reasons. "It was great convening frontline critical hours staff after all these years, many of whom were new to the field. Participant feedback really highlighted the importance of frontline staff networking and collaborating with other child and youth serving programs across the city."

Thank you to the CHTG for organizing and hosting the Critical Hours Training Conference and to the following organizations who provided funding or in-kind services:

- City of Ottawa—Recreation, Cultural, and Facility Services
- Crime Prevention Ottawa
- Jewish Family Services
- Ottawa Catholic School Board
- Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses
- Rideauwood Addiction & Family Services

OCYI 2022-23 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

	Revenue	Expenses	Balance
Balance Forward (April 1, 2022)			\$132,096.39
Revenue			
United Way – Community Wide Initiative	\$75,000.00		
CHEO	\$20,000.00		
Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est	\$5,000.00		
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario	\$5,000.00		
Crime Prevention Ottawa	\$2,000.00		
Ottawa Carleton District School Board	\$20,000.00		
Ottawa Catholic School Board	\$10,000.00		
Ottawa Police Service	\$5,000.00		
Ottawa Public Health	\$10,000.00		
Revenue Totals	\$152,000.00		
Expenses			
Salaries and Benefits		\$119,133.82	
Website & Communication Tools		\$630.28	
Media/Graphics/Stock Photos		\$7,622.55	
Project Expenses		\$13,830.77	
Honoraria		\$674.82	
Translation Services		\$7,441.46	
Consulting Services		\$6,650.00	
Professional Development		\$2,486.59	
TOTAL		\$158,470.29	
March 31st Fund Balance			\$125,626.10



**Ottawa Child
& Youth Initiative**
Growing Up Great

Instagram

@OCYI_Ottawa

Twitter

@OCYI_Ottawa

Email

info@growingupgreat.ca

Website

www.OCYI.ca

The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative works together to foster the healthy development of all children and youth through research, advocacy and program development.

Our vision is for children and youth in Ottawa to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.