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Meet 10 Exceptional Former Youth in Care Award Recipients



For the past 27 years, OACAS and YouthCAN have hosted a glamorous evening where former youth in care each receive a Clark Bursary, a highly coveted award that provides funding of \$3,500 a year for up to 4 years towards their postsecondary education. The bursaries are the generous gift of Ron and Nancy Clark, who feel passionate about helping youth in care succeed in higher education. Increasing the

graduation rates of youth in care is a priority for the child welfare sector. Currently, only 44% of youth in care graduate from high school.

Meet 10 of these exceptional young people by clicking on their photos and learn about their dreams for the future.



Children's Aid Partners With Police to Tackle Human Trafficking in Ontario

Nancy French of York Region Children's Aid Society discusses how pimps lure youth in care into the sex trade with promises of a better life and what child welfare and the police are doing to stop it.



Nancy French, Chief Operating Officer at York Region Children's Aid Society.

How did you first learn that human trafficking is an issue that concerns child welfare?

We work closely with York Regional Police on a number of fronts, including child abuse. One day back in 2013 Detective Sergeant Thai Truong contacted me and said, "You probably don't know this, but we've been working in the area of human trafficking for some time, and we've noted that every single girl we've come in contact with has had Children's Aid involvement at some point in her life."

Were you surprised by this information?

Yes, I was. I realized that we needed to put some attention to this because there were obviously signs and circumstances that we as a child welfare system and as an agency had missed. I realized that I had a very narrow understanding of human trafficking. It fell within what most people probably think when they first hear about human trafficking. "Oh, that's when young girls and women from Europe are brought to North America under false pretenses and then become involved in the sex trade." That is actually a

very small piece of human trafficking. The idea that human trafficking is not a domestic issue is quite false, and the perception that some may hold - that human trafficking "is not in my backyard or in my community" so to speak - is equally false. Human trafficking can be simplified and defined as providing a labour or service out of fear.

Read the full story [here](#).

Adopted Youth Now Eligible for Aftercare Benefits

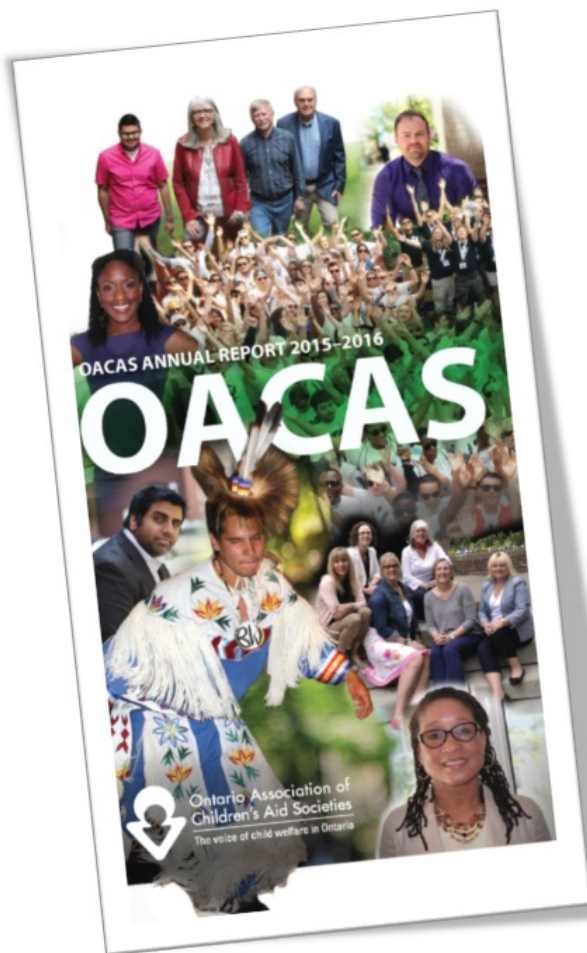
OACAS is pleased to announce that adopted youth are now eligible for the Aftercare Benefits Initiative (ABI).

The ABI program, which provides health, dental, counselling, and life skills support services to former youth in care aged 21 to 25, was launched 2 years ago. Last year, the eligibility criteria were expanded to give youth on social assistance (i.e., Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program) access to the counselling and life skills support services. As of June 1, 2016, the criteria have been further modified to permit adopted youth aged 18 to 25 to enroll, for a maximum of 4 consecutive years.

Enrollment in ABI continues to grow each year. At the end of the 2015-2016 fiscal year there were 1393 plan members, including 1165 youth and 228 dependent children. This was a 64% increase from 2014-2015. An additional 125 youth on social assistance were enrolled to access the counselling and life skills support services only.

Check out our [infographic](#) to learn more about the Aftercare Benefits Initiative, or visit www.oacas.org/abi.





For the first time, [OACAS' Annual Report](#) is available in an interactive digital format.

In the report you'll learn about the people and projects behind this year's significant accomplishments. As the membership organization for 44 Children's Aid Societies, OACAS is privileged to be on the front lines of the challenging and inspiring work undertaken by the child welfare sector in Ontario. The three pillars of OACAS engagement - advocacy, leadership, and service excellence - guide our work with our members as we collectively work to serve children, youth, and families.

Grassy Narrows First Nation Youth Get Vocal

OACAS and Children's Aid Societies across Ontario marked National Aboriginal History Month in June. Child welfare is engaging in a long-term process of reconciliation with Indigenous people. One of the key issues that is being addressed is the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. To make these much-needed changes requires looking at broader systemic issues, such as institutional racism, poverty, and lack of equitable access to social services, health care, employment, housing, and clean drinking water.

Watch this beautiful music video made by youth from Grassy Narrows First Nation as they address these issues and send a message of hope to their people.



Send Us Your News and Events!

[The Voice](#) has an extensive readership in Ontario and across Canada.

Please forward any child-welfare related news, events, or announcements to webadmin@oacas.org for possible inclusion in our monthly newsletter.



**Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies**
The voice of child welfare in Ontario



**L'Association ontarienne des
sociétés de l'aide à l'enfance**
Unis pour le bien-être des enfants de l'Ontario

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