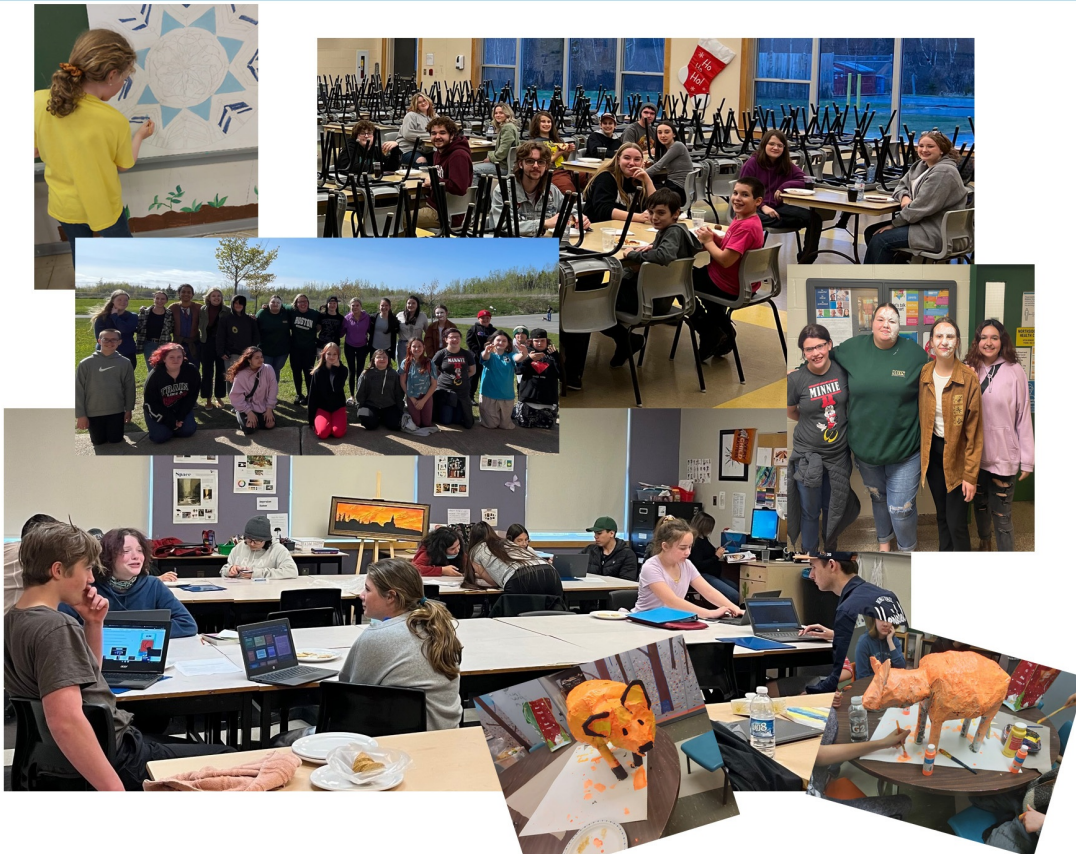




EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM INNOVATIONS CHARITY SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT



2023

EPIC - CONTACT INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or requests you may have.

Educational Program Innovations Charity (EPIC) Society

Email: **epiccharity@gmail.com**
Website: **http://epiccharity.com**
Mailing address: **PO Box 1897
North Sydney, Nova Scotia
B2A 3S9 Canada**
Phone: **902-794-7225**
Fax: **902-794-9225**

Youth Peer & Outreach and Parents PEACE

Email: **youthpeerprogram@live.com**
Location: **Youth Peer Centre
Sydney Adult High School, downstairs**
Mailing address: **290 Whitney Avenue
Sydney, Nova Scotia
B1P 5A6 Canada**
Phone: **902-539-8228**
Fax: **902-794-9225**

EPIC Youth Peer Video

YouTube Search: **Youth Peer Program - EPIC**

CRA Charities Listing

Google Search: **CRA Charities Listings
Registration #89214 9964
Educational Program Innovations Charity Society**



CHARITY OVERVIEW

2023

MISSION, FOCUS, AND VISION

The mission of Educational Program Innovations Charity Society is to advance marginalized learners through innovation, empathy, volunteerism, diversity and partnership. The focus is on youth at high risk, especially those from marginalized cultures, who require enhanced accommodation and support to optimize social adaptation and educational advancement. EPIC's vision is to cost-effectively deliver free after-school tutor-mentor services fulfilling community needs and positively transforming the outlook for partner-referred high-risk youth by nurturing 1-to-1 relationships with youth volunteers in Cape Breton and inspiring others to replicate the Youth Peer model.

ACTIVITIES

The charity's activities include:

- educational projects filling voids in services for disadvantaged and high-risk learners
- tutoring, mentoring, and creative arts services
- high school grad humanity/scholarship awards; post-secondary volunteerism awards
- educational initiatives serving marginalized youth and their caregivers
- networking with other charities to promote parallel initiatives in other Canadian sites

HISTORY

EPIC was founded in Nova Scotia in 1996 by Barry Waldman. At that time, he was Director of Unama'ki Training & Education Centre (TEC) in Eskasoni First Nation, an alternative high school and adult education facility which he had nurtured from a 1-year pilot project to a mainstay of the community. Through daily contact with marginalized learners, Barry came to understand the nature of their challenges and the potential loss of life-transforming opportunities if sufficient program funding could not be accessed. He envisioned a community-based charitable organization, fully supported for its innovative approaches, rapid and flexible in its responses to identified needs, effective in recruiting and engaging young volunteers, and transformative in delivering programs for the advancement of high risk participants who were otherwise likely to fall through the cracks of agency services. His solution was to form Educational Program Innovations Charity Society and to oversee program and charity activities as a volunteer to keep administrative and fundraising costs to a bare minimum. He continues to volunteer as EPIC's Executive Director and Board Finance Director. EPIC has also been able to recruit and retain outstanding and dedicated Board members, distinguished in their fields, to volunteer substantial talents and resources and ensure fulfillment of EPIC's mission. For 17 years, concluding in 2014, the Donner Canadian Foundation provided national non-profit awards for Excellence in the Delivery of Social Services. For 9 years, EPIC applied and was evaluated rigorously through a 2-stage Fraser Institute protocol. In that period, EPIC received more Donner Foundation cash award recognition than any of the other 2,000 competing Canadian charitable programs competing over the 17-year awards program. EPIC received the \$5,000 Donner Foundation Award 6 times as the highest achieving non-profit in Services for Children. In 2010 and 2013, EPIC received the \$20,000 highest Donner Foundation Award across all social service categories. In 2012 received the Peter Drucker Award for most consistent record of excellence and innovation in the management and delivery of non-profit program services. In more recent years, Charity Intelligence has conducted comprehensive reviews of 800+ Canadian charities. Since 2020, EPIC has been assessed as a 5-star charity and selected in the Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities and Top 10 Impact Youth Charities.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EPIC's Policies and Procedures state: *"The Board shall be made up of collaborative, dedicated, and open-minded individuals with a commitment to achieving the broadest community benefit, and who each effectively represent the needs of marginalized learners from a unique perspective."* EPIC's volunteer Board operates by consensus, and great effort is made to ensure 100% attendance at Board meetings. Board members also fulfill the five Executive positions. Board members are encouraged to serve the charity on an ongoing basis, so two-year terms are renewed automatically unless a Board member requests departure.

CHAIR / PLANNING DIRECTOR

Janet Robinson



Janet is a self-employed workplace facilitator who works on contract to help struggling women find jobs. She was formerly a Counsellor for the Ann Terry Society and served on the Board of New Dawn Enterprises. She currently works part-time for the Old Sydney Society. She has a wealth of community-based career and volunteer experience including valued assistance with the Celtic Colours International Festival. She has served on the EPIC Board since 2005.

VICE-CHAIR / VALUES & ETHICS DIRECTOR

Dana Feltmate



Dana is the Minister of the United Protestant Church in Sydney River, a church which has grown rapidly in congregation and community service under his leadership. Dana and his wife Delores have been instrumental in enhancing provincial services to children in care. They have also been foster parents to 11 children including a daughter they adopted. He has worked tirelessly for the United Church Children and Youth in Crisis working group and the Cape Breton Child Welfare Board. He joined the EPIC Board in 2016.

VICE-CHAIR / PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

Barb Donovan



Barb has been an integral part of EPIC for over 25 years. She was pivotal in the development of Youth Peer as Program Director for 13 years and Breakthrough Facilitator & Back-up for 6 years, and has served on EPIC's Board as Programs Director since 2016. She is considered by EPIC and by almost everyone else she has worked with to be extraordinarily gifted in fostering healthy relationships with marginalized youth. She continues to help former Youth Peer participants overcome social challenges.

TREASURER / FINANCE DIRECTOR

Barry Waldman



Barry is EPIC's founder, Executive Director, and supervisor of its programs. He considers himself retired, but oversees EPIC's operations and finances as a volunteer, a role he has sustained since 1996. He was formerly a carpenter, teacher, educational administrator and consultant, who spent most of his career serving the Eskasoni School Board. In 2008 he received the Cape Breton United Way Harvey Webber Volunteerism Award and in 2013 received Cape Breton's Tom Miller Human Rights Award for services to the disadvantaged. He joined the Board in 2007.

SECRETARY / COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Nancy S. M. Waldman



Nancy is a writer, artist, and retired psychiatric nurse who holds a Master's Degree in Nursing. She has served on the Board of Cape Breton Mental Health Association, is one of three founders and editors for Third Person Press which nurtures and promotes emerging Cape Breton speculative fiction writers, and has created By and By Press which features her own short story collections and novels. She has volunteered for EPIC since 2000 and has served as EPIC webmaster ever since. She joined the Board in 2007.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2023

Youth Peer

Youth Peer is a free, daily 2½ hour after-school program for Cape Breton Regional Municipality youth ages 8-18 referred by EPIC's 34 community agency partners to address social and academic challenges. Each day, up to 15 youth at high risk are matched 1-to-1 with their own volunteer tutor-mentor who was recruited from university, college, or high school to help the youth overcome educational challenges and personal obstacles and to engage in positive social activities like art, music, workshops, and educational games. The relationship that develops between high-risk youth and tutor-mentors is magical. Participants advance rapidly in social skills and academic achievements. Troubled youth begin to feel and behave like regular kids in the structured, yet fun, environment. Youth, volunteers, and staff interact like a wonderful family, which results in reduced risks to self, family, and community; enhancement of school attachment and achievement; and increased self-esteem and positive behaviours. In the 2022-2023 school-year, an average of 70 marginalized youth were transported from 17 different schools and home to participate in the 5-day-a-week Youth Peer Program in Sydney. The program optimizes social and academic benefits for youth participants while sustaining a supportive and fulfilling environment for youth volunteers, caregivers, staff, and community partners.

Youth Peer Outreach

Youth Peer Outreach evolved 7 years ago from community requests and an opportunity to collaborate with SchoolsPlus representing Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education, after EPIC was selected by Nova Scotia Education and Early Childhood Development to receive sufficient funding to cover most costs. From 2016-2022, the program was delivered by EPIC weekly for 2 hours after-school in Northside, New Waterford, and Glace Bay. However, in time for the 2022-2023 school-year, EPIC received new requests from under-served communities to deliver Youth Peer Outreach on a weekly basis. This coincided with EPIC's receipt of a record number of charitable donations, mostly attributable to EPIC's national recognition by Charity Intelligence. As a result, EPIC was able to expand Outreach from 3 to 6 communities, adding Whitney Pier, Iona, and Sackville. The Sackville program, a 5 hour drive from Sydney, is a unique partnership with Boys & Girls Club of Greater Halifax and Halifax Regional Centre for Education with SchoolsPlus as the liaison. In the Memorandum of Agreement, EPIC committed to running Youth Peer Outreach fully for 2 school-years and inservicing BGC staff to enable them to initiate a Boys & Girls Club version of Youth Peer beginning in 2024-2025. The shared objective is for EPIC to demonstrate how to deliver a cost-effective weekly 1-to-1 tutor-mentor program that ensures transformative change in marginalized youth participants through healthy relationships with youth volunteers. If the hand-off from EPIC to BGC goes as smoothly as envisioned, BGC will then be able to deliver a tutor-mentor program, based on the Youth Peer model, to 6 BGC clubs across the Halifax region. If the Halifax roll-out is successful, the partners hope that other Boys & Girls Clubs across Canada will follow the Halifax lead. In any case, EPIC anticipates delivering 5 weekly Outreach programs in Cape Breton on an ongoing basis. Scheduling will need to reflect program site options and Coordinator availability compatible with post-secondary studies and other employment. The current 2023-2024 projection is that Youth Peer Outreach will be delivered on Mondays both at Whitney Pier Middle School in Whitney Pier and at Memorial High School in Northside, Tuesdays at Breton Education Centre in New Waterford, Wednesdays at Rankin School in Iona, and Thursdays at Oceanview Middle School in Glace Bay. Youth Peer Outreach will continue to optimize social and academic advancement of marginalized youth while providing life-fulfilling experiences for youth volunteers and staff.

Parents PEACE (*Practicing Esteem-building Acceptance Communication & Evaluation*) Parents PEACE is a free, ongoing parenting workshop that engages 6 parent/caregivers of high-risk youth in discussions strengthening their parenting skills through Facilitator guidance and group support. Parents meet Mondays throughout the school-year from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Youth Peer Centre with an average of 5 parents attending each session. The program provides a safe place to talk, practical strategies, and social support in coping with real parenting problems. The Facilitator obtains parent input on areas of concern, either facilitating those discussions or arranging for expert community agency representatives to present relevant discussion ideas. This year, 5 EPIC partner agencies volunteered to facilitate discussions on anxiety-reduction strategies, substance issue services, gender identity well-being, school services for high-risk students, and employment support for out-of-school youth. The program continues to help parents better understand their interactions with their children and to put that knowledge to work for them. Parent participants have acknowledged behavioural improvements in their children and increased awareness and communication skills in themselves.

PROGRAM NEED 2023

For many years, social agency staff in CBRM (**Cape Breton Regional Municipality**) have conveyed frustration with the severity of youth cases they handle and isolation dealing with compound social dysfunction factors. The youth immersed in social conflict have tended to be both Mental Health and Community Services clients who have been suspended from school and are deficient in social skills, impulse control, and self-esteem. The communities served by EPIC experience all the conditions that place communities at high-risk of social maladaptations: comparatively low education levels, high unemployment, and a high percentage living in poverty (*Nova Scotia Government*). The percentage of CBRM adults who have completed a university degree or diploma is 34% lower than the national average (*Community Foundation of Nova Scotia*). The average unemployment rate in CBRM over the past 20 years – 15% is more than twice the national average – 7% over the same period (*Statistics Canada*). A pan-Canadian comparison of CBRM with similarly-sized cities in 6 other provinces (Kelowna, BC; Red Deer, AB; Regina, SK; Thunder Bay, ON; Saint John, NB; and St. John's, NF) revealed that average family income in CBRM is 28% lower (*EnviroNics Analytics*). Including communities like Eskasoni with a child poverty rate of 73%, the average child poverty rate across CBRM is 29%, which is 53% higher than the Canadian average of 19% (*Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*). Unfortunately, despite encouraging signs in CBRM related to international university students and a recent increase in employment rates, the overall prosperity demographics remain bleak. The historic employment outlook has driven the population of CBRM spiralling downward for decades with an average annual population decline of 1% (*Statistics Canada*).

Youth referred by EPIC's social agency partners to Youth Peer & Outreach are prioritized for being at high risk of social conflict and academic challenges. Over 95% of participants ages 8-18 have been formally assessed as being socially and academically at high risk, and have an average poverty rate of 75%, higher than in any community of Nova Scotia. If EPIC did not provide free transportation, providing access from 27 different schools, the majority of participants would be unable to attend. The free snacks provided are often the closest thing to a nutritional meal that day. The goal of EPIC's delivery of Youth Peer & Outreach is to provide acceptance, support, encouragement, and a transformative safe haven environment for youth who might otherwise be headed for a lifetime of dysfunction.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION 2023

The table below provides a pre-audited breakdown of costs allocated by program category or EPIC's most recent fiscal year, from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. Audited revenue and expense details will be provided in EPIC's financial statements conducted by Hunston Kachafanas Accounting, available by November on EPIC's website... <http://epiccharity.com>

EXPENSES BY PROGRAM	COST
Youth Peer, Outreach, and Online Programs	215,120
* Administration	8,550
Parents PEACE Program	4,180
Scholarships and Awards	4,000
TOTAL	\$231,850

* Rounding to the nearest \$10, EPIC categorizes the following expenses entirely as Administration costs: external audit, liability insurance, donations to fundraisers for others, directors' travel, bank charges, dues and fees. EPIC has been informed that the external audit for 2023, not recorded until the 2023-2024 fiscal year, will increase Admin costs by \$3,700. Other costs involved in supervision of operations including facilities and program and charity financial management continue to be provided as in-kind services as itemized below. Fundraising is carried out almost exclusively through applications and proposal writing provided in-kind by the volunteer Executive Director.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS * 2023

CATEGORY	CONTRIBUTOR	CALCULATIONS	COST
Supervision	Executive Director	30 hrs/wk x 44 wks x \$45/hr	59,400
	SchoolsPlus Facilitators	5 x 3 hrs/wk x 40 wks x \$35/hr	21,000
	Board Members	2 hrs/wk x 40 wks x \$45/hr	3,600
	Partner Agency Members	2 hrs/wk x 40 wks x \$40/hr	3,200
Youth Services	Tutor-Mentor Volunteers	2,120 youth matches x 2 hrs x \$17/hr	72,080
Program Facilities	Sydney - Adult High	2 classes, 2 offices x 10 mos x \$500/mo	20,000
	Whitney Pier - Whitney Pier Middle	1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month	5,000
	Northside - Memorial High	1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month	5,000
	New Waterford - Breton Middle	1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month	5,000
	Iona - Rankin Middle	1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month	5,000
	Glace Bay - Oceanview Middle	1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month	5,000
Financial Services	Executive Director	4 hrs/wk x 44 wks x \$45/hr	7,920
		TOTAL	\$212,200

* All calculations are based on wage rates and market value costs that would apply if these services were not provided as in-kind contributions. For example, EPIC's minimum wage is \$17/hour. The similar totals for program expenses and in-kind contributions are consistent with a long-established pattern in Youth Peer & Outreach Program that the number of paid staff hours closely matches the number of volunteer hours.

PROGRAM OUTPUTS 2023

Youth Peer & Outreach Program Summary		2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
Management Team Partner Agencies #		34	34	34
School Referral Sources #		27	21	21
Active Youth Participants #		136	93	92
Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #		134	100	93
Average Improvement in Protective Factors %		11%	14%	9%
Site	Output Indicators	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
Sydney & Online	Active Youth Participant #	70	65	72
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	69	67	73
	Protective Factor Improvement %	10%	14%	7%
Northside	Active Youth Participant #	15	8	7
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	14	10	9
	Protective Factor Improvement %	11%	11%	20%
New Waterford	Active Youth Participant #	14	8	6
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	15	9	5
	Protective Factor Improvement %	12%	13%	14%
Glace Bay	Active Youth Participant #	14	12	6
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	15	14	6
	Protective Factor Improvement %	15%	16%	23%
Whitney Pier	Active Youth Participant #	7	-	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	6	-	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	9%	-	-
Iona	Active Youth Participant #	9	-	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	9	-	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	16%	-	-
Sackville (program for 22-23 & 23-24 preparing for 24-25 Boys & Girls Club hand-off)	Active Youth Participant #	7	-	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	6	-	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	12%	-	-

SEGWAY (Social Emotional Growth & Wellness Assessment of Youth) uses staff observations of 20 evidence-based risk indicators to determine school-year changes. Raw scores are then divided in half to account for unintended staff bias and attribution to other sources.

Site	Output Intensity	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
Sydney	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	1208	1187	1303
Northside	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	212	133	107
New Waterford	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	211	132	117
Glace Bay	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	201	189	85
Whitney Pier	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	111	-	-
Iona	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	78	-	-
Sackville (Halifax region)	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	103	-	-
Total		2124	1641	1612
High-Risk Marginalization Demographics		Youth Peer & Outreach		CBRM *
Child Poverty (school-aged children)		72%		29%
Indigenous (on-reserve and off-reserve)		14%		5%
Transgender (non-binary gender identification)		7%		1%

* Annual data for Youth Peer, Outreach, and Online programs, updated monthly, is compared to the most recent annual data from Statistics Canada for CBRM (Cape Breton Regional Municipality).

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

2023

Youth Peer & Youth Peer Outreach

In school-year 2022-2023, 136 regularly-attending high-risk Youth Peer and Outreach participants were referred by 27 different schools. Many referred youth were also involved with other EPIC partner agencies like Mental Health and Community Services. Guidance Counsellors referred 80% of Youth Peer-Sydney participants from 25 different schools in Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education and 2 schools in Halifax Regional Centre for Education. SchoolsPlus actively assisted in each of EPIC's 6 weekly Outreach programs to ensure facility and program delivery support. Youth Peer-Sydney operated daily averaging 13 tutor-mentor matches/day and 2/week online. Outreach operated weekly in Northside, New Waterford, Glace Bay, Whitney Pier, Iona, and Sackville, averaging a total of 66 matches/week. There were 134 tutor-mentors who actively volunteered, 80% from 6 different high schools, 15% from Cape Breton University, and 5% from other college or university programs. The total tutor-mentor matches in Youth Peer's 25th year was 2,124, a stunning 26% higher than the prior record of 1,690. Site breakdown is: Sydney & Online-1,208, Northside-212, New Waterford-211, Glace Bay-201, Whitney Pier-111, Iona-78, and Sackville-103, which reflects 8,496 hours of positive youth academic and social activities. Over 95% of youth participants across all 7 sites were assessed as being at high risk.

Program Changes

As donations to EPIC have risen over the past 3 years from national recognition by Charity Intelligence, requests for EPIC's services have also increased. This has enabled EPIC to address community needs by expanding from 3 to 6 weekly Outreach programs in the past school-year. If EPIC can sustain a balanced budget, 5 of the 6 will Outreach programs will become regular Youth Peer operations. The Sackville site is anomalous, spawned by former Youth Peer staff living in the Halifax region, who asked whether Youth Peer could expand beyond Cape Breton. Exploration of that concept led to partnership with Boys & Girls Club and SchoolsPlus. In the agreement, BGC provides the facility, SchoolsPlus acts as liaison to schools referring participants and tutors, and EPIC sponsors and oversees the program for 2 years until BGC can integrate Youth Peer into regular club activities. This is the first time EPIC has been asked to seed a program for adoption by a partner. While we cannot predict the outcome, we are delighted Youth Peer has been so fully embraced and that, if Sackville BGC is able to offer their version of Youth Peer to 6 clubs in the Halifax region, there is a great opportunity for roll-out to other BGC clubs across Canada.

In May, 2023, staff assessed 129 marginalized youth, 64 in Sydney and 65 in Outreach, using SEGWAY (**S**ocial **E**motional **G**rowth & **W**ellness **A**ssessment of **Y**outh) which tracks behavioural changes across 20 research-validated risk indicators. Final results, reflecting school-year changes, confirmed what staff had observed anecdotally that 92% of participants are internalizing protective factors that counteract social conflict risks. The average assessed change in social conflict risk indicators was an 11% improvement in pro-social behaviours. Overall, for every 2½ hours students attended Youth Peer, there has been a 1% average improvement in protective factors to counteract social risk.

Parents PEACE

An average of 5 parents participated in weekly Parents PEACE evening sessions, improving parenting skills and enhancing capacity to support their children. Five of EPIC's partner agencies engaged parents in interactive discussions on critical parenting issues which provided parents with greater insights for helping their children, and nurtured support from other parents to navigate challenges with their children at risk.

OUTPUT GOALS

2023

Short-term

This year, after adding 3 Outreach programs, EPIC achieved an extraordinary record number of tutor-mentor matches, 2,021 in Cape Breton, and 2,124 with Sackville included. Now that weekly Outreach programs in Whitney Pier, Iona, and Sackville, have become firmly rooted, we will strive to make operation and growth as smooth in these sites as in EPIC's longer established programs. We anticipate that EPIC will sustain 5 weekly Outreach programs on an ongoing basis. Whitney Pier is an under-served community within Sydney. Iona is a rural school outside CBRM in Victoria County that is still part of Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education. Sackville is 5 hours away, impractical to supervise directly, but housed at Sackville Boys & Girls Club, EPIC's partner that seeks to have a Youth Peer modelled program in each of their 6 Halifax region clubs. EPIC has agreed to sustain full responsibility for 1 more year to give BGC time and inservicing before the hand-off of the peer tutor-mentor model to BGC beginning in September 2024. EPIC will sustain the daily Youth Peer Program in Sydney and 5 weekly Outreach programs in Cape Breton with the goal of providing transformative services to 130 marginalized Cape Breton youth, 70 in Youth Peer-Sydney and 60 in 5 Outreach sites. In the past school-year, EPIC delivered services to 129 youth in Cape Breton and 7 in the Halifax region.

Mid-term

EPIC endeavours to sustain donations at a level that will enable the charity to make the Outreach sites in Whitney Pier and Iona permanent additions to Youth Peer services so that EPIC is consistently able to carry out more than 2,000 tutor-mentor matches each school-year. EPIC has a long history of positive connections in Whitney Pier and we know there is no other volunteer-based service for youth who are socially and academically at high risk, live in poverty, and face challenges of cultural marginalization. EPIC's involvement with Rankin School in Iona is new, but the school principal has already described continuation of Youth Peer as "a high priority." We believe that the under-served youth in this rural setting, particularly for the majority of target youth who travel half an hour by bus from the Mi'kmaq community of Eskasoni, make Youth Peer a unique and highly valued service. In the mid-term, we hope to overcome transportation challenges so that youth-parent intake meetings, volunteer tutor-mentor training, and transportation home for both participants and volunteers become as smooth and routine as EPIC's provision of nutritional snacks and transformative activities.

Long-term

The Executive Director of EPIC founded the charity, serves on the Board, and oversees all programs and finances, having committed an average of 30 hours/week as a volunteer since 1996. He hopes to continue in this capacity for many more years. However, since his position in the organization is singular, succession planning is a priority both in terms of stable long-term funding and operations. An ideal replacement has been identified. She is an extraordinary young woman who has spent many years as an EPIC volunteer and staff member, both full and part-time. On her own initiative, she has made it clear she wants to learn as much about EPIC as possible. The EPIC Board, in consultation with and enthusiastic approval of the current Youth Peer Program Director, has recently created the new position of Youth Peer Assistant Director for this person. Initially, she will work in a part-time capacity as back-up for the Program Director and Volunteers Coordinator. EPIC's goal is for her to gradually acquire the skills and knowledge to take on more responsibilities and eventually run the charity as a full-time employee.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

2023

Comprehensive review of EPIC by Charity Intelligence has led to continued inclusion in the Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities and Top 10 Impact Youth Charities with a corresponding rise in faraway-place donations. Unsolicited donations have now become our greatest revenue source. For EPIC, more resources means delivering more services. This year we doubled weekly Outreach sites from 3 to 6. New programs at Whitney Pier Middle School and Rankin School in Iona will undoubtedly increase expenses, but transformative impact on 16-20 additional marginalized youth should validate our efforts and help ensure future donor support. EPIC's partnership with Sackville Boys & Girls Club, 5 hours away, will promote BGC adoption of the Youth Peer volunteer tutor-mentor model by the end of 2023-2024. Delivering this service for 2 years may strain budget balancing, but should enable BGC to grow their version of Youth Peer in new locations across Canada for many years.

LESSONS LEARNED

2023

This year, EPIC partnered with Cape Breton University in a 200-hour community research project to answer the question, "Are there youth-oriented or peer-based programs in Canada that are kindred spirits to EPIC's Youth Peer Program?" The researchers identified 47 potential matches and a shortlist of 8, with the top 3 interviewed extensively. They concluded that EPIC's "closest cousin" is East York Learning Experience for its striking similarities in the way they nurture 1-to-1 relationships between marginalized participants and community volunteers. We have learned how rare it is to find a charity driven relentlessly by transformative impact on clients and community, and how essential it is to recognize and collaborate with those "close cousins."

The quest for new revenue has sometimes included applying for 1-time grants. We have learned to limit these only to activities which assist partner organizations and innovate activities meriting permanent adoption. Parents PEACE, art, and guitar instruction are all 1-time EPIC projects imbedded years ago. Youth Peer Outreach has evolved over 6 years into a growing extension of Youth Peer. We have learned that healthy growth should be driven by demonstrated merit in addressing the needs of under-served communities, rather than by budget constraints. If the objectives are worthy, the resources will follow.

On the unusual occasions when EPIC's services align perfectly with community requests, magic can happen rapidly. In March, 2023, the Rankin School principal in rural Iona sought to offer an after-school tutoring program, especially targetting the school attachment of students bussed 30 minutes away from the indigenous Eskasoni community. Historically, after-school activities could only be considered there by families able to pick up their children - a prohibitive challenge for potential tutors and target youth. However, simultaneous to the SchoolsPlus Facilitator's strong recommendation of Youth Peer, EPIC received new donations sufficient to overcome the challenges. Because the partners were able to pull strongly in the same direction, EPIC was able to initiate 9 weekly tutor-mentor matches only 6 weeks from the principal's initial request, with free rides home for all.

We have come to believe that, beyond thoughtful leadership, the real magic of EPIC's programs comes from relationships built within environments that encourage older youth to keep volunteering to be nice to younger marginalized kids, because this is what enables recipients to look forward every week to feelings of support and acceptance.

SCHOLARSHIPS VOLUNTEERISM AND HUMANITY AWARDS

2023

SCHOLARSHIPS

Beyond its school-year community programs, EPIC actualizes its mission to advance marginalized learners by providing scholarships. The first scholarship was awarded in 1997 with multiple scholarships awarded since 2002.

The scholarships are provided under the following criteria:

“Awarded by Educational Program Innovations Charity Society to further the education of a graduating student distinguished by high school staff for commitment to community or perseverance in overcoming obstacles to advancement”

Each of the following students received EPIC’s \$500 Scholarship in 2023:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Aleigha Paul | Eskasoni First Nation | Allison Bernard Memorial High |
| • Jill MacDonald | Membertou First Nation | Riverview Rural High |
| • Skye Lucas | African-NS Community | Sydney Academy |
| • Hannah Teresa Sears | *Rural Community | Riverview Rural High |

** This is the third year of the Rural Community scholarship – sponsored by a generous donor, enabling EPIC to celebrate Riverview’s role as EPIC’s largest source of volunteers.*

VOLUNTEERISM AWARDS

EPIC initiated the EPIC Volunteerism Awards in 2012 in recognition of the volunteer contribution of post-secondary students in service placements in which they have assisted tremendously with Youth Peer, Outreach, and Online. An award has been issued annually to Cape Breton University and Nova Scotia Community College graduates ever since.

The volunteerism awards are provided under the following criteria:

“Presented by Educational Program Innovations Charity Society to a graduating post-secondary student distinguished for outstanding volunteerism beyond course requirements”

The following student received EPIC’s \$500 Volunteerism Award in 2023:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| • John MacEwan | Cape Breton University | Community Studies |
| • Meadow Crawley | NSCC - Marconi | Social Services |

HUMANITY AWARD

Vincent Waterman served on EPIC’s Board for 20 years and was an extraordinary friend and exceptional giver to the community before he passed away in January, 2019. As an ongoing legacy suggested by his sister-in-law and former Nova Scotia Lieutenant Governor Mayann Francis, EPIC initiated the Vincent Waterman Humanity Award in collaboration with Cape Breton County high school guidance counsellors who nominate an award finalist from each of 5 high schools.

The humanity award is provided under the following criteria:

“Awarded by Educational Program Innovations Charity Society to a graduating high school student for exemplifying Patriarch Vincent Waterman’s boundless community giving and treatment of others as winners of the human race”

The following student received the \$500 Vincent Waterman EPIC Humanity Award in 2023:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| • Jaimie Bowers | Sydney Mines | Memorial High |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|

MANAGEMENT TEAM PARTNERS

2023

EPIC oversees the finances and daily operations of Youth Peer, Youth Peer Outreach, Youth Peer Online, and Parents PEACE, in partnership with 34 community agencies who refer high-risk kids, volunteers, and/or caregivers to the programs, network to enhance the community's services, and offer advice to ensure the smooth dovetailing of EPIC's programs with other community supports. The Management Team meets quarterly, while staff and referring partner representatives are in regular contact, often on a daily basis.

The following 34 community partner agencies continue to serve on the Management Team:

- Island Community Justice
- Salvation Army
- Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education
- Nova Scotia Legal Aid
- Nova Scotia Community Services - Child Welfare
- Nova Scotia Health Authority Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Cape Breton University - Career Services
- Black Educators Association
- Membertou Education
- Nova Scotia Correctional Services
- Cape Breton Regional Police
- Transition House
- Whitney Pier Boys and Girls Club
- Native Council
- Centre Scolaire Etoile de l'Acadie
- Family Service of Eastern Nova Scotia
- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
- Family Place Resource Centre
- Nova Scotia Community College - Marconi Campus
- YMCA of Cape Breton
- Association For Safer Cape Breton Communities
- Adult Literacy Association of Cape Breton County
- SchoolsPlus
- CaperBase Access 808
- Nova Scotia Public Health
- Ally Centre of Cape Breton
- Housing First
- Cape Breton Centre for Sexual Health
- Cornerstone Cape Breton
- Cape Breton Youth Project
- Undercurrent Youth Centre
- IWK Mental Health and Addictions
- Northside Employment & Resource Centre
- Five Eleven Youth and Family Center

REVENUE SOURCES

2023

Core Funding

Law Foundation of Nova Scotia



Multiple Years

United Way Cape Breton



Nova Scotia Community Services



Nova Scotia Justice



Nova Scotia Education & Early Childhood Development



Nova Scotia Association of Realtors



Ted Rogers Community Grant



Individual Unsolicited Donors

Canadian National Recognition

Charity Intelligence - Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities
3 years... 2020, 2021, 2022

Charity Intelligence - Top 10 Impact Youth Charities
3 years... 2020, 2021, 2022



William H. Donner Award - \$20,000 highest award
2 years... 2010, 2013

Donner Canadian Foundation Award - \$5,000 award
6 years... 2007-2013

Peter F. Drucker Foundation - \$5,000 award... 2012



YOUTH PEER STAFF

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Delores Feltmate



Delores was an elementary/middle school teacher & guidance counsellor for many years, fostered 11 children including 1 she adopted, and is a Nova Scotia leader in child advocacy. She became Youth Peer Co-Director in 2014 but retired a year later with health challenges. Her prognosis improved and Youth Peer has thrived exceptionally well since 2018 with Delores as full-time Program Director. She generates a positive team-building atmosphere and demonstrates extraordinary compassion and finesse making marginalized youth feel accepted and supported.

VOLUNTEERS COORDINATOR

Kendrick Miller



Kendrick distinguished herself as a Youth Peer tutor-mentor volunteer before being hired as Outreach Program Assistant and Online Program Assistant. In 2021, she was elevated to the role of Volunteers Coordinator and has risen impressively to meet each new challenge. She completed a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and has pursued an online Dalhousie Master of Social Work program while working full-time at Youth Peer and sustaining part-time work as a beloved dance instructor.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR

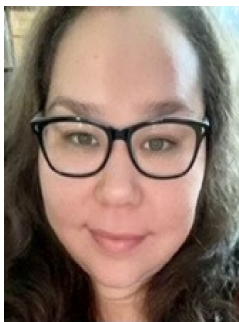
Samantha Fernandez



Samantha distinguished herself as a Youth Peer volunteer for 4 years, before being hired as a Program Assistant. She was soon promoted to Outreach Coordinator for the new Whitney Pier program while attending Cape Breton University full-time on scholarship. Her caring and calm interactions with youth, volunteers, and staff have ensured her place on staff in any feasible capacity. She brings maturity, collaborativeness, outstanding organization, and admiration from the youth.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Aria Bernard



Aria became known to EPIC in 2007 as a school leader and volunteer in Eskasoni Math Tutoring, a partnership with Eskasoni School Board. After completing her BA degree from Cape Breton University, she served 5 years as Youth Worker for high-risk indigenous youth in Resiliency Education Leadership Adventure & Youth Service program, EPIC's partnership with Cape Breton Regional Police. EPIC was delighted to hire her as Outreach Coordinator in Iona where she was already carrying out Options to Anger sessions with marginalized students.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Anna George



Anna has been the Outreach Coordinator since 2019 after endearing herself for 2 previous years as a tutor-mentor volunteer. She is highly skilled in multi-tasking and coordinating programs in Northside, New Waterford, and Glace Bay. She sustains a positive outlook when crises are encountered and works seamlessly with SchoolsPlus Facilitators and Outreach Assistants to set up resources, recruit volunteers, contact parents, organize activities, provide nutrition, create a healthy learning environment, and make youth and volunteers feel valued.

EDUCATOR

Anne Pentecost



EPIC was introduced to Anne as Math Coach Specialist for Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre For Education. Staff were so pleased with her expert advice and supportive demeanor that she was hired as Outreach Educator in 2019. Her extraordinary organizational skills, vast knowledge of helpful resources, and exceptional rapport with staff and volunteers have led to her serving as Educator for all of Youth Peer's programs, the daily program in Sydney and the 5 weekly Outreach sites.

YOUTH PEER & OUTREACH PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

Youth Peer & Outreach Program Assistant staff are all post-secondary students who first distinguished themselves as outstanding tutor-mentor volunteers. Program Assistants Kendall Miller and Darcy MacLeod worked 5 afternoons-a-week at Youth Peer while studying full-time at Cape Breton University. Outreach Program Assistants worked fewer hours but brought similar enthusiasm and empathy to their respective programs, endearing them to high-risk participants, volunteers, and staff, and ensuring wonderful experiences from arrival through tutoring, nutrition, social breaks, and mentoring.

ART INSTRUCTOR

Susanne Donovan



Susanne has been the Art Instructor since art was introduced to the Youth Peer in 2002. Susanne provides youth and their mentors with a wide range of fun, enriching and educational creative activities 2-3 afternoons a week. She holds a Fine Arts degree from Mt. Allison University in New Brunswick. Her imaginative projects engage even the kids who think they lack artistic talent, and all participants feel encouraged and honoured.

MUSIC INSTRUCTOR

Emile Conn



Emile has been teaching guitar, harmonica, and keyboard at Youth Peer since 2004. He provides private instruction to any interested student along with the tutor-mentor for two afternoons a week at Youth Peer. His quiet demeanor is calming to the participants and his strong musical skills draw in kids to explore their own musical talents. For several of the students, Emile's gentle instruction entices them to attend the program more consistently which enhances their advancement academically as well as socially.

PARENTS PEACE STAFF

FACILITATOR

Ann McPhee



Ann became Parents PEACE Facilitator in 2016. She began her career as a high school teacher, but served as Executive Director of the Ann Terry Society for over 25 years overseeing projects focused on women's employment. She is highly skilled in designing, developing, delivering, and tailoring programs for adult learners that address challenges faced by the caregivers of children at high risk. Her easy rapport with parents, wealth of experience, and extensive community connections contribute greatly to participant confidence and adaptiveness and to the enhancement of parent-child relationships.

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS AND VOLUNTEERS

EPIC's programs engage high-risk marginalized youth ages 8-18 and caregivers of all ages who strive to improve relationships with their troubled children. All activities involve 1-to-1 matching or small group interactions. Aside from Youth Peer Outreach programs for youth ages 10-16 in Northside, New Waterford, Glace Bay, Whitney Pier, and Iona, all activities take place at the Youth Peer Centre, downstairs from the Sydney Adult High School. It is a safe haven in which participants and volunteers feel mutually accepted, valued, and treated like family. Youth tutor-mentors have volunteered from Grade 9 through university, claiming that the program has been as fulfilling for them as it has been for the kids they've assisted. Staff, who have also served as volunteers, consider it a magical place to work because they consistently feel they are able to witness their own impact in helping struggling youth to improve their lives.



The following quotes reflect commonly expressed feelings about the Youth Peer Centre: *"I never used to trust people because I was bullied a lot. When I lashed out at the ones who threatened me, that brought the authorities and Mental Health crashing down on me. Youth Peer helped me overcome what I thought was impossible. Without Youth Peer support, I would never have completed high school, gone on to secure a trade, and gotten better control of my life. I'm lucky I was part of it."*

~ former Youth Peer participant ~



"Parents PEACE has been my lifeline - the place where I can go for help. Everything said is kept confidential so I can be very open and leave feeling better than when I came. My daughters have reading disabilities and severe anxieties. Youth Peer has been a godsend, helping them work independently with confidence."

~ former Parents PEACE participant whose children attended Youth Peer ~



“Youth Peer forever changed my life, as a volunteer then as a hired Program Assistant. My leadership was sharpened and I became more positive with an open, accepting mind. No job was ever more challenging yet so rewarding. Such wonderful people and such an amazing program.”

~ young teacher and former Youth Peer tutor-mentor volunteer and Program Assistant ~

