



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM INNOVATIONS CHARITY SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT



  **2024**

EPIC - CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Educational Program Innovations Charity (EPIC) Society

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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

2024

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

2024

Youth Peer

Youth Peer is a free, daily 3 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 2023-2024 school-year, an average of 65 marginalized youth were transported from 13 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 8 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 2023-2024 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 their own version of Youth Peer beginning in 2024-2025. For hand-off in September, 2024, EPIC has offered solid support to assist BGC at the Sackville Community Centre, or alternatively, to SchoolsPlus if a school site is deemed more feasible. Regardless of lead organization, program title, or site, there is now a shared objective to offer a cost-effective weekly 1-to-1 tutor-mentor program which achieves transformative change in marginalized youth participants through healthy relationships with youth volunteers. In the Iona program, a 1-hour drive from Sydney, EPIC has inserviced the SchoolsPlus Facilitator in all aspects of the program like recruitment, training, youth intake meetings, and program delivery. If the hand-off goes as envisioned, SchoolsPlus will be able to deliver an effective peer tutor-mentor program in Iona for years to come. In any case, EPIC anticipates delivering 4 weekly Outreach programs in Cape Breton on an ongoing basis. In the current 2024-2025 projection, Youth Peer Outreach will be delivered Mondays at Whitney Pier Middle School (Whitney Pier), Tuesdays at Breton Education Centre (New Waterford), Wednesdays at Oceanview Middle School (Glace Bay), and Thursdays at Memorial High (Northside). In all Outreach sites, EPIC will optimize the social / academic advancement of marginalized youth while engaging staff and youth volunteers in life-fulfilling experiences.

Parents PEACE (*Practicing Esteem-building Acceptance Communication & Evaluation*) Parents PEACE concluded February 29, 2024 when caregivers and the Facilitator agreed that the program had fulfilled its intent and run its course. The program had provided a free, ongoing parenting workshop for 20 years engaging an average of 6 parent/caregivers of high-risk youth in discussions to strengthen parenting skills through Facilitator guidance and group support. Parents had met for 2 hours/week at the Youth Peer Centre with an average of 5 parents attending each session. The program provided a safe place to talk, practical strategies, and social support to cope with parenting problems. Parent input on areas of concern guided discussions and arrangements for expert community agency representatives to present relevant discussion ideas.

EPIC and its management partners have concluded there is still a great need for a parent support group. This has led to formation of a new partnership with SchoolsPlus. Beginning in October, 2024, EPIC anticipates delivering **PEP** (*Parents Encouraging Parents*) at Sherwood Park Education Centre in Sydney with a new Facilitator, new site, new parents of high-risk middle school kids, and a streamlined focus on parent empowerment. Topics brought forward by parents are likely to be similar to those of previous parenting sessions, but this group will focus on helping parents feel understood, validated, and capable of solving their own family challenges. PEP will provide a safe space that enables parents to improve their relationships with their children by first changing their attitudes about themselves in addition to gaining encouragement from others. It is projected that PEP will help parents to be more patient with themselves as well as their children and more confident in establishing healthy boundaries in their parent-child relationships. Parent surveys will be conducted in May 2025 to identify enhancements in parents' sense of self-worth, receptiveness to new ways to improve family life, and belief that the parent can achieve better parent-child relationships through constructive thoughts, words, and actions.

PROGRAM NEED

2024

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, though recently improved to 8.8% is still 40% higher than the national average (*Statistics Canada*). The average child poverty rate across CBRM is 28% - almost 3 times the Canadian average of 10% (*Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*). Despite encouraging local signs in CBRM largely related to international university students, overall prosperity demographics remain bleak.

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 up 13+ 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 2024

The table below provides a pre-audited breakdown of costs allocated by program category for EPIC's most recent fiscal year, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. 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	EXPENSE %	COST
Youth Peer & Outreach	93	244,570
* Administration	5	12,500
Scholarships and Awards	1	3,500
Parents PEACE Program	1	2,400
TOTAL	100	\$262,970

** 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, and dues and fees. EPIC anticipates annual administration costs at 5-6% of annual expenses. Other costs involved in the delivery of EPIC's programs including supervision, youth volunteers, program facilities, financial services, and charity office operation continue to be provided as in-kind services as itemized below. Fundraising is carried out almost exclusively through grant applications and proposal writing provided in-kind by the volunteer Executive Director.*

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS * 2024

CATEGORY	CONTRIBUTOR	CALCULATIONS	COST
Supervision	Executive Director	30 hours/week x 44 weeks x \$45/hour	59,400
	SchoolsPlus Facilitators	5 x 3 hours/week x 40 weeks x \$35/hour	21,000
	Board Members	2 hours/week x 40 weeks x \$45/hour	3,600
	Partner Agency Members	2 hours/week x 40 weeks x \$40/hour	3,200
Youth Services	Tutor-Mentor Volunteers	2,120 youth matches x 2 hours x \$17/hour	72,080
Program Facilities	Sydney-Adult High	2 classes / 2 offices x 10 months x \$500/month	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 hours/week x 44 weeks x \$45/hour	7,920
Charity Office	Board Treasurer	Office space, equipment, office supplies	4,000
		TOTAL	\$216,200

** 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 2024

Youth Peer & Outreach Program Summary		2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Management Team Partner Agencies #		34	34	34
School Referral Sources #		26	27	21
Active Youth Participants #		124	136	93
Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #		130	134	100
Average Improvement in Protective Factors %		11%	11%	14%
Site	Output Indicators	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Sydney	Active Youth Participant #	65	70	65
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	64	69	67
	Protective Factor Improvement %	11%	10%	14%
Northside	Active Youth Participant #	11	15	8
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	13	14	10
	Protective Factor Improvement %	4%	11%	11%
New Waterford	Active Youth Participant #	12	14	8
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	14	15	9
	Protective Factor Improvement %	17%	12%	13%
Glace Bay	Active Youth Participant #	13	14	12
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	14	15	14
	Protective Factor Improvement %	17%	15%	16%
Whitney Pier	Active Youth Participant #	6	7	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	7	6	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	6%	9%	-
Iona	Active Youth Participant #	8	9	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	9	9	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	12%	16%	-
Sackville	Active Youth Participant #	7	7	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	8	6	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	18%	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	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Sydney	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	1209	1208	1187
Northside	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	166	212	133
New Waterford	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	215	211	132
Glace Bay	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	222	201	189
Whitney Pier	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	83	111	-
Iona (Victoria county)	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	159	78	-
Sackville (Halifax region)	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	150	103	-
Total		2204	2124	1641
High-Risk Marginalization Demographics		Youth Peer & Outreach	CBRM *	
Child Poverty (<i>school-aged children</i>)		75%	28%	
Indigenous (<i>on-reserve and off-reserve</i>)		11%	5%	
Gender Diverse (<i>non-binary or transgender identification</i>)		9%	1%	

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

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

2024

Youth Peer & Youth Peer Outreach

In school-year 2023-2024, 124 regularly-attending high-risk Youth Peer and Outreach participants were referred by 26 different schools, 13 to Sydney and 13 to 6 Outreach sites. Many referred youth were also involved with other EPIC partner agencies like Mental Health and Community Services. School guidance counsellors referred 80% of Youth Peer & Outreach participants. 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. Outreach operated weekly in Whitney Pier, New Waterford, Glace Bay, Iona, Northside, and Sackville, averaging a total of 66 matches/week. There were 129 tutor-mentors who actively volunteered, 67% from 7 different high schools, 28% from Cape Breton University, and 5% from other college or university programs. The total tutor-mentor matches in Youth Peer's 26th year was 2,204, 4% higher than the previous record of 2,124. Site breakdown was: Sydney-1,209; Whitney Pier-83; New Waterford-215; Glace Bay-222; Iona-159; Northside-166; Sackville-150. The tutor-mentor matches, averaging 2½ hours/week for each youth participant and volunteer, reflect 11,020 hours of positive social and academic activity engagement. Over 95% of youth participants across all 7 sites were assessed, using referral indicators and evaluation tools, as being at high risk. In May, 2024, staff assessed 113 marginalized youth, 61 in Sydney and 52 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 91% 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 4 hours students attended Youth Peer or Outreach, there has been a 1% average improvement in protective factors to counteract social risk.

Program Changes

As donations to EPIC rose in recent years with national recognition by Charity Intelligence, requests for EPIC's services also increased. This enabled EPIC to address community needs by expanding from 3 to 6 weekly Outreach programs. EPIC now envisions sustaining 4 Outreach sites within ½ hour drive from Sydney. The Iona site, a 1-hr drive away, and the Sackville site, a 5-hour drive away, were planned as 2-year pilot projects to inspire partner organizations to take the lead in September, 2024 after seeing the positive impact on marginalized youth and learning how to deliver an effective program modelled after Youth Peer. In 2024, SchoolsPlus at Malcolm Munroe Middle School in Sydney River requested assistance to establish a volunteer peer tutor-mentor program in the 2024-2025 school-year. EPIC's hope, in the fall of 2024, is to serve in a support role for 3 volunteer peer tutor-mentor programs seeded by Youth Peer (Sackville, Iona, Sydney River), assisting our partners with recruitment strategies, tutor training, program roll-out, staff transition, and program access challenges.

Parents PEACE transition to Parents Encouraging Parents

An average of 5 parents participated in weekly Parents PEACE evening sessions, improving parenting skills and support for their children. The Facilitator engaged parents interactively on critical parenting issues, providing a safe haven for group support and navigation of parenting challenges. The program concluded February 29, 2024. A new EPIC program, **PEP** (**P**arents **E**ncouraging **P**arents) is scheduled to start in October, 2024, facilitated by Youth Peer's recently retired Program Director, at Sherwood Park Education Centre a short distance from the Youth Peer Centre, in partnership with SchoolsPlus, in a fresh space with a new group of high-risk middle school student caregivers and a primary focus on parent-to-parent empowerment.

OUTPUT GOALS

2024

Short-term

In the most recent school-year, having added 3 new Outreach programs, EPIC achieved an extraordinary record number of tutor-mentor matches, 2,204. Now that the weekly Outreach program in Whitney Pier has become firmly rooted, we envision achieving participant numbers and measured impact comparable to those in the well-established Outreach programs in New Waterford, Glace Bay, and Northside, sustaining 4 weekly Outreach programs in Cape Breton on an ongoing basis. EPIC will deliver transformative peer tutor-mentor services to 110 marginalized youth, 65 in Youth Peer-Sydney and 45 in 4 Outreach sites. Additionally, EPIC will provide partner support for tutor-mentor programs modelled from Youth Peer and led by SchoolsPlus in Sydney River and Iona, and by Boys & Girls Club or SchoolsPlus in Sackville.

Mid-term

EPIC endeavours to sustain grants and donations at a level enabling the charity to make the 4 Cape Breton Outreach sites within ½ drive from Sydney permanent additions to Youth Peer services. This would ensure EPIC's consistent capacity to carry out over 2,000 tutor-mentor matches each school-year with transformative impact on over 100 marginalized youth and life-enhancing experiences for over 100 youth volunteers.

Long-term

EPIC's Executive Director, who founded the charity, serves on the Board, and oversees programs and finances, has committed 25+ hours/week volunteering since 1996. He hopes to continue in this capacity for years to come. However, since his position in the organization is both singular and volunteer, succession planning is a priority to achieve stable long-term funding and charity operation. EPIC's Youth Peer Program Director, after many stellar years of service, retired this year. We recently created the new position of Youth Peer Program Manager, in the hope of hiring an extraordinary leader, mature enough to be admired by young staff and energetic enough to conduct site visits to 4 Outreach programs while still overseeing daily Youth Peer operations in Sydney. If we are able to find the right person, passionate about the positive impact of Youth Peer on marginalized youth and the youth volunteers who transform their lives, and effective as a staff and community leader, we will encourage the acquisition of skills and knowledge needed to run the charity. The ultimate goal will be to have a well-compensated leader capable of sustaining the charity as well as the programs.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

2024

Charity Intelligence recognition of EPIC in the Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities and Top 10 Impact Youth Charities has significantly increased our unsolicited donations which are now our greatest revenue source. For EPIC, having more means doing more. In the past school-year, operating 6 Outreach programs, particularly the far-away sites of Sackville and Iona, was unusually time-consuming and expensive. The Executive Director's volunteer commitment sometimes exceeded 40 hours/week and annual Youth Peer expenses grew by over \$30,000. We believe Youth Peer was highly successful and well-appreciated in those 2 communities, but not sustainable by EPIC. We are not territorial about helping marginalized youth, so we have done our utmost to ensure a smooth handoff of future volunteer peer tutor-mentor activities. However, we cannot know how our partners will fare with lead responsibility. We will be generous partners to help the new program leads, but must rely on hope that Sackville, Iona, and Sydney River will deliver their own effective volunteer peer tutor-mentor programs.

LESSONS LEARNED

2024

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. EPIC's parent program, art, and guitar instruction are all 1-time projects imbedded years ago. Youth Peer Outreach has evolved over 7 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. However, by delivering 6 Outreach programs this school-year instead of 3, we over-extended Executive Director volunteer hours and incurred a budget deficit that can only be deemed a wise investment if our passing lead responsibility to our program partners results in greater services to the community.

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. We have now embarked on a new path in which EPIC supports the efforts of others to lead volunteer peer tutor-mentor activities. We have no idea whether any or all of 3 different EPIC partners will run with the Youth Peer hand-off and deliver results similar to what EPIC has refined over 26 years. What we do know is that there are always far more marginalized youth in communities than programs to improve their life trajectory. We cannot expect EPIC and its partners to make the world a better place, only to ensure that the programs of EPIC and its partners are a better place than the world.

SCHOLARSHIPS VOLUNTEERISM AND HUMANITY AWARDS 2024

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 2024:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Larra Francis | Eskasoni First Nation | Allison Bernard Memorial High |
| • Danikah Stevens | Membertou First Nation | Sydney Academy |
| • Levi Dorey | African-NS Community | Sydney Academy |
| • Maria Rozicki | *Rural Community | Riverview Rural High |

** This is the 4th year of the Rural Community scholarship – sponsored by a generous donor, enabling EPIC to celebrate Riverview’s role as a vital source of tutor-mentor 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. 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 2024:

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| • Kyla Edmond | Cape Breton University | Community Studies |
| • Sarah Young | 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 2024:

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|
| • Hayden Timbury | Sydney Mines | Memorial High |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|

MANAGEMENT TEAM PARTNERS

2024

EPIC oversees the finances and daily operations of Youth Peer & Outreach, Scholarships and Awards, 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

2024

Core Funding

Law Foundation of Nova Scotia



Multiple Years

United Way Cape Breton



Nova Scotia Community Services



Nova Scotia Education & Early Childhood Development



Nova Scotia Justice



Marty Cutler Family Foundation



Fyfe Foundation



Individual Unsolicited Donors

Canadian National Recognition

Charity Intelligence - Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities
4 years... 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023



Charity Intelligence - Top 10 Impact Youth Charities
4 years... 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

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

Donner Canadian Foundation Award - \$5,000 award
6 years... 2007, 2009-2013

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

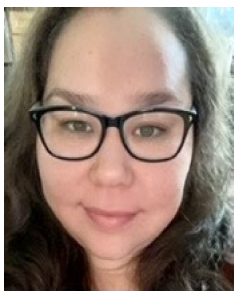
Samantha Fernandez



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 ongoing weekly 4 CBRM 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 Youth Peer in 2002. Susanne provides youth and their mentors with a wide range of fun, enriching and educational creative activities 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 3 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 October, 2016, and sustained the program through its conclusion in February, 2024. She began her career as a high school teacher, but served for over 25 years as Executive Director of the Ann Terry Society overseeing projects focused on women's employment. She was highly skilled in designing, developing, delivering, and tailoring programs for adult learners to address challenges faced by the caregivers of children at high risk. Her easy rapport with parents, wealth of experience, and extensive community connections, enabled her to boost participant confidence thus improving parent-child relationships.

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS AND VOLUNTEERS

EPIC's programs engage high-risk marginalized youth ages 8-18 and caregivers 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 Whitney Pier, New Waterford, Glace Bay, and Northside, 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 volunteers, ranging from Grade 9 through university, have claimed 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 ~



"EPIC's parent program 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 ~

