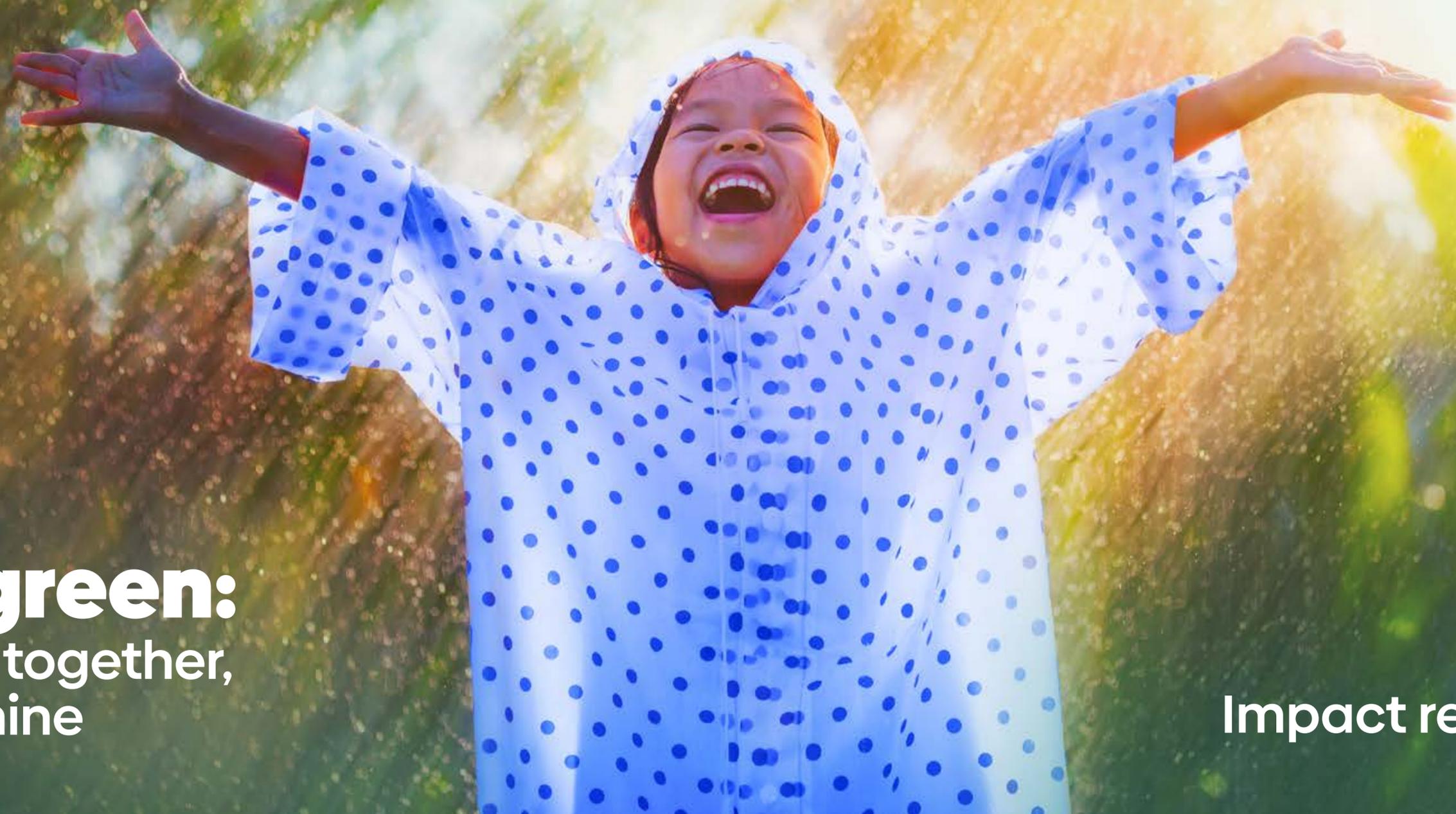


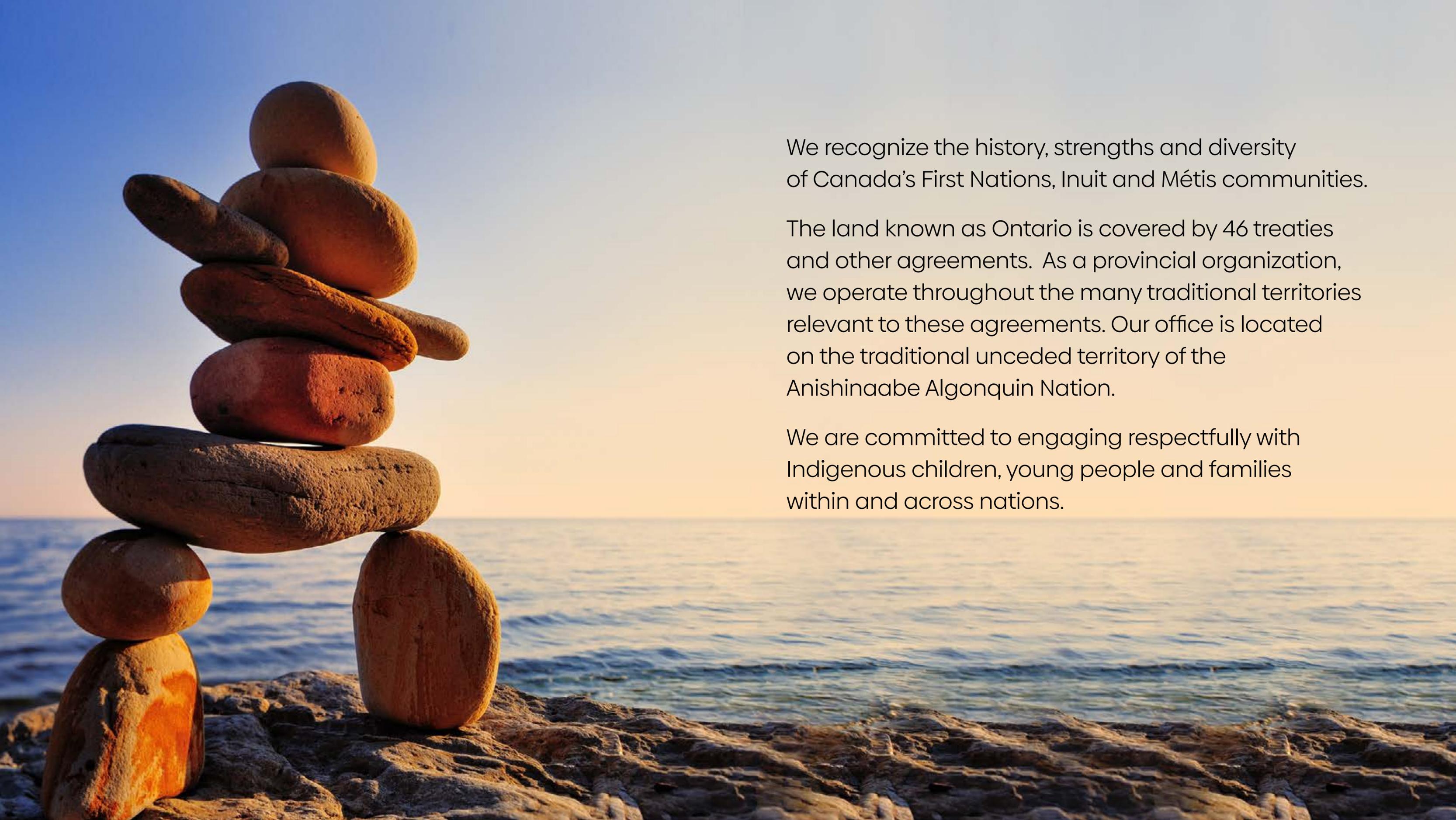


**Knowledge  
Institute**  
on Child and Youth  
Mental Health and Addictions



**Evergreen:**  
Growing together,  
rain or shine

**Impact report 2022**



We recognize the history, strengths and diversity of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

The land known as Ontario is covered by 46 treaties and other agreements. As a provincial organization, we operate throughout the many traditional territories relevant to these agreements. Our office is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

We are committed to engaging respectfully with Indigenous children, young people and families within and across nations.

# Contents

Changing our leaves, keeping our roots intact.....	4
Seeing the forest as well as the trees.....	5
Planting seeds.....	8
Putting down roots.....	11
Growing together.....	14
Standing tall.....	17
Seeding forests.....	20
Bearing fruit.....	22
Staying (in the) green.....	23
Acknowledgements.....	24
Branching out.....	25



# Changing our leaves, keeping our roots intact

In the fall of 2021, the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health became the Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions. Our new identity came with a colourful new logo and a new organizational emphasis on supporting the sector's capacity to deliver high quality, equitable care to all Ontarians through a specific focus on equity, diversity and inclusion. As well, we're working to better understand and address complex mental health needs, particularly including the overlaps between mental health and addictions.

But while our name, look and feel have changed and our focus has expanded, our fundamental mission and purpose remains the same. We're committed to supporting our sector and its knowledge needs, and to working together to ensure the best mental health and well-being for Ontario's children, young people and families.



**Knowledge Institute**  
on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions



# Seeing the forest as well as the trees

Living through a global pandemic takes a lot of energy – much of it spent focusing on the details right in front of us and avoiding obstacles in our path. Our team's endurance and the expertise of those guiding the way have been crucial to our ability as an organization to step back from the day-to-day toil to see the bigger picture and prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Here are some messages from our intrepid leaders.



## Honouring the trek so far – and carrying on with determination

Through the last fiscal year, the pandemic continued – and continues – to have a significant impact on each of us.

If 2020 demanded unprecedented adaptability, 2021 required extraordinary endurance. The second year of the pandemic brought new optimism along with new anxieties, offering relief from some challenges while others emerged or deepened. Like hikers on a formidable trek, our team reached the peak of the pandemic exhausted and a little sore. Along with our partners in the sector, we experienced fatigue, social isolation and the struggles of parenting while working from home. Yet collectively we are emerging stronger, wiser and more capable than before.

We're proud of the way the Knowledge Institute has maintained our focus on critical priorities in child and youth mental health and addictions, grown in new directions and continued to show up for our sector, supporting agencies and service providers through it all. We're pleased to be able to share key highlights of the past year in this report, like

the launch of our quality guideline on virtual walk-in services and our foundational work to advance racial equity in child and youth mental health and addictions services.

None of this would have been possible without the remarkable resilience and teamwork of our staff, advisory councils and partners. We're humbled by the spirit of collaboration and the grit and stamina that each of them has shown along the way. They're the reason we can confidently say that we'll keep moving ahead to support our sector and Ontario's children, young people and families, no matter what.

Together, we'll continue to negotiate the challenging terrain of pandemic recovery and together we'll successfully navigate any forests of uncertainty or adversity that lie ahead.



**Purnima Sundar**  
Executive Director



**Louis Doyle**  
Chair, Strategic advisory council



## Getting out of the woods by ensuring faster access to services

The past several months have felt like slowly emerging from a dark, dense thicket into a sun-lit clearing. Mandates dropped. Restrictions lifted. We started to reconnect face-to-face with colleagues, friends and loved ones. This summer we went to festivals and sporting events. We took real vacations. Most recently, children returned to the classroom with the promising potential of an uninterrupted school year.

This ability to resume any sort of “normal” at a community level speaks to the incredible resilience of Ontarians as a whole and the colossal efforts of so many, including the Knowledge Institute team. However, at this point it’s important to remember that we’re not out of the woods yet. We have good reason to be cautiously optimistic about leaving the pandemic itself behind, but on the other side of the clearing is the post-pandemic reality that we still need to get through.

Trends at CHEO’s emergency department speak to the toll the pandemic has taken on child and youth mental health. We’ve seen unprecedented numbers of young people with eating disorders and a shocking rise in self-harm, along with an overall increase in the complexity and acuity of needs. These are the kinds of challenges that don’t go away when the mandates do.

These challenges are exacerbated when families have to wait too long to access mental health and addictions services. We must prioritize faster access to integrated health care to truly put the pandemic behind us now, and to better support early intervention and better mental health outcomes in the future.

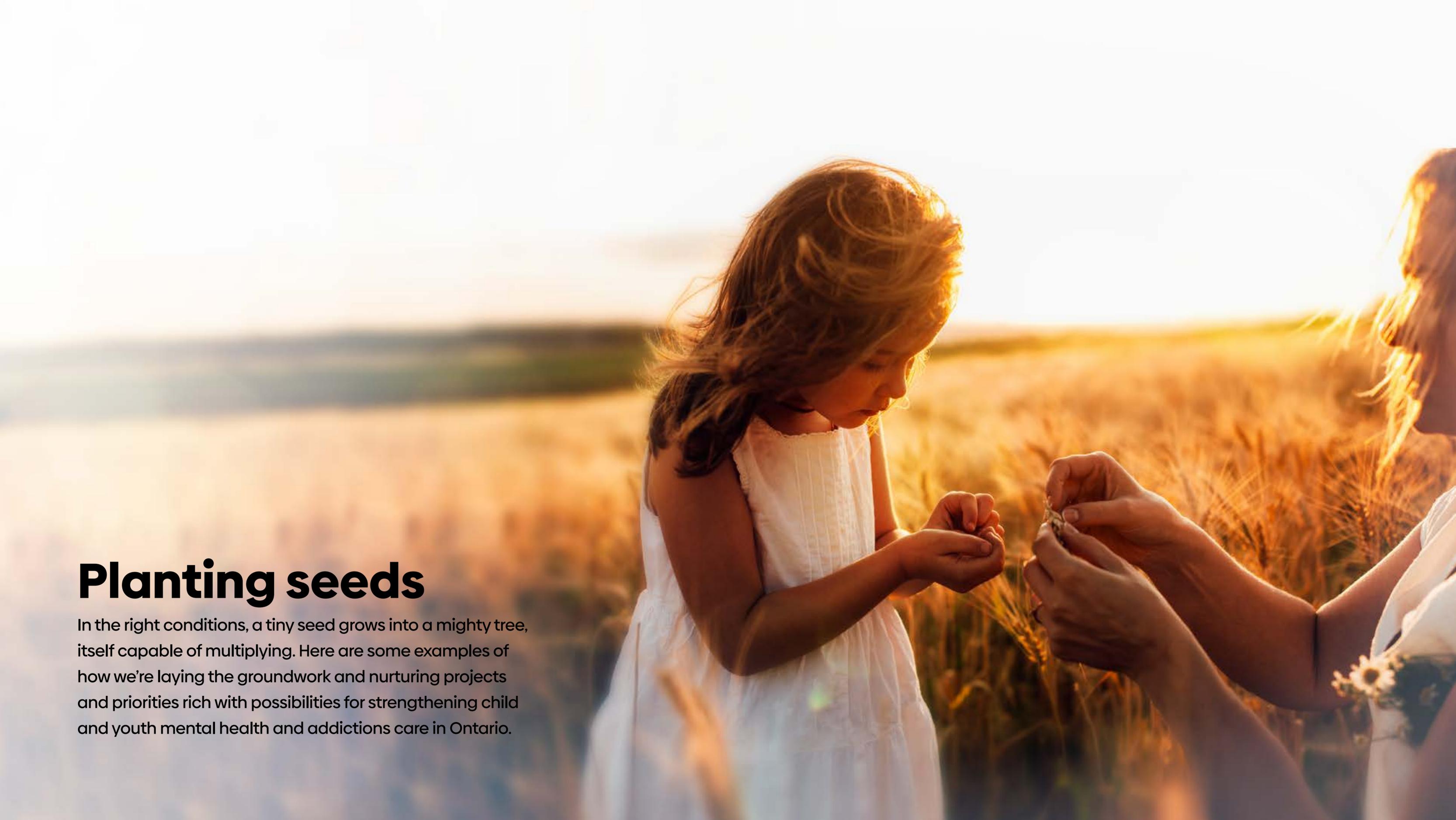
That’s why I appreciate that improving access remained a core theme across the Knowledge Institute’s projects last year. This was particularly evident in the areas of virtual care and integrated care pathways, and in the projects selected for the organization’s Quest program, Innovation Initiatives and impact grants.

I want to acknowledge the Knowledge Institute team’s unwavering commitment through these challenging times. I’m especially grateful to those among them who answered the call to support hospital operations during the peak of the Omicron wave at CHEO last January. I reserve a special thanks for Purnima for her awesome leadership. Her ability to collaborate and partner is a model for us all!



**Joanne Lowe**  
Vice-President of Mental Health and Addictions, CHEO  
Executive Director, Youth Services Bureau



A young girl with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white sleeveless dress, stands in a field of tall, golden grass. She is looking down at something in her hands. To her right, an adult woman with long blonde hair, also wearing a white dress, is looking at the same thing in her hands. The background is a soft, golden sunset over a field, with a body of water visible in the distance. The overall mood is warm and peaceful.

# Planting seeds

In the right conditions, a tiny seed grows into a mighty tree, itself capable of multiplying. Here are some examples of how we're laying the groundwork and nurturing projects and priorities rich with possibilities for strengthening child and youth mental health and addictions care in Ontario.

## Digging in to advance racial equity

Biased or unfair policies, practices and perceptions affect how racialized families seek and receive care. Even when unintentional, these barriers mean unequal access to services and poorer mental health outcomes. This is a systemic problem that requires a system-wide response. So, in 2021 we partnered with Children's Mental Health Ontario to prepare the way for a collective approach to advance racial equity in child and youth mental health and addictions services.

First, we reviewed the literature to identify the best available research and practices in this area. Next, we conducted our own research to better understand our sector's current racial equity efforts. Last December we released our findings in a report highlighting existing gaps, opportunities for improvement and promising practices across five domains, including workforce diversity and development. Most recently we began developing resources to help our sector action recommendations from the report.



Equity, diversity and inclusion is a new focus area in our 2022-24 strategic plan.

>100

agency surveys and nearly 20 case studies informed our "We journey together" report

## Cultivating research and innovation in our sector

Child and youth mental health and addictions agencies need resources to support innovation aimed at improving care and service experiences. In 2021 we launched another round of Innovation Initiatives, this time asking applicants to address one or more key recommendations from our [Transition to virtual care](#) report. Recipients received \$50,000 each to develop or improve their virtual service offerings to better serve children and young people now and post-pandemic. [Learn more about the selected projects.](#)

We also awarded another impact grant – a funding opportunity we offer in partnership with Mental Health Research Canada to help close the gap between research and practice. Selected project teams are made up of agencies and academics and receive \$100,000 to work together to improve service quality or access. This time, we asked applicants to focus on the unique challenges in remote and northern communities. [Learn about the selected project.](#)



*“[The Knowledge Institute’s] backing and belief in i-Sibworks has sparked other grants and invaluable opportunities. If I’m already feeling the downstream effects of this support after less than 18 months, I’m excited to see where it takes us in a few more years.”*

Dr. Shannon Scratch, Ph.D, C.Psych  
Clinical Neuropsychologist, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital  
Former Impact grant recipient

[Learn more about i-Sibworks](#)

A large tree with thick, moss-covered roots growing over a rock in a forest. The roots are gnarled and spread out over a large, grey, mossy rock. The forest floor is covered in green moss and fallen leaves. Sunlight filters through the trees in the background, creating a soft, hazy atmosphere.

# Putting down roots

A good root system isn't just an anchor supporting a tree's resilience. It also improves the soil's structure and fertility, benefiting the surrounding flora. These are some areas where we've been working to firmly establish ourselves, producing great value for our sector along the way.

## Extending our focus on virtual care

Our attention to [virtual care](#) was significant throughout the pandemic and continues to evolve as a key priority area in our new [2022-24 strategic plan](#). In addition to supporting several Innovation Initiatives and impact grants focused on virtual care, the past year saw the release of our [quality guideline on virtual walk-in services](#). Since then, we've provided ongoing implementation and evaluation support for One Stop Talk, a provincial walk-in service being developed by the child and youth mental health Lead Agency Consortium.



*“We used the quality guideline as a reference while developing the business case and as a foundational document for the Quality and Standards working group, which was made up of partners around the province who were tasked with recommending the model of care for One Stop Talk. The Knowledge Institute has been a great partner throughout the project. It’s really exciting because this is the first time that the Lead Agency Consortium is coming together to move the system forward by launching a provincial clinical program. This will weave together existing brief services and clinical capacity across the province to provide immediate access to help, no matter where children and young people are located. It’s a game changer for access equity.”*

**Terra Cadeau**

Director of Planning, Performance, Engagement  
and Operations, Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence  
Former co-chair, Lead Agency Consortium

## Deepening our investment in original research

As the pandemic has progressed, we've continued to respond to our sector's current knowledge needs and anticipate future needs. We've expanded our research and knowledge mobilization team and put more energy into original research projects, particularly those related to the pandemic's impact and the sector's recovery needs. This includes starting to develop a webinar series exploring key issues our sector is facing as we emerge from the pandemic, which will roll out throughout the 2022-23 fiscal year.

In 2021, we published a [research summary](#) featuring highlights from our study looking at young people's mental health service use and needs one year into the pandemic. This research has been published in peer-reviewed publications and cited in [InBetween magazine](#). Our senior clinician-scientist is also a lead investigator on two research projects that received funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research last December. One focuses on engaging young people and families in designing a mental health service plan in response to the pandemic and the other is a collaboration with the Kids Come First Health team to use real-time community and hospital data to identify, forecast and meet service needs.



**174** views of the webinar recording

**116** registrants for our Take good care webinar



# Growing together

Trees that grow together grow taller and stronger and are better able to weather storms than trees that grow in isolation. Likewise, we've reached new heights by working together with partner organizations, especially during these challenging times. Partnership is a critical element in almost all our projects and initiatives, and this section highlights some of our key collaborations with government and sector leaders.

## Pushing forward with partners and stakeholders

Over the past year we've continued work to:

- » advance provincial priorities in collaboration with the child and youth mental health Lead Agency Consortium and community of practice.
- » provide evidence and engagement support for the family, child and youth stream of the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy program.
- » develop training materials to meet the knowledge needs of Good2Talk helpline staff and evaluate the delivery of support services – including the recent implementation of supports in a third language (Mandarin).
- » support data governance for the Ministry of Health's Business Intelligence Solution.
- » ensure meaningful engagement at local and provincial levels for Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario integrated service hubs.
- » capture Ontario-wide findings about the mental health impact of COVID-19 and related public health measures, as part of a collaborative group of mental health researchers.
- » pilot the HEADS-ED screening tool for children under the age of six with social workers and clinicians.



## Burgeoning focus on complex needs

Addressing complex needs is a budding priority for us and our key system partners, including the Lead Agency Consortium. We're helping to implement their provincial training initiative by providing ongoing evidence, implementation and evaluation support. The initiative aims to expand the range of intensive, community-based treatment options available throughout the province. This involves equipping more direct service providers with the knowledge and skills they need to address complex needs through training, clinical supervision and a community of practice.

Last fall we also worked with our Ministry of Health partners to lay the foundation for consistent, evidence-based secure treatment programs across Ontario. Secure treatment involves intensive, live-in mental health services for clients with complex needs. We've conducted a systematic review and developed recommendations to guide further work in this area.



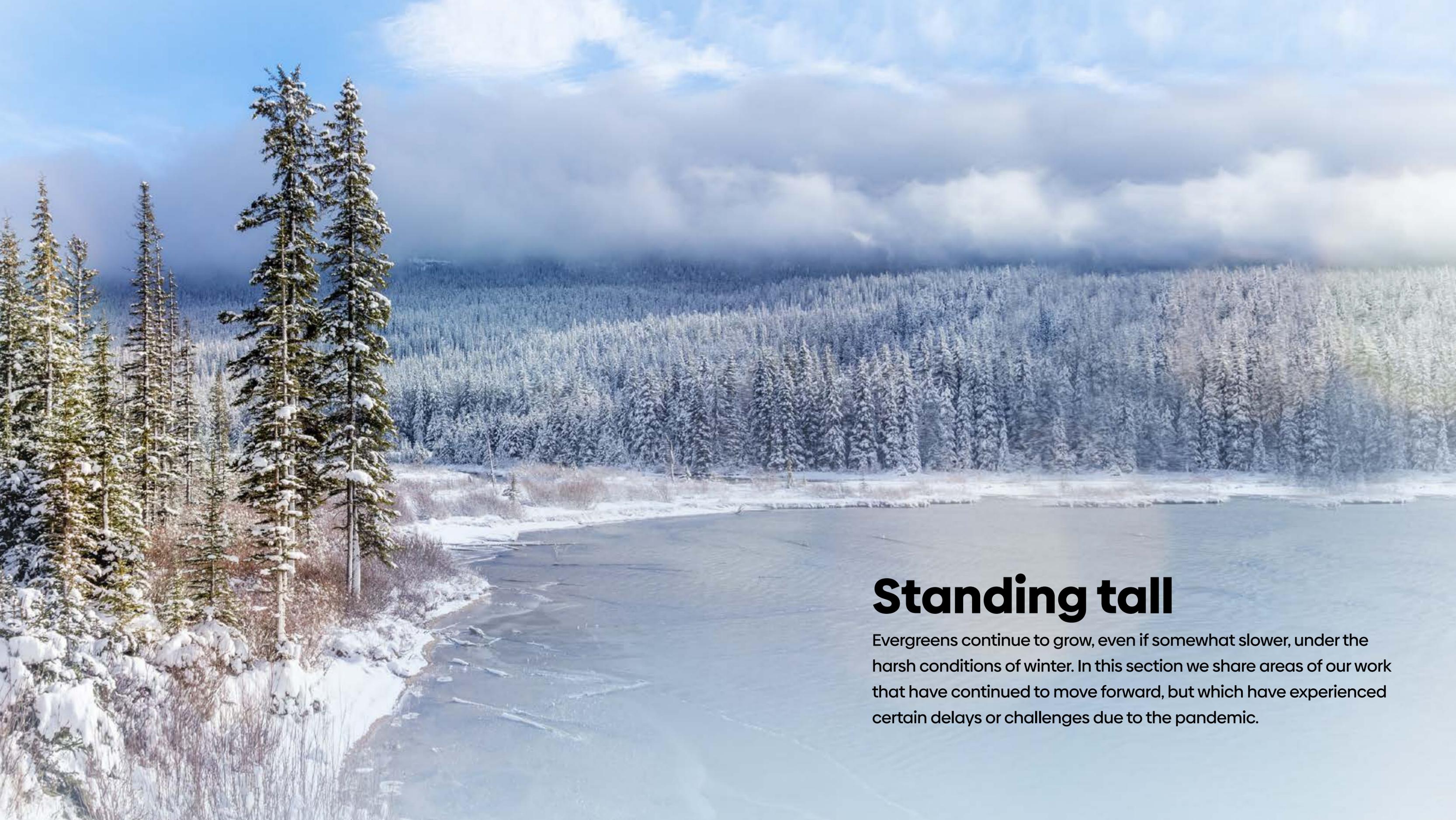
Complex needs and intensive services is a new focus area in our 2022-24 strategic plan.



**63**  
**>1,300**

articles analyzed in depth

articles screened during our systematic review on secure treatment



## **Standing tall**

Evergreens continue to grow, even if somewhat slower, under the harsh conditions of winter. In this section we share areas of our work that have continued to move forward, but which have experienced certain delays or challenges due to the pandemic.

## Holding space for the quality engagement standards

Pandemic crisis response and recovery planning meant many agencies have had to shift priorities away from activities focused on implementing youth engagement and family engagement quality standards. The absence of in-person touch points has also had an impact on relationship building – even though virtual connections have brought about other benefits. Altogether, this means that the number of agencies implementing the quality standards is still growing, and work to validate the measurement survey is ongoing.

Over the past year, our engagement team has continued to provide implementation coaching for 13 agencies, and they facilitate a quality standard engagement community of practice, with participation from 24 agencies across the province.



*“As young people, we’ve proven that our profound perspectives and passion can change the world... we need to be part of the conversation. We need that connection and that community to thrive in our authentic lives.”*

**Brett Recollet**, Youth Advisory Council member  
From an op ed on the importance of youth engagement  
published in [True North Living](#) in 2021.

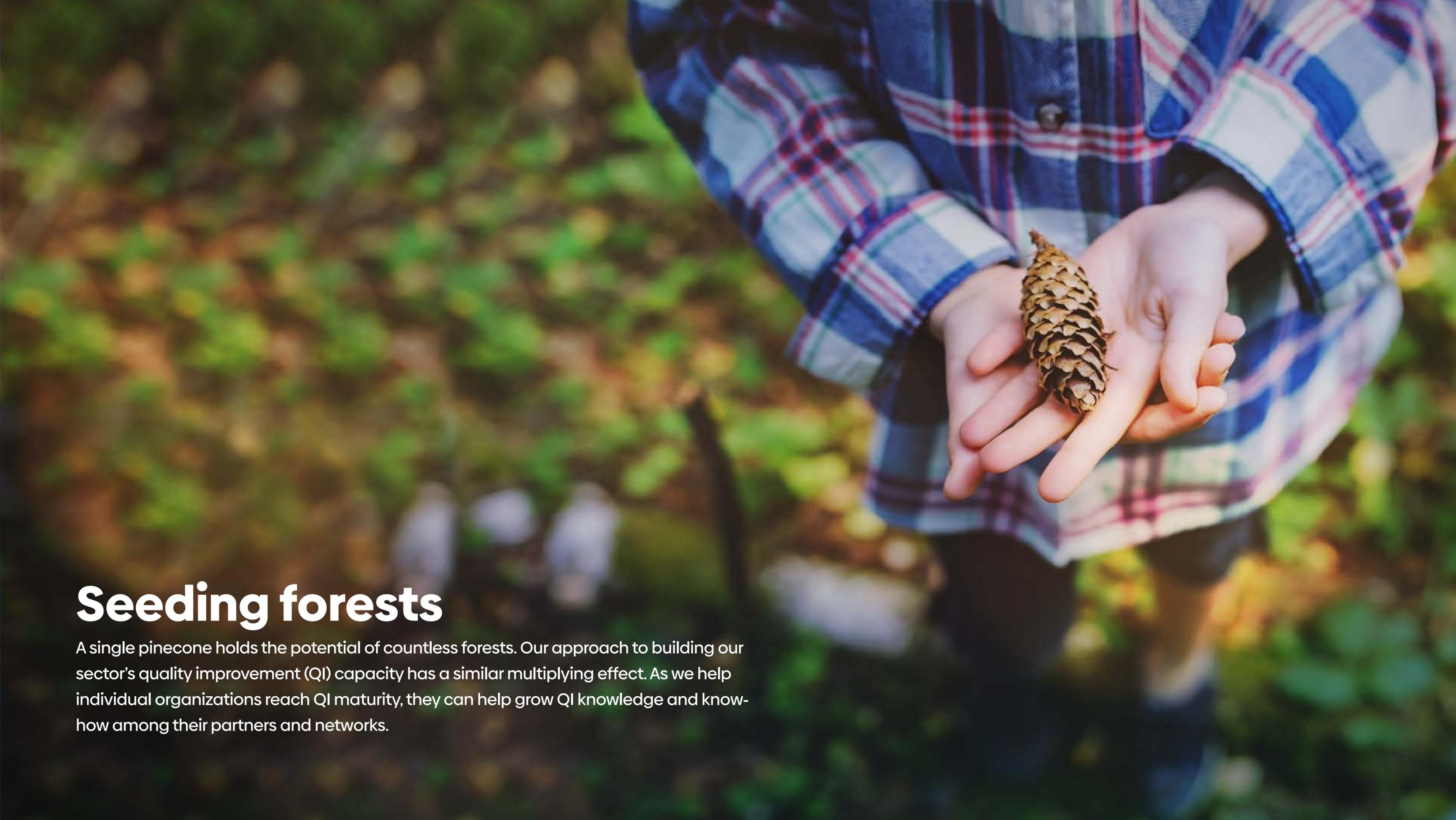




## Marking the way with care pathways

Supporting the creation of integrated care pathways across sectors remains a focus area in our new 2022-24 strategic plan. Here's some of our work in this area over the past year:

- » Despite some early pandemic setbacks, by December 2021, two of our three [early years](#) sites had implemented their care pathways for mental health services for children under the age of six. We've now turned our attention to developing a toolkit to help other communities looking to develop pathways for young children.
- » After several months of pandemic-related delays, several of our [primary care pathways](#) demonstration sites began work to re-launch their pathways or resume data collection in early 2022. One site is now in the post-implementation phase and our team continues to provide ongoing support and guidance to the remaining sites, as needed. Preliminary results indicate that anxiety, family conflicts and school concerns are the top three most common mental health concerns of those seeking care— and 77% present with two or more mental health concerns.
- » We co-developed [Right time, right care: Strengthening Ontario's mental health and addictions system of care for children and young people](#) with the Lead Agency Consortium, School Mental Health Ontario and Children's Mental Health Ontario. This foundational resource helps set a vision for strong, clear, integrated care pathways between the education and child and youth mental health and addictions sectors.

A person wearing a blue, red, and white plaid shirt is shown from the chest down, holding a single brown pinecone gently in both hands. The background is a blurred forest floor with green moss and brown leaves. The overall tone is natural and hopeful.

# Seeding forests

A single pinecone holds the potential of countless forests. Our approach to building our sector's quality improvement (QI) capacity has a similar multiplying effect. As we help individual organizations reach QI maturity, they can help grow QI knowledge and know-how among their partners and networks.

## Spreading a culture of continuous QI

Our [Quest](#) program helps spark innovation and sustained enhancements that lead to better experiences for agency staff and clients and better outcomes for children, young people and families.

The first cohort of 10 agency teams completed their Quest journey in July 2021, shortly before the second cohort of 6 agency teams got underway. Both cohorts have been focused on improving care pathways.

*“Our coach was incredible. Her expertise, level of professionalism, efficiency and responsiveness was a huge reason we were able to complete the project, particularly in the context of COVID when everyone was overwhelmed with competing priorities. The coaching and hands-on support was critical to our initial and ongoing success in establishing some momentum around QI across the agency.”*

Quest participant

**126** certified White Belts earned through our Lean Six Sigma training

**94%** of cohort 1 participants reported feeling better prepared to support future improvement initiatives

**96** people participated in our QI 101 training

**Figure 1** Cohort 1 improvements





# Staying (in the) green

## Investments

Salaries and benefits	\$3,563,939
Office supplies and expenses	\$115,198
Office equipment	\$55,911
Staff training and development	\$33,766
Communication: promotions, materials and translation	\$48,272
Staff travel and accommodation	\$1,545
Meeting expenses	\$13,547
Purchased services: consultants	\$522,363
Distributed funds	\$787,766
Rent	\$146,088
Administration fee	\$611,606
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,900,000</b>



# Acknowledgements

The insights and perspectives of those with lived experience are invaluable. We're very grateful for our advisory councils and the time and energy they share with us and invest in the child and youth mental health and addictions sector, especially through the challenges of the pandemic.

Learn about the members of our:

- » [Strategic advisory council](#)
- » [Family advisory council](#)
- » [Youth advisory council](#)

*“Our family experienced first-hand the difficulties of navigating the mental health system in Ontario, so I joined the family council so I could share our experiences with the hope of helping other families in similar situations.”*

**Damion Nurse,**  
Family advisory council member



# Branching out

Each new branch a tree sends out enables it to reach more light; light that it transforms into energy and future growth. Similarly, our work has recently taken on new dimensions and new directions to obtain more light – that is, knowledge. We'll transform this knowledge into resources, recommendations and programs that strengthen the child and youth mental health and addictions system and help agencies and service providers respond to the evolving needs of children, young people and families.

Our strategic plan for 2022–24 includes three new focus areas:

- » complex needs and intensive services
- » equity, diversity and inclusion
- » substance use and addictions

As the content of this report shows, we're already hard at work on the first two new focus areas. For substance use and addictions, we're focusing first on the doing legwork of bringing together partners to pinpoint gaps and identify where and how we might have the biggest impact in both the short and long term, given that addictions is now part of our name.

We look forward to contributing to much more growth in each of these areas over the next couple of years while also continuing to prioritize our work on integrated care pathways, youth and family engagement and virtual care.





CYMHAOntario



cymhaon



cymha\_on

695 Industrial Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 0Z1

 – 1 613 737 2297

 – 1 613 738 4894

**EN** – [cymha.ca](http://cymha.ca)

**FR** – [smdej.ca](http://smdej.ca)