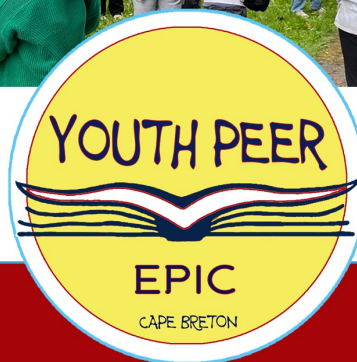




EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAM
INNOVATIONS
CHARITY SOCIETY

1996 - 2026
30 years of community service

ANNUAL REPORT



2026

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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Phone: **902-794-7225**

Youth Peer & Outreach Program

Email: **epicyouthpeerprogram@gmail.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**

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

2026

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 promote social adaptation and educational advancement. EPIC's vision is to deliver free, cost-effective after-school tutor-mentor services fulfilling community needs and positively transforming the social adaptiveness and life outlook of partner-referred high-risk youth by nurturing 1-to-1 relationships with youth volunteers in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and inspiring others to replicate the Youth Peer model.

ACTIVITIES

The charity's activities include:

- educational programs filling voids in services for disadvantaged and high-risk learners
- relationship-building between socially maladaptive youth and caring youth volunteers
- weekly 1-to-1 youth-peer matching for tutoring, mentoring, group games, and creative arts
- networking with other charities to promote parallel initiatives in other Canadian sites
- high school graduate humanity awards and post-secondary volunteerism awards

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, selected in the Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities and Top 10 Impact Youth Charities, and in 2024 chosen in the Top 10 Impact Charities including those with international missions.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EPIC's 5-member volunteer Board operates by consensus, usually with 100% attendance, to achieve the broadest community benefit. Members fill 5 Executive positions in lieu of committees with a 2-year commitment which is renewed automatically until a Board member requests departure. Values & Ethics Vice-Chair Dana Feltmate served effectively on EPIC's Board for 9 years and completed his tenure when he left retirement to serve full-time in United Church ministry. In 2025-20026, EPIC was fortunate to be able to enlist Kerri Fernandez, a social worker well-known and liked by other Board members who has been a long-time partner for Youth Peer & Outreach.

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

Kerri Fernandez



Kerri is currently Field Education Lead for the Bachelor of Social Work Program at Cape Breton University, having served as the consultant who created and developed the program in 2022. After receiving her Master of Social Work, she worked as a social worker for over 25 years in mental health, child welfare, and school settings. She first partnered with EPIC 10 years ago in the Youth Peer Outreach program in Glace Bay where she encouraged many community youth to volunteer. She supported the program with such high energy and creativity that EPIC felt inspired to expand Youth Peer to other under-served communities.

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 to 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

2026

Charity activities are usually identified as a program rather than a project if the initiative could operate independently when another program run by the charity ends. By that definition, EPIC, since its inception in 1996, has administered only one program — Youth Peer. EPIC has delivered many short-term projects over the years, all affiliated with Youth Peer. EPIC currently oversees weekly Youth Peer Outreach sessions in 4 community sites beyond the 5-day-a-week core program in Sydney, Nova Scotia. These have evolved to become part of the Youth Peer Program. EPIC currently supports the Peer Tutoring project in 4 sites run by EPIC's partners. EPIC envisions providing ongoing support for Peer Tutoring while encouraging increasing ownership by EPIC's partners. All initiatives supported by EPIC, including the Peer Tutoring project and EPIC's Humanity Awards and Volunteerism Awards, are linked to a thriving Youth Peer Program.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

2026

Communities served by EPIC all experience 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 (**Cape Breton Regional Municipality**) 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 is 40% higher than the national average (*Statistics Canada*). The average child poverty rate across CBRM is over 3 times the Canadian average of 10% (*Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*). Despite encouraging local signs largely related to international newcomers and government-supported projects, overall prosperity demographics remain bleak. EPIC's partners have prioritized referrals to Youth Peer & Outreach of youth prone to social conflict and academic challenges, and 87% of active Youth Peer participants have been assessed by EPIC as being at high risk. The target youth, on average, have a family poverty rate of 70%. If EPIC did not offer free transportation, providing access for youth from ~19 schools, the majority of participants would be unable to attend and would have no alternative community-based support. 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, volunteer support from peers, staff encouragement, and a transformative safe haven environment for youth who might otherwise be headed for a lifetime of dysfunction.

Youth Peer

Youth Peer is a free, daily 2-3 hour after-school program for 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 a volunteer tutor-mentor recruited from university, college, or high school to help youth overcome social and educational challenges and engage in positive activities like music, workshops, and group games. The relationship which 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 with: reduced risks to self, family, and community; enhancement of school attachment and achievement; and increased self-esteem and positive behaviours. In the 2025-2026 school-year, an average of 60 marginalized youth were transported from 13 different schools and home to participate weekly in the Youth Peer Program in Sydney. The program optimized 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 has evolved for 10 years from community requests and an opportunity to collaborate with SchoolsPlus social workers representing CBVRCE (**C**ape **B**reton-**V**ictoria **R**egional **C**entre for **E**ducation). EPIC was selected by Nova Scotia Education and Early Childhood Development to receive funding that covered most costs. Beginning in 2016, the program was delivered by EPIC weekly for 2 hours after-school in Glace Bay, New Waterford, and Northside. In 2022, Youth Peer Outreach expanded to include Whitney Pier. This site served marginalized middle school students, but was unable to root as fully as in other Outreach programs. In 2025, EPIC successfully transferred Whitney Pier Outreach students to the nearby Youth Peer Program in Sydney. EPIC simultaneously agreed, at the urging of elementary school counsellors, to establish a new Outreach program for troubled Grade 4-5 students in Sydney Mines. This program has been well received by school personnel and community partners and is expected to continue, primarily by matching elementary school kids with volunteer tutors from the local high school. Provincial funding for the Out-of-School-Time grant which had enabled Youth Peer to expand to 4 under-served Outreach communities, was terminated province-wide in 2026. Future renewal of provincial support is not anticipated. However, EPIC now considers Youth Peer & Outreach to be one program.

Peer Tutoring Project

In November, 2024, EPIC received funding from Joyce Family Foundation to enhance EPIC's impact on marginalized youth in a project titled ADAPT (***A**ccess & **D**evelopment of **A**ffiliated **P**eer **T**utoring*). The project enabled EPIC to provide free weekly transportation for any participant or tutor who needed it in Youth Peer and the 4 Outreach sites. The project also spawned 4 Youth Peer-modelled programs run by EPIC's partners in other communities. In February, 2026, ADAPT was renamed **Peer Tutoring** when the 4th partner-run project became operational in East Dartmouth in the Halifax region.

EPIC continues to provide free transportation for any youth engaged in weekly matches of 60 Youth Peer, 39 Outreach, and 28 Peer Tutoring youth who need it. BGC (***B**oys & **G**irls **C**lub*) delivers Peer Tutoring in Sackville and East Dartmouth. SchoolsPlus, on behalf of Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education, delivers Cape Breton Peer Tutoring in Sydney River and Iona. In all 4 sites, cost-effective weekly project delivery achieves transformative change in marginalized youth through healthy relationships with peer volunteers. In each site, the goal is to optimize the social and academic advancement of marginalized youth, while engaging staff and youth volunteers in life-fulfilling experiences.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION *

2026

The table below provides a pre-audited breakdown of costs allocated by program category for EPIC's most recent fiscal year, from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. Audited revenue and expense details will be provided in EPIC's financial statements conducted by Roach Perry Anderson Accounting, available by November on EPIC's website... <http://epiccharity.com>

EXPENSES BY PROGRAM	EXPENSE %	COST
Core Program - Youth Peer & Outreach	75.7	193,900
Current Project - Peer Tutoring	17.6	45,000
Administration - Core Program, Project, Charity	5.4	13,800
Fundraising - In-kind Contributions	0.0	0
Awards - Humanity & Volunteerism	1.3	3,500
TOTAL	100	\$256,200

** Rounding to the nearest \$100, EPIC categorizes the following expenses entirely as Administration costs: external audit, directors' travel, liability insurance, and fees (bank charges, society dues, donation fees). EPIC anticipates administration costs at 5-6% of annual expenses and external fundraising costs at 2-3%. Other costs involved in the delivery of EPIC's core program and projects including: supervision, youth volunteers, program facilities, financial oversight, and charity office operation, continue to be provided as gifts in kind as in-kind contributions as itemized below. External Fundraising has been budgeted in 2026-2027 for a \$6,000 contract with a Development Facilitator which will comprise 2.3% of projected annual expenses. All previous Fundraising has been carried out through grant applications and proposal writing provided as in-kind contributions from the volunteer Executive Director. All charity-related expenses which could be designated as Fundraising expenses and which have not already been identified as Administration expenses, have been provided as in-kind contributions.*

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS *

2026

CATEGORY	CONTRIBUTOR	CALCULATIONS	COST
Supervision	Executive Director SchoolsPlus Facilitators Board Members Partner Agency Members	30 hours/week x 44 weeks x \$45/hour 5 x 3 hours/week x 40 weeks x \$35/hour 2 hours/week x 40 weeks x \$45/hour 2 hours/week x 40 weeks x \$40/hour	59,400 21,000 3,600 3,200
Youth Services	Tutor-Mentor Volunteers	1,588 youth matches x 2 hours x \$19/hour	60,300
Program Facilities	Sydney-Adult High Northside-Memorial High Glance Bay-Ocean View Middle	2 classes & 2 offices x 10 months x \$1,000/month 1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month 1 classroom x 10 months x \$500/month	20,000 5,000 5,000
Financial Oversight	Executive Director	5 hours/week x 44 weeks x \$45/hour	9,900
Charity Office	Board Treasurer	Housing, office space, equipment, office supplies	4,000
Publicity	Webmaster / Website	Website / maintenance 10 months x \$250/month	2,500
		TOTAL	\$193,900

** All in-kind contribution calculations reflect market value rates and costs that would apply if those services were not provided as in-kind contributions. For example, EPIC's current minimum wage is \$19 / hour. The similarity in totals between core program expenses and in-kind contributions is consistent with the long-time pattern in Youth Peer & Outreach that the number of paid staff hours closely matches the number of volunteer hours.*

PROGRAM OUTPUTS

2026

Youth Peer & Outreach Program Summary		2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Management Team Partner Agencies #		34	33	34
School Referral Sources #		22	24	26
Active Youth Participants #		99	96	101
Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #		84	93	105
Average Improvement in Protective Factors % *		9%	11%	11%
Site	Output Indicators	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Sydney	Active Youth Participant #	60	60	65
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	57	55	64
	Protective Factor Improvement %	9%	13%	11%
Northside	Active Youth Participant #	11	10	11
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	10	11	13
	Protective Factor Improvement %	9%	18%	4%
New Waterford	Active Youth Participant #	11	14	12
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	7	14	14
	Protective Factor Improvement %	7%	4%	17%
Glace Bay	Active Youth Participant #	10	12	13
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	5	13	14
	Protective Factor Improvement %	6%	12%	17%
Sydney Mines	Active Youth Participant #	7	-	-
	Active Tutor-Mentor Volunteers #	5	-	-
	Protective Factor Improvement %	8%	-	-

* **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 converted to percentages after adjusting for unintended staff bias.

Note: Whitney Pier program concluded in 2024-2025. Most of those students were transferred to Sydney in 2025-2026. Sydney Mines program started in 2025-2026.

Site	Output Intensity	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Sydney	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	1063	854	1209
Glace Bay	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	120	228	222
New Waterford	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	167	209	215
Northside	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	151	139	166
Sydney Mines	Tutor-Mentor Youth Matches #	87	-	-
Total		1588	1430	1812
High-Risk Marginalization Demographics		Youth Peer & Outreach		CBRM *
Child Poverty (school-aged children)		70%		32%
Indigenous (on-reserve and off-reserve)		7%		5%
Gender Diverse (non-binary or transgender identification)		7%		1%

* Youth Peer & Outreach data compared to the most recent annual data from Statistics Canada for CBRM (Cape Breton Regional Municipality)

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

2026

Youth Peer & Outreach Program

In school-year 2025-2026, 99 regularly-attending high-risk Youth Peer and Outreach participants were referred by 19 schools, 13 schools to the Youth Peer Centre in Sydney and 6 schools to Outreach sites. Youth Peer-Sydney operated daily averaging 9 tutor-mentor matches/session. Outreach operated weekly in Sydney Mines, Glace Bay, New Waterford, and Northside, averaging 8 matches/session. In Youth Peer, there were 57 tutor-mentors who actively volunteered, 72% from 6 high schools, 25% from Cape Breton University, and 3% from other college or university programs. Total tutor-mentor matches in Youth Peer's 28th year was 1,588. Site breakdown was: Sydney - 1,063; Sydney Mines - 87; Glace Bay - 120; New Waterford - 167; Northside - 151. The tutor-mentor matches reflect 7,940 hours of positive social activity and academic engagement. Over 87% of youth participants in Youth Peer had been assessed as being at high risk, based on referral indicators and evaluation tools.

Outcome Assessment

In 2015, EPIC's founder and retired educational consultant, was contracted by Cape Breton Regional Police to submit a proposal to the National Crime Prevention Centre to fund a 5-year intervention targetting youth at highest risk of conflict with the law. Research for the approved grant included delineation by Public Safety Canada of the most significant risk and protective factors associated with youth crime and its prevention, and a detailed assessment checklist in Canada's Youth Level of Service Case Management Inventory. The highlighted risk factors closely matched the challenges facing kids referred to Youth Peer. However, the governmental evaluation included factors unknowable to EPIC like witnessing of violence, and parents in conflict with the law. EPIC sought to create a simpler evaluation tool that would better reflect observable behavioural changes reported by Youth Peer & Outreach staff over the school-year. The tool was refined and field-tested at Youth Peer for 3 years until scores mirrored the feedback from others involved with the youth. In 2021, EPIC finalized SEGWAY (**S**ocial **E**motional **G**rowth & **W**ellness **A**ssessment of **Y**outh). Since then, EPIC has found SEGWAY scores to be credible and fairly consistent across sites and years. In May, 2026 using SEGWAY, staff assessed 85 marginalized youth, 55 in Sydney and 30 in Outreach, tracking behavioural changes across 20 research-validated risk indicators. SEGWAY scores, reflecting school-year behavioural changes, confirmed staff anecdotal observations that ~87% of participants are internalizing protective factors that counteract social conflict risks. The average assessed change in social conflict risk indicators for active participants was ~9% improvement in pro-social behaviours. Overall, for every 5 hours students attended Youth Peer or Outreach, there was a 1% average improvement in protective factors to counteract social risk.

EPIC Program Changes

- 1) EPIC's auditor advised adding fuller details in staff time-sheets and contracting an accountant to conduct monthly bank reconciliation. Both have enhanced financial accountability.
- 2) Peer Tutoring, formerly called ADAPT, expanded to a 4th partner-run site in February, 2026.
- 3) Payworks was contracted to conduct auto-deposit payroll and government remittances.
- 4) EPIC addressed the uncertain fidelity of \$500 high school graduate Scholarships by issuing Humanity Awards with clearer criteria, Board consensus, a simpler procedure, and counsellor assurance that their 1-page nomination can ensure a winner at each of their 5 high schools.
- 5) When student receptiveness to art instruction continued to decline, EPIC replaced those activities with group games and workshops better attended and more appreciated.
- 6) In April, 2026 EPIC contracted a Partnership Facilitator to increase youth referrals from non-school partners, conduct off-site visits, and free the Program Director to focus on Youth Peer activities and impact. This contract will continue in the 2026-2027 school-year.

Peer Tutoring Project

In the fall of 2024, EPIC received a multi-year grant from the Joyce Family Foundation to spearhead a new initiative called ADAPT (**A**ccess & **D**evelopment of **A**ffiliated **P**eer **T**utoring). The project's primary goal is to spawn new after-school programs based on the Youth Peer model, led by EPIC's partners, receiving EPIC's staff and financial support and encouragement to take ownership. EPIC committed to the development of 4 Nova Scotia sites. Two were established in November, 2024 at Rankin School in Iona, an hour from Youth Peer Sydney and at the Sackville Library in the Halifax region, five hours away. A third site started in January, 2025 at Malcolm Munroe Middle School in Sydney River. The fourth site was initiated in East Dartmouth in February, 2026 in partnership with BGC (*Boys and Girls Club*). Having explored numerous prospective partnerships and facilities, EPIC now believes a one-size-fits-all approach was not achievable and that the goal must be to optimize impact on marginalized youth with each program tailored to meet partner organization needs and facility constraints.

OUTCOME GOALS

2026

Short-term

EPIC's Youth Peer & Outreach Program operates with 2 full-time staff. In the 2025-2026 school-year, the Program Director had 1 year of experience working for EPIC and the Activities Coordinator was new to working for EPIC. Learning curves were understandably steep and the number of youth participants, volunteers recruited, and tutor-matches carried out were not at capacity until late in the school-year. The short-term goal for Youth Peer & Outreach is to have transformative impact each year on ~100 students and 100 youth volunteers, with self-esteem and resiliency internalized so that the development of protective factors offsetting risk factors continues long after program participation. The full-time staff now have a clearer understanding of the steps needed to achieve high participation rates in the weekly matching of youth participants with tutor-mentor volunteers to optimize social advancement of high-risk kids with diverse needs, and to provide youth tutors with fulfillment in knowing their volunteerism is impactful to kids with high needs. This school-year, in response to elementary school counsellor requests, EPIC initiated Youth Peer Sydney Mines for marginalized Grade 4-5 kids. Despite challenges to establish a new Youth Peer Outreach program in a community identified as having a significant school dropout rate and high youth crime rate, EPIC was able to nurture school and community partnerships to ensure that a minimum of 7 high-risk youth were thoughtfully matched 1-to-1 with caring youth volunteers. There is already encouraging evidence from Youth Peer staff and community partners that this Outreach site is improving the social and academic outlook for Sydney Mines elementary school kids at highest risk.

Mid-term

EPIC's Peer Tutoring project partnerships target the advancement of marginalized youth in 4 partner-run sites across Nova Scotia. To date, these sites have carried out an average of 8 tutor-matches/session. EPIC envisions supporting the 4 partner-run Peer Tutoring sites on an ongoing basis, 2 in the Halifax region led by BGC (**B**oys & **G**irls **C**lub) and 2 in Cape Breton spearheaded by SchoolsPlus on behalf of CBVRCE (**C**ape **B**reton-**V**ictoria **R**egional **C**entre for **E**ducation). EPIC's mid-term goal is to empower partners to assume increasing ownership of Peer Tutoring, bolstered by EPIC staff and resources. These partners share EPIC's mission to address the needs of marginalized youth who are of greatest concern to the schools and communities involved. As EPIC continues to encourage partner leadership in Peer Tutoring, partners will witness in tutor matching the internalization of protective factors in troubled youth that emanates from positive relationships with kind peer youth volunteers. Partner adoption of the Youth Peer model will ensure positive impact on an additional 30-40 marginalized youth.

Long-term

EPIC's Executive Director (*also Board Finance Director*) has contributed 25+ hours/week since founding the charity in 1996, and hopes to continue as long as feasible. However, his role is unique and succession planning is deemed essential for stable long-term funding and charity operation. EPIC's approach is three-fold. First, EPIC hired a young leader as Program Director who elicits the admiration of young staff and is passionate about the positive impact of Youth Peer. Second, the Board is mapping out the intersection between charity functions and program supervision to explore how EPIC can sustain organizational effectiveness and program impact while simultaneously reducing the dependence upon the volunteer Executive Director. Third, in 2026-2027, the Board anticipates contracting a Development Facilitator capable of expanding EPIC's funding sources. The Board believes that the right person, fairly compensated as Executive Director, highly skilled, and dedicated to EPIC's mission, will be able to sustain EPIC, Youth Peer & Outreach, and related initiatives, whenever this becomes essential.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES 2026

EPIC's multi-year recognition in Charity Intelligence's Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities and Top 10 Impact Youth Charities, and prestigious 2024 inclusion in the Top 10 Impact Charities have significantly increased private donations to EPIC and drawn Youth Peer to the attention of charitable foundations. Earlier this year, EPIC learned that 2 provincial grant projects, which had contributed ~20% of EPIC's annual revenue for 10+ years, had been terminated. The generosity of charitable foundations and individual donors who believe in EPIC's positive community impact, may offset this loss. EPIC's world-view is that, having more means giving more. In the past 2 years, to nurture the Peer Tutoring project and provide staff and resources supporting the development of 4 partner-led sites, the Executive Director sometimes volunteered 40+ hours/week — which is not sustainable. EPIC is not territorial about helping marginalized youth, so the charity has done its best to promote smooth hand-off of Peer Tutoring activities to our partners. We cannot predict how partners will fare long-term with lead responsibility, but signs to date are very promising. The Executive Director is also determined to encourage Peer Tutoring partner leadership without increasing his volunteer hours.

LESSONS LEARNED 2026

The charity's quest for revenue sometimes necessitates applying for 1-time grants. We now limit these only to projects which assist our partners and innovate activities that merit adoption. Youth Peer Outreach has evolved in 10 years into an extension of Youth Peer. We believe growth must be goal-driven to meet the needs of under-served communities. In spawning 4 Peer Tutoring project sites, in addition to Youth Peer and 4 Outreach sites, the Executive Director devoted many additional volunteer hours. Those efforts will prove worthwhile if passing lead responsibility to project partners achieves greater community service. The magic of the Youth Peer model comes from relationships nurtured in safe haven environments that honour the kindness of volunteers and enable marginalized recipients to look forward each week to feelings of support and acceptance. Peer Tutoring is a fresh path for EPIC to encourage partners to lead volunteer peer tutor-mentor activities. We cannot know whether EPIC's partners will achieve outcomes similar to what EPIC has delivered for 28 years. Statistical evidence and partner reporting to date have been very promising. There will always be more marginalized youth in communities than initiatives to improve their life trajectory. EPIC will continue to work with its partners to ensure that EPIC's activities and partner-led projects impact positively on the communities we serve.

VOLUNTEERISM AND HUMANITY AWARDS

2026

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 students received EPIC’s post-secondary \$500 Volunteerism Award in 2026:

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| • Jennifer Hubbert | Cape Breton University | Community Studies |
| • Isaac Coates | NSCC - Waterfront | Social Services |

HUMANITY AWARDS

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 counsellors who nominate one award candidate from each of 5 high schools. EPIC reviews nominations to confirm that each nominee fulfills Humanity Award criteria, then delivers an award certificate and \$500 cheque, ideally to all 5 nominees.

The EPIC 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 graduating Cape Breton County high school students received the \$500 Vincent Waterman EPIC Humanity Award in 2026:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| • Macey MacDonald | New Waterford, NS | Breton Education Centre |
| • Quinlan Losier | Glace Bay, NS | Glace Bay High |
| • Hayden Barron | Sydney River, NS | Riverview High |
| • Maranne Currie | Sydney, NS | Sydney Academy |
| • Chloe Brasier | Sydney Mines, NS | Memorial High |

MANAGEMENT TEAM PARTNERS

2026

EPIC oversees the finances and daily operations of Youth Peer & Outreach, Volunteerism and Humanity Awards, and Peer Tutoring, in partnership with 34 community agencies who: refer high-risk kids and volunteers to the program; 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 stay in regular contact, often on a daily basis.

The following 34 community partner agencies serve on EPIC's Management Team:

- Island Community Justice
- Salvation Army
- Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education
- NS Legal Aid
- NS Opportunities and Social Development
- NS Mental Health Child & Adolescent Services
- Cape Breton University - Career Services
- Black Educators Association
- Membertou Education
- NS Justice Correctional Services
- Cape Breton Regional Police
- Transition House
- BGC Whitney Pier Youth Club
- Native Council
- Centre Scolaire Etoile de l'Acadie
- Family Service of Nova Scotia
- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
- Family Place Resource Centre
- Nova Scotia Community College - Marconi Campus
- YMCA of Cape Breton
- Adult Literacy Association of Cape Breton County
- SchoolsPlus
- CaperBase
- Nova Scotia Public Health
- Ally Centre of Cape Breton
- Housing First
- Cape Breton Centre for Sexual Health
- Cape Breton Youth Project
- Undercurrent Youth Centre
- Allison Bernard Memorial High School
- Citizens Service League
- Clifford Street Youth Centre
- New Dawn Enterprises
- Community Cares Youth Outreach

REVENUE SOURCES

2026

Core Funding

Law Foundation of Nova Scotia



Multiple Years

Joyce Family Foundation



Marty Cutler Family Foundation

The Marty Cutler
Family Foundation

Fyfe Foundation



First Year

The Windsor Family Foundation

Canadian National Recognition

Charity Intelligence - Top10 Impact Charities - 2024

Charity Intelligence - Top 10 Canadian Impact Charities
6 years... 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

Charity Intelligence - Top 10 Impact Youth Charities
6 years... 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

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

Amber Buchanan



Amber became Program Director in September, 2024, bringing a deep commitment to the support of marginalized youth and strong skills in community and relationship building. She has extensive experience in conference planning and workshop presentation. She is a fluent speaker of Gaelic, well-known in the Gaelic community regionally and internationally. Amber is keenly attuned to the needs of struggling youth, tutor-mentor volunteers matched with them, and the young staff who learn so much from her. She has ensured that the Centre remains a safe haven for all.

ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

Kyle McCarthy



Kyle has completed his first year with Youth Peer, having previously worked several years for Horizon Achievement, a program for adults facing multiple barriers to employment. He is well-liked by students, volunteers, and young staff, and is quick to deliver on any request to fulfill staff needs and keep the program operating smoothly. He is uniquely skilled at capturing the essence of what's needed routinely at Youth Peer, including outstanding staff meeting minutes and positive interactions with service providers.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Indee Anna MacPhail Loughlin



Indee Anna distinguished herself for many years as a Youth Peer volunteer tutor before being hired as Outreach Coordinator in Glace Bay, New Waterford, and Northside. She anticipates pursuing a career as a teacher, but is happy to continue as an Outreach Coordinator until she enters her B.Ed. program. She is well appreciated by students and will undoubtedly become an excellent teacher when she completes her studies.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Breagha Embree



Breagha volunteered as a Glace Bay Outreach tutor before being hired as a Program Assistant. This year, when EPIC started a new Sydney Mines Outreach program for elementary school students, Breagha agreed to serve as Outreach Coordinator. She quickly developed this program into one greatly appreciated by all. It is expected that this program will continue to be nurtured as EPIC's 4th Outreach site and Breagha is eager to lead it.

MUSIC INSTRUCTOR

Mike Le Lievre



Mike has been teaching guitar and performing in bands for many years. This was his first year as Music Instructor at Youth Peer where he provided small group instruction to interested students and tutors 3 afternoons a week. His easy-going manner is calming to youth participants and his strong musical skills draw in kids to explore their own musical talents.

YOUTH PEER & OUTREACH PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

Youth Peer & Outreach Program Assistant staff are all post-secondary or high school students who first distinguished themselves as outstanding tutor-mentor volunteers. This year the following 10 Program Assistants worked 1-3 afternoons / week at Youth Peer or Outreach while studying full-time at Cape Breton University, NSCC-Waterfront, Sydney Academy, Glace Bay High, Riverview High, Breton Education Centre, or Memorial High: Kate MacDonald, Madison Melski, Onah Uzoh, Payton MacDougall, Tessa Dixon, Victor Flores, Emma Larade, Keisha Torres, Kiley Rich, and Julia Boudreau. All of these young staff brought enthusiasm and empathy to their respective programs, endearing them to high-risk participants, other volunteers, and staff, and ensuring wonderful experiences from arrival through tutoring, nutrition, and mentoring.

STRATEGIC PLAN

EPIC's mission is to advance marginalized learners through innovation, empathy, volunteerism, diversity, and partnership. Our vision is to engage 100+ high-risk youth ages 8-18 each school-year, nurturing 1-to-1 relationships with slightly older youth volunteers to enable kids to internalize self-acceptance and develop the resiliency needed to overcome social & academic challenges. This entails empowerment of tutor volunteers to gain fulfillment from helping other youth in need. Achieving our mission and vision requires staff leadership to generate a safe haven in each Youth Peer & Outreach site to make youth, caregivers, staff, and community partners feel encouraged, valued, and treated like family.

The following SWOT (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats*) analysis reflects EPIC's goals, challenges, and strategies to optimize the charity's positive community impact:

Strengths:

- + deep long-term community service commitment from all Board members as volunteers
- + charity oversight from EPIC's founder and Executive Director as in-kind contributions
- + captivating website created and maintained by a Board member as in-kind contributions
- + extraordinary success recruiting caring and capable youth volunteers, average ~100/year
- + positive reputation (30 years) with youth, school / post-secondary staff, and partner agencies
- + core funding (20+ years) from a foundation with an aligned mission serving high-risk youth
- + national recognition (multi-year) for community impact, reporting, & financial transparency

Weaknesses:

- youth volunteers are all students and are likely to leave for further education or employment
- the charity is unwilling to compete with valued partners for limited local resources
- most of EPIC's volunteer Board members are over 75 and will some time need to be replaced

Opportunities:

- + expansion of partnerships with other non-profits locally and province-wide is feasible
- + Peer Tutoring project partnerships can be deepened to promote spread of Youth Peer model
- + newly contracted Development Facilitator is capable of enhancing EPIC funding sources

Threats:

- provincial grant funding is more dependent on political priorities than on program impact
- increasing net assets for program stability without exceeding annual costs is a balancing act
- inflation in daily operational costs like nutrition and youth transportation must be factored
- succession planning will require thoughtful transition to hire a fully capable and fairly compensated Executive Director when the volunteer Executive Director is not able to continue



"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 ~