



## THE FUTURE IS NOW! AWARDS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is the Future is NOW Awards?

The Future is NOW Awards program was launched by Children First Canada in 2024 to celebrate the bright lights and shining young trailblazers who are dedicated to making Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up!

The Awards will honour up to ten individual children or youth living in Canada under the age of 18 who are promoting and defending the rights of children and have demonstrably changed the lives of young Canadians for the better.

The finalists will be invited to attend The Future is NOW Changemaker Summit with up to 50 youth from across Canada and attend the awards reception and celebration taking place in Toronto, ON, on May 13, 2025.

Successful candidates will also benefit from the awards program through participating in a year-long schedule of activities to champion and support their projects/campaigns and increase their social impact on the lives of children and youth from coast to coast to coast.

### What is Children First Canada?

Children First Canada is a national charity that aspires to create a country where children can grow up free from the barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential – starting with the protection of their most basic rights to childhood.

As a charity that's uniquely focused on the rights of children in Canada, we aim to raise awareness of the issues through research and campaigns, we equip young Canadians as the leaders of today and tomorrow, and we unite our country around a shared vision and plan to make this the best place in the world for kids to grow up!

### Isn't Canada already one of the best places in the world for kids to grow up?

As Canadians we deeply value our freedom and human rights. We step up on the world stage to advocate for the rights of women, children, and the most marginalized members of society. Yet many are surprised to learn that millions of children in our own backyard lack what they need to survive, let alone thrive. In fact, **Canada ranks 66<sup>th</sup> on the global Kids Rights Index** due to the shockingly high rates of child poverty abuse, and poor physical and mental health.

To put this into context, in Canada (yes, in Canada!):

- 1 in 4 children experience food insecurity, despite their right to nutritious food.
- 2 in 3 will experience abuse before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, yet they have the right to be free from all forms of violence
- And sadly, suicide is now the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15 and above, and the third leading cause of death for 10-14 year olds.

Canada's future prosperity depends on investments we make in children and youth today. Children and youth are not a special interest group. They are ¼ of our population and 100% of our future. They are the heartbeat of our nation and our greatest natural resource.



### **What are the rights of children?**

Children's rights are human rights that are unique to people under 18 years of age. They reflect the vulnerability and potential of every child, along with their developmental needs.

Children's rights include all the things that they need to survive and thrive and fall into four main buckets:

- Survival – for example, safe water, nutritious food, the best medical care possible, and a clean environment
- Development – such as a good education, physical activity and play, and extra support for children with disabilities
- Protection – including from all forms of violence, abuse and harm of your body and mind.
- Participation – to be involved in decisions that affect your life, including within your family, school and government.

These rights are not special privileges which some children receive, and for which others must earn or struggle. One of the key principles of children's rights is that of non-discrimination. Every child in Canada and around the world shares these rights in common, and all adults - including parents, teachers, doctors and nurses, leaders in government and the private sector – have duties to uphold children's rights.

Children can also play a critical role in the fulfillment of their rights and the rights of others. The Future is NOW Awards were created to recognize and support the young leaders and changemakers in Canada who have taken the initiative and are driving meaningful change to build a more prosperous and equitable future for all.

### **What is the Deadline to Nominate a Child/Youth for the Award?**

Nominations must be received by CFC via the [online nomination form](#) on or before 5 p.m. ET on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

### **Who may nominate a child/youth for the award?**

Any person or organisation may nominate a child for the Future is NOW! Awards.

### **Does the child/youth and their parents/guardians need to know about the nomination?**

A valid nomination must be made with the knowledge of the nominee and contain a signed statement by the nominee (if 14 or older) and by the nominee's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) that consents to the nomination being made and confirms acceptance of these terms and conditions.

### **How can I receive updates on my nomination?**

Children First Canada (CFC) will only correspond with the Nominators of the finalists and will not be able to attend to individual correspondences unless it's regarding the withdrawal of a nomination. For updates on the Future is NOW Awards, please visit: [www.childrenfirstcanada.org](http://www.childrenfirstcanada.org). Be sure to sign up for our newsletter to be the first to hear announcements and follow CFC on social media.

### **When will the finalists be announced?**

The Future is NOW! Top 10 U18 Changemakers will be announced on May 13, 2025.



### Who is eligible?

Nominees must meet the following eligibility requirements

- a. be under 18 years of age as of May 13, 2025;
- b. have lived in Canada for at least one year as of May 13, 2025;
- c. have a clear history of promoting or defending children's rights and measurably improving the lives of young Canadians.
- d. be active (or have been active within the 12 months prior to their nomination) in the initiative for which they are being nominated;
- e. not be a current member of CFC's Youth Advisory Council;
- f. not be the child, grandchild, niece, nephew or cousin of any CFC director, employee, or contractor; and
- g. be living; The Future is NOW! Awards cannot be awarded posthumously.

### What type of impact must the nominee have made?

Awards may be granted to children or youth who have founded or been the driving force behind initiatives to defend the rights of children in the following areas:

#### Promoting Mental Health

- Developing programs to support mental health and/or community building
- Removing biases against people with mental health issues
- Advocating to create access to professional supports and services
- Teaching coping strategies, mindfulness techniques, and emotional regulation for mental well-being to others within the schools
- Promoting/encouraging the use of non-stigmatizing language and fostering supportive communities.
- Educating young people about mental health to create a generation that promotes mental wellness

#### Combatting Bullying

- Developing anti-bullying programs
- Encouraging older students to mentor and guide younger students to foster a positive and supportive school environment
- Highlighting positive interactions among students as an alternative to bullying.
- Utilizing social media, TV campaigns, and documentaries to spread anti-bullying messages to a wider audience
- Organizing/participating in large-scale campaigns like "Anti-Bullying Week" or "Pink Shirt Day" to educate communities and reduce bullying behavior.

#### Combatting Systemic Racism & Discrimination

- Combatting racism and/or discrimination
- Striving to create systemic changes

#### Promoting Truth and Reconciliation

- Helping to address the inequities facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and striving to create

systemic changes

- Creating reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth
- Supporting Indigenous youth leadership programs, like providing mentorship and leadership development opportunities to Indigenous youth to empower them.
- Advocating for Indigenous education, like culturally relevant and accessible education that respects and incorporates Indigenous knowledge, languages, and histories.
- Developing collaborative community projects with Indigenous children, like bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth together to work on projects that foster understanding and cooperation

### **Promoting Health and Wellness**

- Creating a community sports program to provide free access to physical activities and promote healthy lifestyles for children in underserved neighborhoods.
- Developing a social media campaign focused on body positivity and healthy habits, inspiring young people to embrace a balanced lifestyle.
- Advocating for accessible playgrounds
- Increasing access to sports or opportunities for outdoor play and physical education
- Helping ensure that schools and PE classes have access to equipment that all students can utilize (i.e. equipment for children with disabilities)
- Promoting wellness, nutrition, mental health, and wellbeing within schools

### **Combatting Violence and/or Abuse**

- Raising awareness about child abuse or how to seek help
- Creating peer support programs and opportunities
- Running workshops, campaigns and information sessions to help people recognize signs of violence and abuse, understand their rights, and know available support services
- Helping children and youth feel less alone and more able to ask for help
- Promoting that children and youth have the right to be safe in their environment

### **Ending Poverty, Food Insecurity or Hunger**

- Spearheading food drives
- Advocating for school breakfast or lunch programs
- Promoting access to shelters or affordable housing
- Raising public and government awareness about how poverty affects children and youth
- Creating programs/information that teach children and their families about healthy eating
- Volunteering with local shelters and housing resources to promote and advocate for affordable housing for families living in poverty

### **Combatting Climate Change**

- Promoting conservation or agriculture
- Encouraging responsible consumption
- Combatting pollution
- Promoting the use of recycling, the importance behind it
- Advocating the important of eco-friendly and sustainable products
- Organizing community cleanups

### **Promoting Equitable Education**

- Promoting literacy and numeracy
- Efforts to seek language, culture, diversity inclusion in schools
- Responses to pandemic education disruptions
- Youth voice in school decision making

### **Civic Engagement / Advocacy**



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- Advocating for the rights of children at local, provincial or federal government level
- Engaging in political processes to bring about systemic change
- Using social media, local events to reach a wide audience and gain community support
- Actively participate in public hearings in the community to ensure children's needs are represented.

## What are the characteristics of the youth being recognized for the Future is NOW Awards?

Nominees must demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. **Leadership:** The nominee is promoting or defending children's rights and measurably improving the lives of young Canadian and demonstrating courage and conviction.
2. **Collaboration:** The nominee has engaged others in taking action to promote/defend children's rights and improve the lives of young Canadians. They have they partnered with and collaborating with others to increase their social impact.
3. **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** The nominee is combatting discrimination and creating greater pathways to success for young Canadians who experience barriers to full their participation.
4. **Innovation:** The nominee is disrupting the status quo by changing attitudes, practices or policies and creating opportunities to make life better for young Canadians.
5. **Impact:** The nominee has measurably improved the life of young Canadians.
6. **Scalability:** The Future is NOW Award will enable the nominee to scale and improve their impact on the lives of young Canadians.
7. **Resilience:** The nominee is overcoming barriers or challenges in their own life and using their own experience of adversity to make life better for other young Canadians.