



2026 THE FUTURE IS NOW! AWARDS – FAQ

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 (dates to be confirmed).

Successful candidates will also benefit from the awards program by 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!

Can I still make a nomination for the 2026 Future is NOW! Awards?

No, the deadline for this year's nominations was March 20th. If you missed this year's deadline, we encourage you to make a nomination for next year's The Future is NOW! Awards once the form is released later this year.

When will the 10 winners be announced?

The winners for the 2026 The Future is NOW! Awards will be announced on a later date (TBC).

Will the winners be responsible for booking flights and accommodations?



No. Children First Canada will organize and take care of the winner's flights and accommodations.

How are the winners selected?

The winners will be selected through a jury process in which youth and adults will be paired to review and evaluate nominees' applications.

When and where is the Future is NOW! Awards this year?

The 2026 Future is NOW! The awards will be held on a date and at a venue to be announced.

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 o 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 o 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

- 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.