CHILDREN FIRST CANADA

The Future is NOW! Awards

OCTOBER 16TH, FAIRMONT ROYAL YORK, TORONTO

CELEBRATING CANADA'S
TOP 10 YOUNGEST CHANGEMAKERS

ABOUT CHILDREN FIRST CANADA



Children First Canada (CFC) is a national charity with a bold vision: together we can make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up. We champion the rights of all 8 million children in Canada, working to eliminate the barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential.

As the only national charity uniquely focused on children's rights in Canada, CFC leads cutting-edge research, advocates for policy change, and empowers children and youth to become leaders and changemakers. Through events like the Future is NOW! Awards, and programs like the Young Canadians' Parliament and Being, Belonging, Becoming, we provide platforms for young voices to shape their childhood and build a brighter future.

Founded in 2015, CFC has mobilized a movement of children, youth, families, educators, health professionals, business leaders, and policymakers to stop, listen, and act—defending children's rights and ensuring they are seen, heard, and empowered to thrive.

We're building a national movement in which children and youth are the heroes. Will you raise your hand and join us?

www.childrenfirstcanada.org



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER & CEO

Sara Austin

The future is NOW. And the future is OURs.

Thank you for joining us to celebrate the 3rd year of the Future is NOWQAs Children First Canada enters our second decade, I am filled with a profound sense of hope and possibility.

Ten years ago, we began with a bold vision: together we can make Canada the best place in the world for kids to grow up. Today, that vision is more urgent than ever, and our ambitions for the future are even bigger.

Our new 2030 Strategic Plan, **The Future is OURS**, charts the next chapter of our movement. We will deepen our research, strengthen our advocacy, and dramatically expand opportunities for children to lead.

From creating a safer digital world and strengthening children's mental health, to advancing equity and ensuring young people have a voice in the decisions that shape their lives, we are determined to drive transformational change for Canada's children.

Our North Star is simple: to be the champion for Canada's 8 million children — so every child knows that we are standing up for their rights, and they have the power to stand up for themselves and others.

And there could be no better expression of that future than the remarkable young people we celebrate today. The Future is NOW! Award recipients remind us that children and youth are not simply the leaders of tomorrow: they are changing Canada today.

But they cannot do it alone. The next decade will require all of us: families, educators, businesses, governments, and young people, working together with greater courage and ambition.

Thank you for believing in the extraordinary potential of every child and generously investing in their future.

Together, we can build a Canada where every child is safe, healthy, and empowered to thrive.

EVENT AGENDA

11:15 AM	Welcome Reception
12:00 PM	Opening Performance: Splash Company Youth Choir
12:05 PM	Opening Remarks & Land Acknowledgement: Lindsey Deluce (Master of Ceremonies) & Zachary Fathally (Youth Co-Host)
12:12 PM	Welcome Remarks: Sara Austin, Founder & CEO, Children First Canada
12:15 PM	Video: The Future Is Ours
12:17 PM	Main Course Served
12:32 PM	Introduction to the Awards: Farah Nasser, Kian & Arya
12:37 PM	The Future is NOW! Awards The Future Builder Award, presented by Mantella Corporation The Thriving Communities Award, presented by BMO The We Belong Award, presented in honour of Will & MacKenzie Sievert The Guiding Light Award, presented by Children First Canada The No Planet B Award, presented by Children First Canada

EVENT AGENDA

1:00 PM	Keynote Address: Senator Farah Mohamed
1:10 PM	Dessert, Coffee & Tea Served
1:30 PM	The Future is NOW! Awards
	The Civic Spark Award, presented by FACE Toronto
	The Together We Rise Award, presented by Children First Canada
	The Shine a Spotlight Award, presented by Children First Canada
	The Be an Upstander Award, presented by Children First Canada
	The Health for All Award, presented by Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities
1:50 PM	Call to Action: Andrea Chrysanthou & Rayn Asaria
1:53 PM	Raffle Draw
1:55 PM	Musical Performance: Splash Company Youth Choir
2:00 PM	Closing Remarks

MASTERS OF CEREMONIES

MEET THE HOST OF THE FUTURE IS NOW! AWARDS



LINDSEY DELUCE

NEWS ANCHOR • JOURNALIST • TELEVISION PERSONALITY

Lindsey Deluce is an accomplished Canadian journalist and the News Anchor for CTV's Your Morning, where she helps Canadians start their day with the latest news and stories shaping communities across the country. A familiar and trusted presence in Canadian broadcasting, Lindsey previously served as News Anchor for CP24 Breakfast and has covered major local and national stories throughout her career.

Beyond the newsroom, Lindsey is passionate about giving back to her community and has lent her time and voice to a variety of charitable events and causes. As a mother and longtime supporter of initiatives that strengthen communities, Lindsey brings warmth, energy, and a genuine passion for meaningful storytelling to the stage. We are delighted to welcome her as Master of Ceremonies for the 2026 Future Is NOW! Awards.

YOUTH MASTERS OF CEREMONIES



ZACHARY FATHALLY

13 YEARS OLD

MEMBER OF CFC'S YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL & THE YOUNG CANADIANS PARLIAMENT

Zachary is 13-years-old and he and his family live in Ottawa, Ontario. He is an avid reader who seizes every opportunity to learn about history, geography and science. This enthusiasm has led him to take engineering classes with the Faculty of Engineering (for kids) at the University of Ottawa. Zachary is passionate about advocating for children's rights and raising public awareness about climate change and online safety. His involvement with CFC's Young Canadians' Parliament (YCP) and Youth Advisory Council is a testament to his strong belief in amplifying children's voices.

He is passionate about advocating for online safety and has been a spokesperson for CFC's Countdown for Kids campaign, testifying to Parliament and meeting with federal Ministers, Members of Parliament and the Senate, and speaking with media about the importance of the new Safe Social Media Act. At the age of 10, he became a Child Ambassador for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – Voices of Future Generations (a worldwide Project supported by UNESCO) – after winning the silver medal for his book about children's rights entitled "Reda's Little Village." Zachary is fluent in English, French, and Arabic and is currently taking Italian and Spanish lessons. In his free time, he enjoys playing the piano, swimming, cycling, and reading. He is also a member of a soccer team in Ottawa.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



SENATOR FARAH MOHAMED

The Honourable Farah Mohamed was appointed to the Senate of Canada in 2025, following more than 30 years of leadership addressing systemic inequities and unlocking the potential of young people in Canada and around the world.

A refugee from Uganda, Senator Mohamed's journey inspired a lifelong commitment to championing opportunity for those facing barriers. She previously served as CEO of The King's Trust Canada and the Malala Fund, where she advanced Malala Yousafzai's global mission to educate girls. She also founded FORA (formerly G(irls)20) to advance the education, economic participation and leadership of girls and women.

Her many honours include the Meritorious Service Medal, King Charles III Coronation Medal and Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, and recognition among the BBC's 100 Women and Canada's Top 25 Women of Influence.

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Celebrating Canada's Top 10 Youngest Changemakers

AMARA WILSON ZEGIL

THE TOGETHER WE RISE AWARD



Amara Wilson-Zegil, 17, Ontario, is a passionate STEM advocate dedicated to expanding opportunities for youth in rural communities. As captain of the award-winning Manitoulin Metal robotics team, she leads and mentors young people while helping bring hands-on robotics and STEM programming to communities across Northern Ontario. Through outreach, camps, mentorship, and her work developing Project RISE (Rural Initiative for STEM Equity), Amara is working to ensure that access to STEM opportunities does not depend on where a young person lives.



SOPHIA KHALID

THE THRIVING COMMUNITIES AWARD

SPONSORED BY BMO

Sophia Khalid, 11, Ontario, is a young changemaker and founder of Sophia's Kindness Club, inspiring youth to create meaningful change through acts of kindness. She leads initiatives supporting children and families, including donation drives for essential items, school supplies, and winter clothing, and recently donated 100 backpacks to help children start the school year feeling prepared and confident. Sophia has also raised more than $1,100 for McMaster Children's Hospital, created oral-hygiene kits, and tutored refugee children learning English. Now leading a team of eight youth volunteers, Sophia continues to show that young people can make a meaningful difference in their communities.

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FIFI CHEN

THE WE BELONG AWARD

PRESENTED BY MACKENZIE AND WILLIAM SIEVERT



Fifi Chen, New Brunswick, is a community advocate, student leader, and co-founder of CreateAbility Camp, a nonprofit providing inclusive creative programming for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through the program, Fifi has helped create opportunities for young people to build confidence, develop new skills, and form meaningful connections. She also represents more than 24,000 students as an Anglophone School West District student councillor and serves as secretary of the New Brunswick Provincial Student Representative Council. Through her leadership in education, accessibility, and community service, Fifi is committed to empowering young people and creating more inclusive communities.



LEONORE WEILL

THE FUTURE BUILDER AWARD

SPONSORED BY MANTELLA CORP.

Leonore Weill, Quebec, is a student entrepreneur and community leader pursuing an Honours Commerce DEC at Marianopolis College. She is the founder of the Youth Founder Network (YFN), a youth-driven initiative connecting and supporting young Canadian entrepreneurs through mentorship, networking, recognition, and access to opportunities. Under her leadership, YFN has grown to more than 5,000 followers and a community of over 100 young founders, while featuring more than 75 youth entrepreneurs. Leonore is also involved in civic engagement and is passionate about making entrepreneurship more accessible, helping young people build confidence, develop their ideas, and create their own opportunities.

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AHNAAF HASSAN

THE CIVIC SPARK AWARD

SPONSORED BY FACE TORONTO



Ahnaaf Hassan, Ontario, is a student advocate and Student Trustee with the Toronto District School Board, where he works to ensure young people have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their education and wellbeing. He has advocated on issues including food security, mental health, online safety, and student representation, and founded Student Voices in Action Ontario, mobilizing more than 400 students and community members. Through his work with education leaders, community organizations, and youth across Ontario, Ahnaaf is helping ensure students are not only affected by decisions, but actively involved in shaping them.



PANIA GHANEIAN

THE SHINE A SPOTLIGHT AWARD

Pania Ghaneian, Ontario, is a passionate advocate for children's rights and protection, dedicated to preventing child exploitation and empowering young people to stay safe. As a member of OneChild's Youth Advisory Squad and an Educational Consultant, she has helped strengthen educational programming, deliver workshops for youth and families, and raise awareness about human trafficking, reaching thousands of people in Canada and internationally. Pania has also represented Canada through the Inter-American Children's Institute's CORIA program, bringing youth perspectives on child protection to international policy discussions. Through education, advocacy, and youth leadership, she is working toward a future where every child is informed, empowered, and protected.

THE FUTURE IS NOW!

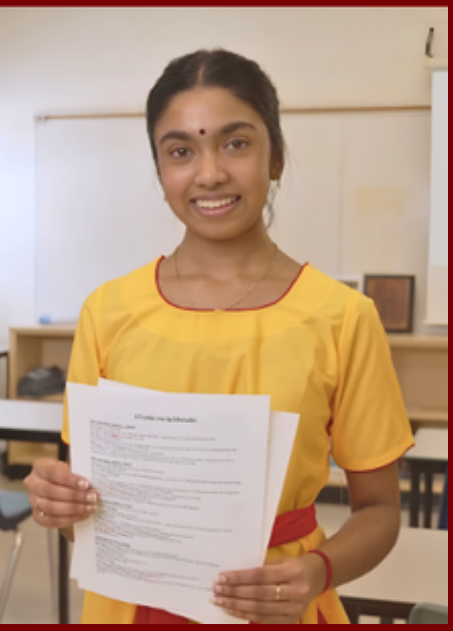
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JOANNA ZHU

THE NO PLANET B AWARD



Joanna Zhu, Alberta, is an environmental advocate and youth leader passionate about sustainable fashion and climate action. She leads Common Closet, an initiative associated with the United Nations Association in Canada that redistributes clothing to communities in need and repurposes textiles for animal shelters. Through the initiative, Joanna has mobilized more than 100 student volunteers and diverted hundreds of clothing items from potential waste. She also mentors youth through environmental programs and has contributed to climate education and policy initiatives, creating opportunities for young people to take meaningful action in their communities.



BAIRAVI KALATHARAN

THE BE AN UPSTANDER AWARD

Bairavi Kalatharan, Ontario, is a public speaker, human rights advocate, and trained Bharatanatyam dancer dedicated to advancing social justice and cultural inclusion. She founded The BLESS Foundation and its A.B.C. Mission, focused on anti-racism, bullying prevention, and cultural equity, while using dance to support humanitarian causes and make the arts more accessible. With more than 1,800 volunteer hours across 25 organizations, Bairavi has represented youth at national and international forums and earned recognition for her leadership, public speaking, community service, and advocacy. Through her work, she empowers young people to embrace their identities and use their voices to create meaningful change.

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VICTORIA GREENWOOD

THE GUIDING LIGHT AWARD



Victoria Greenwood, Ontario, is a youth advocate and lifelong dancer who founded the Indigenous Dance Foundation at age 12 to expand access to arts and recreation for Indigenous youth in remote Northern communities. Through the Foundation, she has helped bring free dance programming to fly-in communities across Nunavut and has reached more than 7,000 people through speaking engagements focused on Truth and Reconciliation. Victoria also brings youth perspectives to national policy and advocacy through advisory roles with organizations and leaders across Canada. Through dance, education, and advocacy, she is helping create opportunities for Indigenous youth and inspiring young people to take meaningful action toward reconciliation.



CADEN CHAU

THE HEALTH FOR ALL AWARD

SPONSORED BY CANADIAN TIRE JUMPSTART

Caden Chau, Alberta, is an innovator and community leader using technology, education, and mentorship to make opportunities more accessible. He founded MakeAble, a youth-led organization using 3D printing to create assistive solutions, which has produced more than 600 devices and developed open-source designs reaching over 400,000 people globally. Caden also founded a peer tutoring program and supports accessible music education through Art2Heart Society. Across his work, he is transforming everyday barriers into practical solutions that help young people learn, participate, and thrive.

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT COMMITTEE

Farah Nasser, Journalist, Broadcaster, Event Chair

Lindsey Deluce, Master of Ceremonies

Farah Mohamed, Keynote Speaker

Dr. Jamil Asaria, FACE Toronto, Jury Chair

Ashley Salazar, BMO Commerical Bank

Sylvia Mantella, Mantella Corporation

Kelly Kasper, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities

Trina Hiscock, bodeEV Canada & bodeEV US

Sara Austin, Children First Canada CEO

Jennifer Bassett, Bassett Events

Rayn Asaria, Chair of CFC's Youth Advisory Council

Hanna Grover, Youth Advisor & Past FIN Award Winner

Zammie Igwe, Youth Advisor & Past FIN Award Winner

Zachary Fathally, Youth Advisor

Naba Kazi, Youth Advisor

Aria Samdjy, Youth Advisor

Kian Samdjy, Youth Advisor

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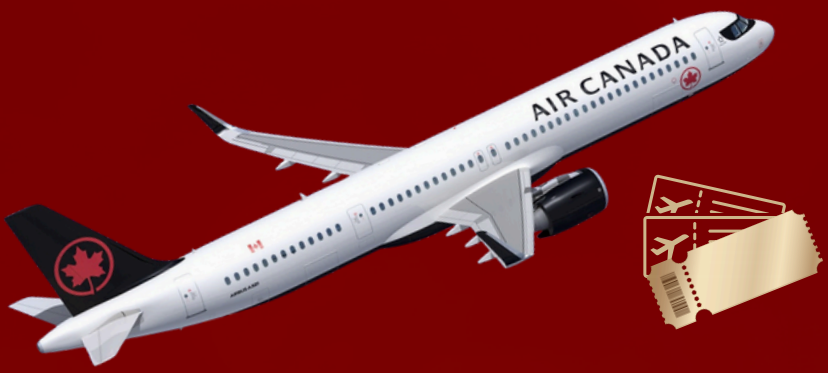
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