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Child and Youth Care in Quebec, Canada

Le travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse « Child and Youth Care » au Québec (Canada)*

Patti Ranahan

In 2014, the Graduate Diploma in Youth Work program launched in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Concordia University in the province of Quebec, Canada. To mark the 10-year anniversary of the Youth Work program, this edition of *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* centres on Child and Youth Care in the Quebec context. Child and Youth Care has a long history of integrating Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective on practice, which emphasizes that our engagement with children, youth, families and communities is situated within particular contexts that shape practitioners' interactions and approaches to practice, while simultaneously influencing how human development unfolds

* français à suivre.

(see for example Derksen, 2010; Ferguson et al., 1993). With the aim of fully appreciating how Child and Youth Care is a situated and contextual practice, this edition places the Quebec context in the foreground, in which culture, language, and politics sway how Youth Workers' knowing, doing, and being¹ unfolds.

I joined Concordia University in December 2011 having spent a few years teaching in the Child and Youth Care program at Vancouver Island University in British Columbia, Canada. At the time, my career and educational journey in Child and Youth Care had spanned two decades in British Columbia, where several colleges and universities provide graduates of Child and Youth Care programs desired credentials for practice within various publicly funded and not-for-profit organizations. Indeed, the University of Victoria established the first School of Child and Youth Care in Canada in 1973 (Anglin, 2024). In 2000, during my final year of my bachelor's degree in Child and Youth Care at Malaspina University-College (now Vancouver Island University), the provincial government's Ministry of Children and Family hosted recruitment events aimed at hiring Child and Youth Care graduates. Arguably, this history of Child and Youth Care within the context of British Columbia has rendered the discipline and profession recognized, and recognizable.

Thus, context inevitably shapes the evolution and availability of Child and Youth Care programs and career prospects. Leaving my British Columbian home for a tenure-track position in Quebec was an arduous decision fuelled by a desire to contribute in new ways to the discipline and practice of Child and Youth Care by immersing myself in a research-focused university. I believe(d) that research was one effective pathway to sustaining and evolving the discipline and practice, however, this new context that I attempted to plant myself in was not what was originally presented, nor what I (naively) assumed it to be. I was hired as part of a proposed new baccalaureate program in Family and Youth Work, yet unbeknownst to me at the time, fears from the Quebec Ministry of Education that this program was 'too similar' to Social Work catalyzed its

¹ See White, J. (2007). Knowing, doing and being in context: A praxis-oriented approach to child and youth care. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 36, 225-244. doi:10.1007/s10566-007-9043-1

demise before it even launched. Following this, Varda Mann-Feder, Natasha Blanchet-Cohen and I re-imagined the proposed program’s curriculum into the present-day 12-month post-baccalaureate Graduate Diploma in Youth Work program, as graduate diploma programs did not require Ministry approval. This fall, the 10th cohort of students will walk across the stage at their convocation ceremony to mark their graduation from the Youth Work program and embark upon a career that is premised on the principles of collaborative relationships, an ecosystemic approach, a developmental perspective, a rights-based approach, and ethical and reflexive practice (Ranahan et al., 2015). Like Child and Youth Care outside of Quebec, students in the Youth Work program over the past decade have demonstrated a passion for caring and walking alongside young people and their families and hanging in during challenging times (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011; Stuart & Fryer, 2024).

Nevertheless, as Varda Mann-Feder in this edition explains, the practice context in Quebec where most Youth Work graduates will work has shifted and is now characterized by a restructured health and social service system, increased service demands, and stalled talks on regulating the Youth Work profession within the province. Bill 96, passed by Premier François Legault’s government in 2022, mandated French as the language of the workplace, capped the enrolment in English colleges, and imposed French language proficiency for the majority of out-of-province and international students attending English universities (National Assembly of Quebec, 2022). These political decisions hold implications for the care of young people, families and communities in the province, and for the practitioners engaged in this work.

Kristofer Brown in this edition explains how problematic systemic factors in present-day Quebec have created an optimal situation for practitioners to experience burnout and potentially leaving the field altogether. Youth mental health resources for young people and their families are scarce in Quebec, as evidenced by the demand for child welfare services increasing exponentially by 114 percent over the past 10-years (Global News, 2024). Brown suggests that the work context is particularly challenging for practitioners who have limited training specific to youth mental health coupled with

a lack of mentorship from more senior colleagues due to staffing shortages and high turnover. Furthermore, Brown argues that a primary focus on intervention planning techniques within higher education curriculum is problematic and practical experiential learning opportunities are needed to support Youth Workers meeting the challenging demands of practice within the Quebec context. Indeed, a decade ago Anderson-Nathe (2014) noted this same challenge in Child and Youth Care in the United States practice context:

[I]n direct tension with this commitment to relational practice as the defining feature of Child and Youth Care, much direct Youth Work in the United States unfolds in environments where the fundamental focus of the work is intervention, not relationship. (p. 155)

Taking up this challenge of improving higher education curriculum to better prepare practitioners for intensified demands of practice, authors Vicky Lafantaisie, Sarah Tourigny, Olivier Laau-Laurin, Carolane Coulombe, and Elizabeth Brunet present findings in this edition from an appreciative inquiry examining empowerment-focused approaches in teaching future child welfare (i.e., youth protection) practitioners. Findings suggest that a focus on empowerment in the higher education context supports cooperative learning, deconstruction of power relationships, promotes appreciation for each other's knowledge, and concurrently builds students' confidence. Perhaps with empowerment-focused education, practitioners can begin to effectively negotiate the complexities of practice in Quebec.

Improving Youth Work practice within residential care settings through training staff is also the goal of authors Katherine Pascuzzo, Marie-Pierre Joly, Chantal Cyr, Rosalie Vézina, and Carole Côté. In this edition, the authors share how they provided attachment-informed training to staff with the goal of supporting practitioners' ability to interpret youths' behaviour and communication and respond according to the youth's underlying attachment needs. The authors held focus groups with fifteen practitioners who were working with adolescent boys in residential care and had

received the training. The participants' shared experiences affirmed Brown's argument that youth are increasingly presenting with greater needs, and that training – such as what Pascuzzo and colleagues offered – is critical for effective practice. Findings suggest that the training supported practitioners' capacity to reflect on the needs underlying the young person's behaviours, while simultaneously encouraged practitioners to reflect and evaluate their own reactions to better adjust to meet the youth's needs.

Enhancing Youth Work in Quebec through adopting inclusive, culturally sensitive, and empowering practices permeates Tamara Angeline Medford-Williams' contribution to this edition. Drawing on her community and clinical work, Medford-Williams illustrates how systemic issues, including institutionalized biases, are embedded in educational settings and create barriers for students. Utilizing intersectional analytical and anti-oppressive frameworks to analyze policies, power/powerlessness, and cultural imperialism, she illuminates the ways in which young people and their families are marginalized and their needs remain unaddressed. Culturally responsive training, and as Medford-Williams suggests, “submerg[ing] ourselves in experiences that expose us to other forms of knowledge, communities, and cultures” provides practitioners with the skills and reflective capacity to meet the challenges of practice within the Quebec context.

Building on Medford-Williams' discussion on systemic issues embedded within educational settings, Julie Chacra addresses the tension between an education system rooted in hierarchical practices and the development of family-school relationships in the context of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in this edition. IEPs are typically used to ignite collaboration between teachers, family members, and school personnel, and provide needed supports and problem-solving for individual students. However, through the lens of her rich practice experience, Chacra highlights how the voices of children and families are often marginalized during the IEP process. Further, she proposes theoretical frameworks, including critical theory and complexity, for her future research which will examine the contributions of Youth Workers to the family-school relationship in the context of the IEP process.

Empowerment, participation, connection, personal growth, and shared space are hallmarks of Indigenous youth engagement as documented in the work of Alicia Ibarra-Lemay, Véronique Picard, Carole Bérubé-Therrien, Ève Custeau-Wiscutie, Kassandra Laviolette, Kananish McKenzie and Natasha Blanchet-Cohen in this edition. Yet there are many contextual barriers that impede the youth engagement process, including racism, oppression, and intersecting inequalities. The authors posit that these barriers force Indigenous youth to “paddle upstream” as engagement can be experienced as an obligation and overwhelming responsibility. The authors recommend practitioners begin by acknowledging the historical context that Indigenous youth navigate when they enter an engagement process, and how the engagement space must prioritize safety, inclusion, active listening, while balancing care and healing. Aligned with Chacra’s work, the authors posit that systems structured in hierarchical practices must change toward being responsive and reflective of youth’s perspectives to foster and sustain engagement.

This special edition of *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* offers an interesting and informative glimpse into the current landscape of Youth Work in the Quebec context. Each contribution offers insights into Youth Work education, professional development and training, and theoretical frameworks that may inform how practitioners address systemic issues and promote youth and family engagement. I hope the readership of *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice* benefits from this edition, within and beyond the borders of Quebec.

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En 2014, le diplôme de 2^e cycle en travail auprès des jeunes voyait le jour au Département des sciences humaines appliquées de l’Université Concordia, située au Québec, province du Canada. À l’occasion du dixième anniversaire de ce programme, la présente édition de *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* se concentre sur le travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l’enfance et la jeunesse (« Child and Youth Care ») dans le contexte québécois. Depuis longtemps déjà, le travail

en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse intègre l'approche écologique de Bronfenbrenner (1979) en matière de pratique, laquelle insiste sur le fait que notre engagement auprès des enfants, des jeunes, des familles et des collectivités est ancré dans des contextes particuliers qui façonnent les interactions et les approches des praticiennes et praticiens envers la pratique, tout en influant sur la manière dont le développement humain survient (à ce sujet, voir p. ex. Derksen, 2010; Ferguson et coll., 1993). Afin de prendre la pleine mesure du caractère situationnel et contextuel du travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse, cette édition tourne les projecteurs vers le contexte québécois, dans lequel la culture, la langue et la politique ont une incidence considérable sur la manière d'être et de faire ainsi que le savoir des intervenantes et intervenants².

Lorsque je suis arrivée à l'Université Concordia en décembre 2011, j'enseignais le « Child and Youth Care » à l'Université de Vancouver Island, en Colombie-Britannique, au Canada, depuis quelques années. À l'époque, je cumulais deux décennies d'expérience professionnelle et universitaire dans le domaine, que j'avais acquises dans cette province, où plusieurs collèges et universités dotent leurs diplômés de qualifications convoitées pour la pratique au sein d'organisations financées par l'État ou d'organismes sans but lucratif. Cette situation n'est pas un hasard, car la première école spécialisée travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse du pays, la School of Child and Youth Care, a été fondée par l'Université de Victoria en 1973 (Anglin, 2024). Alors que je terminais ma dernière année au baccalauréat en « Child and Youth Care » au Malaspina University-College (devenu l'Université de Vancouver Island), en l'an 2000, le ministère du Développement de l'enfance et de la famille de Colombie-Britannique organisait des activités de recrutement visant à embaucher des diplômés. Au regard de cet historique, on peut affirmer que le contexte britanno-colombien a servi la discipline et la profession, contribuant au renom et à la reconnaissance du travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse.

² voir White, J. (2007). Knowing, doing and being in context: A praxis-oriented approach to child and youth care. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 36, 225-244. doi:10.1007/s10566-007-9043-1.

Comme on le voit, le contexte façonne inévitablement l'évolution et la disponibilité des programmes de travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse, de même que les perspectives de carrières connexes. Quitter la Colombie-Britannique pour un poste menant à la permanence au Québec a été une décision ardue, alimentée par le désir de contribuer à la discipline et à la pratique de façons nouvelles, en m'immergeant dans une université axée sur la recherche. À mes yeux, la recherche était et continue d'être une voie efficace pour étayer la discipline et la pratique, et contribuer à leur avancement. Cependant, le nouveau contexte dans lequel je tentais de m'implanter ne correspondait ni à ce qui avait été présenté à l'origine ni à mes attentes (naïves). Mon embauche a eu lieu dans le cadre d'un nouveau programme de premier cycle en travail auprès de la jeunesse et des familles, encore au stade d'incubation. Or, le ministère de l'Éducation du Québec craignait que ce programme ne soit « trop semblable » à celui en travail social, ce que j'ignorais et qui s'est avéré fatal pour le programme avant même son lancement. Après ce revirement, Varda Mann-Feder, Natasha Blanchet-Cohen et moi avons repensé le cursus du programme proposé. La version actuelle du diplôme de 2^e cycle en travail auprès des jeunes, d'une durée de 12 mois, a vu le jour, car ce type de diplôme ne nécessitait aucune approbation ministérielle. Aujourd'hui, la dixième cohorte d'étudiantes et étudiants du programme s'apprête à célébrer la fin de ses études en travail auprès des jeunes. Après la collation des grades qui se tiendra cet automne, elle pourra entamer une carrière fidèle aux principes que sont les relations collaboratives, l'approche écosystémique, la perspective développementale, l'approche axée sur les droits, l'éthique et la réflexion dans la pratique (Ranahan et coll., 2015). À l'instar de leurs homologues ayant suivi un programme en travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse à l'extérieur du Québec, les étudiantes et étudiants au diplôme de 2^e cycle de l'Université Concordia ont démontré la passion qui les anime pour le soutien et l'accompagnement des jeunes et de leur famille, ainsi que leur persévérance dans les moments difficiles (Garfat et Fulcher, 2011; Stuart et Fryer, 2024).

Le contexte québécois dans lequel la majorité des diplômés pratiqueront a néanmoins changé, comme l'explique Varda Mann-Feder dans la présente édition. Il est à présent marqué par un système de santé et de services sociaux restructuré, une demande de service accrue et des discussions qui achoppent au sujet de l'encadrement de la profession dans la province. La Loi 96 adoptée par le gouvernement Legault en 2022 a établi le français comme langue du milieu de travail, mis en place un plafond d'admission dans les collèges de langue anglaise et imposé la maîtrise du français à la plupart des étudiantes et étudiants provenant d'ailleurs au Canada ou dans le monde et qui fréquentent des universités de langue anglaise au Québec (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2022). De telles décisions politiques ont des implications pour l'aide aux jeunes, aux familles et aux collectivités de la province, de même que pour les personnes qui exercent le métier et apportent leur soutien à ces groupes.

Dans cette édition, Kristofer Brown explique de quelle manière les facteurs systémiques problématiques qui existent dans le Québec d'aujourd'hui ont engendré les conditions idéales pour mener les praticiennes et praticiens à l'épuisement professionnel, et potentiellement les inciter à abandonner la profession. Les ressources en santé mentale destinées aux jeunes et à leur famille se font rares au Québec, comme le montre la demande en services d'aide sociale à l'enfance qui a explosé, enregistrant une hausse de 114 % au cours des dix dernières années (Global News, 2024). Kristofer Brown avance que le contexte de travail est particulièrement exigeant pour les praticiennes et praticiens disposant d'une formation limitée en santé mentale des jeunes. Cette réalité serait encore aggravée par le fait que l'offre de mentorat par des collègues plus expérimentés est insuffisante en raison de la pénurie de personnel et d'un taux de roulement élevé. Il soutient en outre que l'accent central mis sur les techniques de planification d'intervention dans les cursus universitaires est problématique et qu'il faudrait mettre en place des occasions d'apprentissage expérientiel pour soutenir les intervenantes et intervenants qui doivent relever les défis de la pratique dans le contexte québécois. Il partage ainsi

le même constat que Ben Anderson-Nathe (2014) dans le contexte de la pratique aux États-Unis il y a une décennie :

[E]n opposition directe avec cet engagement en faveur de la pratique relationnelle en tant qu'aspect décisif du travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse, aux États-Unis, une grande partie du travail direct se déroule dans des environnements où l'on se focalise essentiellement sur l'intervention plutôt que sur la relation. (p. 155)

Pour s'attaquer au défi que pose l'amélioration du cursus universitaire dans le but de mieux préparer les praticiennes et praticiens aux exigences croissantes du domaine, Vicky Lafantaisie, Sarah Tourigny, Olivier Laau-Laurin, Carolane Coulombe et Elizabeth Brunet cosignent un article dans lequel ils présentent les conclusions d'une analyse positive examinant différentes approches axées sur l'autonomisation, lesquelles pourraient servir à former les praticiennes et praticiens de demain qui seront actifs dans l'une des sphères de l'aide sociale à l'enfance (comme la protection de la jeunesse). Les conclusions de cette analyse indiquent qu'une approche fondée sur l'autonomisation dans le contexte de l'enseignement supérieur soutiendrait l'apprentissage coopératif et la déconstruction des relations de pouvoir, promouvrait la valorisation réciproque du savoir et permettrait simultanément aux étudiantes et étudiants de gagner en confiance. Peut-être une telle approche pourrait-elle aider les praticiennes et praticiens à mieux gérer les complexités de la pratique au Québec?

Améliorer le travail auprès des jeunes en établissement au moyen de la formation est un objectif que partagent aussi Katherine Pascuzzo, Marie-Pierre Joly, Chantal Cyr, Rosalie Vézina et Carole Côté. Dans la présente édition, les auteures décrivent de quelle façon elles ont fourni une formation éclairée par l'attachement à des intervenantes et intervenants dans le but de renforcer leur capacité à interpréter le comportement des jeunes et à y répondre en accord avec les besoins affectifs sous-jacents qu'ils expriment. Après la formation, elles ont constitué des groupes de discussion d'une quinzaine d'intervenantes et intervenants travaillant auprès

d'adolescents en établissement. Les expériences communiquées par les participants étayent l'argument de Kristofer Brown selon lequel de plus en plus de jeunes présenteraient des besoins accrus et la formation serait cruciale pour une pratique efficace, à l'image des ateliers offerts par Katherine Pascuzzo et ses collègues. Les conclusions de l'article révèlent en outre que la formation fortifierait la capacité des praticiennes et praticiens à réfléchir aux besoins qui sous-tendent le comportement des jeunes, tout en les encourageant à méditer sur leurs propres réactions et à les évaluer pour mieux s'adapter aux besoins de leur public.

Améliorer le travail en éducation spécialisée auprès de l'enfance et la jeunesse au Québec par l'intermédiaire de pratiques inclusives, respectueuses des différences culturelles et favorisant l'autonomie, tel est le thème qui transpire de la contribution de Tamara Angeline Medford-Williams dans cette édition. En puisant dans son travail en milieu communautaire et clinique, celle-ci illustre de quelle manière les problèmes systémiques, y compris les biais institutionnels, sont ancrés dans les contextes éducatifs et de formation, ce qui crée des barrières pour les apprenantes et apprenants. Elle recourt à des cadres analytiques et anti-oppressifs intersectionnels pour analyser différentes politiques ainsi que les concepts de puissance, d'impuissance et d'impérialisme culturel, puis met en lumière la façon dont les jeunes et leurs familles sont victimes de marginalisation et voient leurs besoins demeurer insatisfaits. Au moyen d'une formation qui tient compte des différences culturelles et, comme Tamara Angeline Medford-Williams le suggère, « d'une immersion dans des expériences qui nous exposent à d'autres formes de savoir, de communauté et de culture », les praticiennes et praticiens seraient à même d'acquérir les compétences et les capacités de réflexion nécessaires pour surmonter les défis que présente la pratique au Québec.

Julie Chacra poursuit la discussion lancée par Tamara Angeline Medford-Williams au sujet des problèmes systémiques enchâssés dans l'écosystème éducatif et de formation. Pour ce faire, elle traite des tensions entre un système d'éducation qui mise traditionnellement sur des pratiques hiérarchiques, d'une part, et le développement de relations famille-école dans le cadre des plans d'intervention adaptés (PIA), d'autre part. Les PIA servent généralement à amorcer la collaboration entre le personnel enseignant,

les membres de la famille et le personnel de l'école. Ils fournissent une aide nécessaire et contribuent à résoudre les problèmes auxquels font face certains élèves. Grâce à sa riche expérience pratique, Julie Chacra jette toutefois un éclairage différent sur la réalité et démontre de quelle façon la voix des enfants et des familles est souvent marginalisée durant le processus menant à un PIA. Elle propose par ailleurs des cadres théoriques, tenant notamment compte de la théorie critique et de la complexité, pour ses prochaines recherches, qui porteront sur la contribution du travail auprès des jeunes à la relation famille-école dans le contexte du processus menant à un PIA.

L'autonomisation, la participation, l'établissement de liens, la croissance personnelle et l'espace partagé – tels sont les traits caractéristiques de l'engagement auprès des jeunes autochtones que documentent Alicia Ibarra-Lemay, Véronique Picard, Carole Bérubé-Therrien, Ève Custeau-Wiscutie, Kassandra Laviolette, Kananish McKenzie et Natasha Blanchet-Cohen dans le travail présenté dans cette édition. Cependant, de nombreuses barrières contextuelles freinent le processus d'engagement des jeunes, notamment le racisme, l'oppression et les inégalités intersectionnelles. Les auteures postulent que ces barrières contraignent les jeunes autochtones à « ramer à contre-courant », puisque l'engagement peut être vécu comme une obligation et une responsabilité accablante. Elles recommandent par conséquent aux praticiennes et praticiens de commencer par reconnaître le contexte historique dans lequel les jeunes autochtones naviguent lorsqu'ils entament un processus d'engagement ainsi que l'importance de privilégier la sécurité, l'inclusion et l'écoute active dans l'espace d'engagement, tout en trouvant le juste équilibre entre aide et guérison. Dans la foulée de Julie Chacra, elles émettent l'hypothèse que les systèmes structurés selon des pratiques hiérarchiques doivent céder le pas à des systèmes qui s'adaptent à la perspective des jeunes et la reflètent afin de favoriser et de préserver l'engagement.

Cette édition spéciale de *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* donne un aperçu intéressant et informatif de la réalité actuelle du domaine dans le contexte québécois. Chacune des contributions qui la composent permet d'en apprendre plus sur le cursus en travail auprès des jeunes, la formation et le développement professionnels, de même que les cadres théoriques auxquels les praticiennes et praticiens pourraient se référer

lorsqu'ils luttent contre des problèmes systémiques et promeuvent l'engagement des jeunes et des familles. J'espère qu'elle profitera à notre lectorat du Québec et d'ailleurs.

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Child and Youth Care in Quebec: An Update

Varda R. Mann-Feder

In 2019, my chapter on Child and Youth Care (CYC) in Quebec was published in Volume 1 of *Child and Youth Care Across Sectors* (Gharabaghi & Charles, 2019). At that time, I outlined the three job titles in force in the province (Educatuers, Educateur Specialisee, and Psychoeducateur) and I reviewed the range of practice models in use, with a focus on Child and Youth Care and Psychoeducation as distinct but overlapping fields. I also mentioned the highly developed post-secondary programs in Quebec, the successive reorganizations of the health and social service sector, and finally the passing of legislation in 2012 that more narrowly defined the functions of licensed professions that did not include CYC. I concluded that chapter by stating:

It is hoped that the CYC community can continue to come together across the linguistic divides that still exist in Quebec to share expertise, to continue to lobby for the benefit of children, youth and families, and to advance the recognition of the field as a whole. (Mann-Feder, 2019, p. 222).

Much has changed since that time.

In 2011, Gharabaghi provided CYC with a useful working definition of what constitutes a professional issue. He proposed six major types of concerns that impact directly on practice and practitioners: “societal, cultural and political issues..., issues that reflect the systems context ..., issues that impact the employment context ..., issues that reflect the career development prospects..., issues that reflect the interactions of practitioners with professionals within the field or from other fields....



And issues that are fundamentally about the practitioner” (Gharabaghi, 2011, p.5). In reflecting on what has happened in Quebec in only five short years, it became clear to me that there have been significant shifts in the four domains that align with the broader contextual and systemic issues. What follows are my reflections about these shifts, organized according to Gharabaghi’s categories. While some of the issues overlap, they provide a useful framework for examining that state of the field in a given region and at a given point in history. I will conclude by providing a summary of current opportunities and challenges for CYC in Quebec. It is important to note that I write as an Anglophone Quebecer who was born in Montreal and educated in English, although I have worked in French as well.

Changes in Social, Cultural and Political Issues

At the time of the publication of the original chapter, the Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) government was in its first mandate. In October of 2022, this government was re-elected with an even larger majority. “This right of centre party... touted itself as the experience choice to continue building the province’s economy, fix its reeling health-care system and guard against the decline of the French language” (Nerestant, 2022). Over the course of their first term, the CAQ government adopted controversial legislation banning religious symbols from the public sector, effectively excluding many visible minority individuals from serving as teachers, and intervenors in the public system (Lau, 2019). This had a direct impact on the CYC sector and limited entry to the field for many. In addition, the CAQ government strengthened the charter of the French language, such that the English minority in Quebec was further marginalized (Stevenson, 2022). Anglophone children, youth and families outside of the big cities have experienced reduced access to services for years, and these gaps stand to increase in the years to come, given the government’s prioritizing of French language services in the province (CBC News, 2019). The linguistic divide I referenced in 2019 has thus grown and CYC practitioners work more than ever in an environment where there is reduced contact between English and French youth workers. Shortly after the publication of the chapter in which I expressed hope not only that the communities of

practice could come together but that additionally the models of practice could be taught side by side at Concordia, the English proposal for a Master of Arts degree in Youth Work and Psychoeducation was never approved by the provincial Ministry of Education. It was discovered that the Francophone universities that teach Psychoeducation in Quebec had expressed their opposition to an English program (Personal Communication, D. Leclerc, 2019). It seems likely that the political climate made this possible. This is a perfect example of Gharabaghi's (2011) assertion that "It is (therefore) critically important that when one considers the professional issues of Child and Youth Care Practice, one is conscious of the broader social, political and cultural dynamics" (p. 7).

Shortly after the publication of the original chapter, the world was faced with the global catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic. Quebec was not unique in the degree to which we suffered the consequences, and CYC everywhere was challenged by the shift to online services and the increased needs of children, youth and families for services (CTV News, 2021). In Quebec as elsewhere there was a sharp increase in domestic violence and child neglect, resulting in a significant increase in referrals for youth protection services (Bongiorno, 2023). The move of both elementary and high school students to online education also resulted in serious school delays. However, in Quebec these increased needs overtaxed a system already plagued by underfunding and labour shortages and was under scrutiny because of the death of a young girl in foster care in 2019 (International Bureau of Child Rights, 2021). The escalating demands spilled over into the community sector, and non-profits with the mandates to support children, youth and families strained to compensate (Shingler & Montpetit, 2021). In this way, CYCs in all sectors of the province have been under increased pressure to deal with ever growing numbers of troubled young people and parents, with little increase in agency budgets. If anything, labour shortages in the youth sector have multiplied, such that in 2023, the APTS (Alliance du Personnel Professionnel et Technique de la Sante et des Services Sociaux), an organization representing 10,000 youth workers in Quebec state:

Once again, this year, youth workers have been using everyone last ounce of their strength to hold the system together. Day by day the labour shortage is getting worse and measure to attract and retain employees are few and far between. (n.p)

Issues Impacting on the Systems Context

Exacerbating the consequences of the global pandemic and political changes in Quebec, was also the effect of a reorganization of the Health and Social Service sector in Quebec in 2015, a massive merger took place that integrated public services for children, youth and families into large institutions that also included hospitals and community health clinics. The hope was that this reorganization would increase continuity of services, but this has not been the case. In the short term, youth protection services, residential and placement services, and counselling services in the community health clinics lost their leadership because of massive lay offs and transfers. Youth services were no longer represented at the highest levels, with the impact being that major decisions and budget allocations were dominated by the concerns of the hospitals. This was felt at every level of the youth centres and had a direct impact on both the workloads and the level of influence of CYCs working in the system. As stated by the APTS (n.d.):

Instead of solving the existing problems in the health and social service system, administrative reorganizations have made them worse and even created new ones by excessively centralizing the decision-making processes.... Specialized resources have been dispersed, various spaces for youth workers to confer together have been dismantled, and families' access to services has been reduced. (n.p.)

Another setback for the CYC community in Quebec was the closure in 2022 of the Quebec Association of Educateurs (QAE), the English professional association of Child and Youth Care Workers (Personal Communication, M. Fournier, 2022). The QAE had a thirty-five-year history and as outlined in the 2019 chapter, was the site of

development for many innovative practices locally because of the strong connection to the field nationally, across North America, and internationally. The QAE had been experiencing a downturn in its' active membership for some time and struggled to unite CYCs through the advent of COVID-19 and administrative reorganizations in many of the primary work sites. These challenges were exacerbated by the death in 2022 of Tony Maciocia, a dedicated CYC practitioner who had given leadership to the QAE since 1985 (QAE, 2017). Without him, and without his hard-won connections to the French CYC community and local employers, the QAE executive decided it was time to shut down. This closure will inevitably weaken the level of advocacy for the field, particularly in the English community in Quebec, and it also means that Quebec has for now forfeited its' seat on the National Council for Child and Youth Care Practice.

Issues Impacting the Employment Sector

As outlined earlier, since 2019 there has been a significantly increased demand for services for children, youth and families in Quebec. Despite the completion in 2021 of a report by a provincial commission on the state of services (International Bureau of Children's Rights, 2021), and the numerous recommendations to decentralize and enlarge programs, little has changed. However, as noted earlier, there are clear signs that provincial agencies and non-profits recognize and value the competencies of CYCs in the province. Employment rates of CYC graduates, both at the college and university levels, have increased. The provincial college website, Pygma, places the current job placement rate of CYC graduates at 96.7 (Pygma.ca/351AO, n.d.) while the government of Canada rates the future employment prospects for 2022-2030 for youth workers in Quebec as continuing to be ranked as "good" in comparison with other provinces (Government of Canada, n.d.).

Issues Impacting the Career Development Prospects

While employment opportunities abound for front line practitioners, the long-term career prospects for CYCs have not yet improved. This is in large part due to the legislation mentioned earlier, that reserves certain job functions in the youth serving

sector for professionals licensed by the provincial orders. In many settings, management positions are not accessible to individuals who do not hold a license in Quebec. Efforts to create licensing in the province for youth workers have stalled, and the profession is no closer to recognition than it was in 2019, although the French CYC association, the Association des éducateurs et éducatrices spécialisées, has continued to engage in negotiations with the provincial government (AESSQ, n.d.). A major step forward was their creation of a glossary of professional competencies in order to sensitize the government to the many contributions of CYCs or “Special Care Counsellors”, as they are referred to at the college level in Quebec (Quebec Association of Special Care Counselors, 2020). The Competency Framework specifies the scope of work across the lifespan, the competencies and the knowledge underlying them, and the profile of individual practitioners that may vary according to the clientele they work with. Despite these developments, there continues to be a movement in Quebec, as observed elsewhere in Canada, that a significant percentage of CYC graduates go on to further education so that they can qualify in one of the allied professions that are licensable (Social Work, Guidance Counselling, Counselling Psychology and Psychoeducation) (CYC-Net, 2011). This inevitably results in the loss of talented individuals to the field, and a lack of representation at management and senior management levels by CYC practitioners.

Challenges and Opportunities for CYC in Quebec

At first glance, it may seem that the challenges for CYC in Quebec outweigh the opportunities. It is true that there is ongoing and increasing segregation of English and French services and the French and English CYC communities because of the political climate. This alone is a serious obstacle to the growth of the discipline in Quebec. The legislation in relation to professional licensing has excluded CYC practitioners from a range of professional functions which are now classified as “reserved acts” (Quebec Official Publisher, 2009). In the short term, this has diminished the career prospects of individuals practicing in the field and has encouraged many to move on to other fields of practice in order to gain access to professional status and opportunities for

advancement. The English CYC community has, for now, lost its' advocacy group and its' formal link to both the national and international CYC community.

However, it is also a time of powerful opportunities for the Child and Youth Care field in Quebec. There are increased demands for CYC professionals across all sectors, not only due to labour shortages, but also due to the renewed recognition of the impressive range of competencies of individual practitioners, even without access to licensing. The French Association has produced a nuanced and useful guide to competencies across the lifespan, that provides both the practitioner and the employer with a clear portrait of the profession. Post-secondary programs in French and in English are thriving, with high levels of admissions and retention of strong candidates who wish to enter the field because of their sense of mission. There is virtually a 100% employment rate for these new graduates. There has been increased funding in Quebec of youth-related research, with a greater than ever emphasis on youth participation in that research (Chair-research du Recherche sur la Jeunesse du Quebec, n.d.). While admittedly there are many pressures that impact practice on a political, social, systemic, and employment level, the profile of CYC continues to grow in Quebec. The profession continues to play a key role across systems of care and is increasingly recognized for its' passionate engagement in contributing to the quality of life for children, youth and families (AEESQ, n.d.).

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Relational Child and Youth Care Practice (formerly *The Journal of Child & Youth Care*, established 1982) is committed to promoting and supporting the profession of Child and Youth Care through disseminating the knowledge and experience of individuals involved in the day-to-day lives of young people.

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