



# YCCC

## The wisdom of young carers

Motivated by her own experience as a young carer, **Rebekah Gold**, Co-Founder and Director, leads the **Young Caregiver Council of Canada (YCCC)**. Amplifying carers' stories and fostering a supportive community, the YCCC is proud to celebrate young carers as leaders and change makers.

### What defines a young carer?

Young carers (also called young caregivers) are generally young people who support a family member or friend living with chronic illness, disability, mental health challenge, substance use, parental absence, ageing needs, and/or other social or cultural factors (such as language barriers).

You might be a young carer if you do any of the following things for a parent, grandparent, sibling, other family member or friend:

- manage someone's medicine and medical supplies
- accompany or drive someone to appointments, social gatherings, grocery shopping, etc.
- help to emotionally regulate someone, de-escalate someone or a situation, call emergency services to support someone, protect and keep someone safe, navigate someone's mental health crises
- assist someone with toileting, clothing, showering, moving around, etc.
- help someone communicate with others, advocate for their rights, manage their finances, navigate health and social services.

This is by no means an exhaustive list.

### What is the YCCC, and what motivated you to establish it?

The Young Caregiver Council of Canada (YCCC) is a group of dedicated young carers (aged between 14 and 30) with diverse care experiences (past and/or present). Our aim is to represent and mobilise the stories and wisdom of young carers across Canada.

Co-founded with the Young Caregivers Association® and initially supported by Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation National Grant, I have worked alongside brilliant young carers to build the YCCC from the ground up since 2023. Drawing on my experiences as a young carer and critical participatory

researcher, I worked to ensure the YCCC was created by young carers for young carers, prioritising community, mentorship, shared decision-making and meaningful partnerships. Our group fosters community through shared care experiences and collaboration on efforts, events and projects. In addition to participating in community nights, young carers engage in initiatives including media creation, conference presentations, panel speaking events, research projects, stakeholder meetings, networking, council projects and outreach activities. The YCCC has now become its own advocacy entity and a powerful space for community among young carers.



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### What are the YCCC's goals?

Our mission is to represent carers' stories and experiences, and to support the engagement of young carers in research, practice, decision-making and national policy in Canada.

We want young carers to be recognised, supported and valued. And we want to create a space grounded in connection and co-creation, where we design our own projects, share our lived wisdom and work alongside professionals and policymakers to transform the systems that shape our lives.

We uphold three important pillars:

**Value Our Stories:** We advocate for ownership over our own stories through direct involvement in the decisions that impact our lives. Our stories belong to us. Our stories matter.

**Support Community:** We prioritise

community through inclusion, shared understanding, mentorship and a genuine interest in each other's well-being.

**Advocate for Change:** We engage in initiatives, events and projects in collaboration with professionals, researchers, organisations and institutions that build awareness, support and resources for young carers and families.

### Why is the YCCC needed?

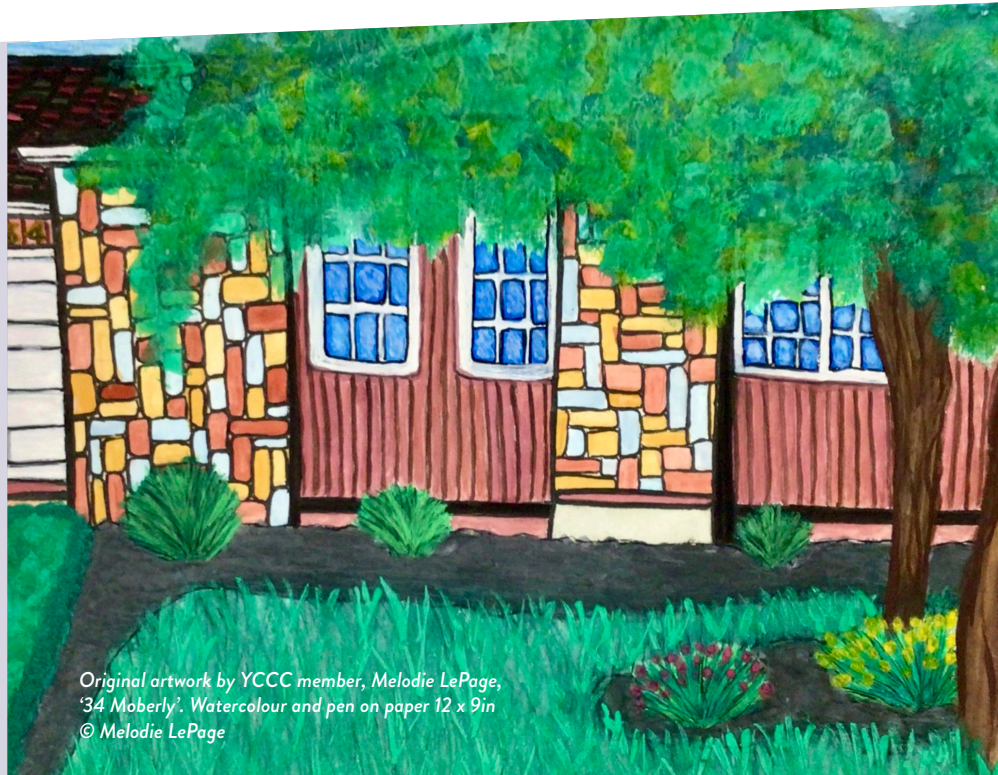
There is an overwhelming lack of awareness, recognition and support for young carers across Canada. With only one organisation

solely dedicated to direct service for young carers (Young Caregivers Association®) and a handful of programmes across Canada (AMI-Quebec, Starlings Community, BC Children's Hospital Sauder Sibling Centre), the YCCC makes up the first national space dedicated to community and advocacy for young carers. The YCCC lifts up young carers as leaders, wisdom-holders, advocates, storytellers and change-makers across Canada. Too often, decisions about young carers are made without including those of us who take up care work every day. The YCCC is here to change that. →

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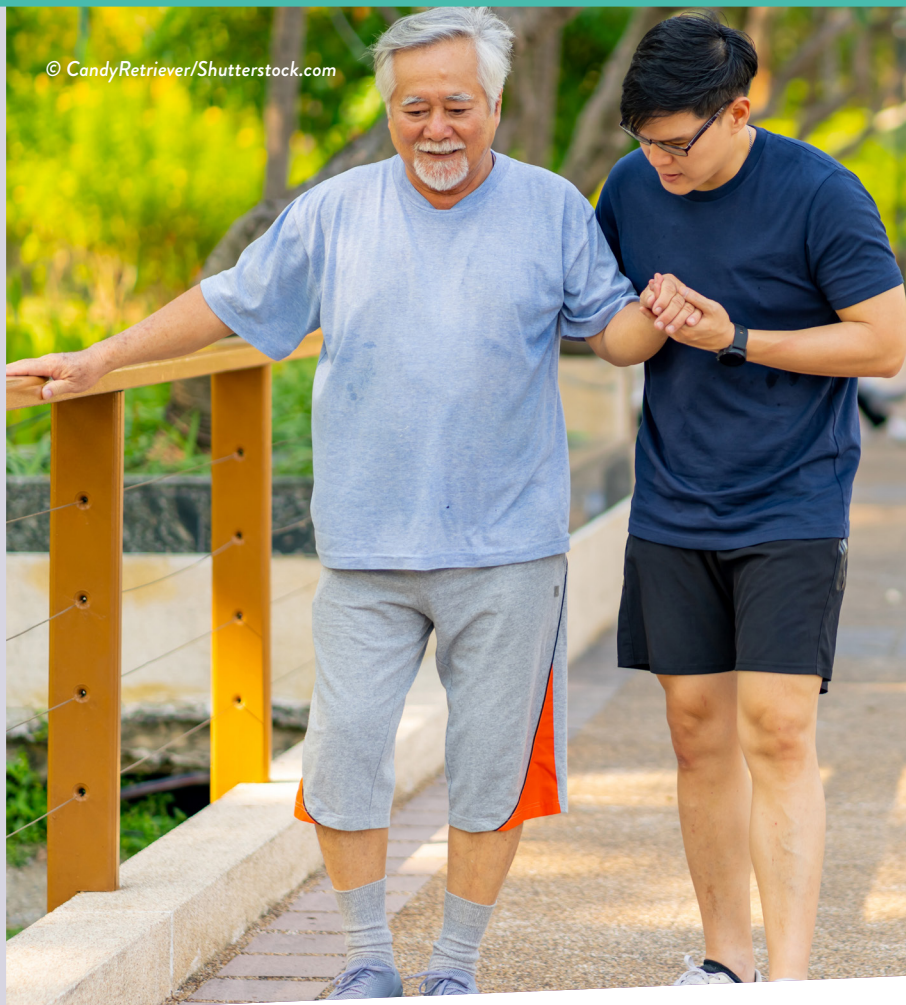
Original artwork by YCCC member, Melodie LePage, '34 Moberly'. Watercolour and pen on paper 12 x 9in  
© Melodie LePage



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## ***The YCCC lifts up young carers as leaders, wisdom-holders, advocates, storytellers and change-makers across Canada.***

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Awareness of young carers matters because it is the first step toward change. When people know we exist, they can begin to create policies, programmes and practices that support us.

### **What are the challenges of being a young carer?**

There is substantial research that references the short and long-term challenges experienced by young carers, which impact them academically, socially and professionally<sup>i</sup>. According to the Young Caregivers Association®, young carers express experiencing stress, loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and difficulties relating to peers. In a research study<sup>ii</sup>, 68% of young carers reported fearing they will do poorly in school because of their care work. Despite the responsibilities they shoulder, young carers remain one of the most overlooked and underserved groups in the country. Many don't even realise that the support they provide is caregiving, let alone that they have a right to accessible, quality resources and support<sup>iii</sup>.

Our three pillars acknowledge the power of community in combatting the isolation that many young carers experience. We

want young carers to know that they are not alone, and that their stories and care work matter.

### **What positive impact can being a carer have on a young person?**

As young people with care experiences, we hold wisdom about the challenges that come with supporting a family member and/or friend. Most of us have navigated caring for someone without any formal support and became aware of the term 'young carer' later in our youth. We hold valuable knowledge about disability and illness, we recognise and experience stigma and injustices that lead to silence and isolation, and we feel deep empathy for young carers and families across Canada who have also been left unsupported. Through caring for someone, we have learnt important life skills that help us support our family, friends and community.

### **How are YCCC members using their wisdom to advocate for change?**

We use our collective wisdom to amplify the voices and stories of young carers and inform policy initiatives across

Canada. Our **Young Caregiver Blog** features important knowledge and stories from young carer Council members. Our blog offers opportunities for guest contributions from young carers who would like to share their stories anonymously and perspectives from researchers and professionals working to understand and support young carers in policy, healthcare and education.

Most recently, we have created the first **National Young Caregiver Support List**, which is a centralised list of support, including resources specifically designed for young carers. This collection brings together national programmes, information hubs, resources available in each province and territory, and youth mental-health services. In addition, we created a **Young Caregiver Library**, which recommends podcasts, videos, toolkits, zines and books. Our website is the first digital space in Canada to bring together almost every relevant support for young carers.

### **What collaborations is the YCCC benefitting from?**

The YCCC collaborates with organisations, institutions, service professionals and

researchers on projects that are novel, meaningful and lead to actionable change for young carers. Some examples of our organisation and academic partners and collaborators can be found on our website. We have been fortunate to collaborate with incredible professionals and researchers, leading to presentations, webinars, co-created research projects, workshops and resources.

### How can people get involved with the YCCC?

We invite educators and young people to connect with us, share our message, and take action in your own communities. Explore our website to learn more about what we do, listen to young carers' stories, and join this growing movement to build a future where young carers feel safe, respected, informed, involved and supported.

Whether you are a young carer, organisation, service professional or researcher, we would love to hear from you! We are always open to new collaborations.

### What advice do you have for young carers?

Many young people may not see themselves as a carer, but if you support

**“ We are extremely proud of the community we have been able to build, the meaningful partnerships we have developed, and the important resources we have curated. ”**

someone in your life or have a close family member/friend that experiences challenges, you might be taking on care work without even knowing it. We encourage you to watch our **YCCC: A Window into Care** video to see how different young people describe their care work.

You have the wisdom to get through this. We see the work you are doing, and it matters. If you do not have access to support, please explore our website. If you are located in the UK, we recommend contacting Carers Trust for more localised support.

### What does the year ahead look like for the YCCC?

We are extremely proud of the community

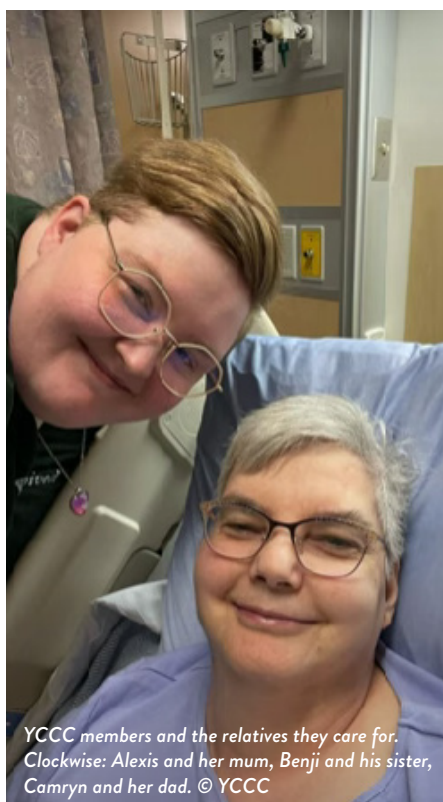
we have been able to build, the meaningful partnerships we have developed, and the important resources we have curated.

In the year ahead, we will continue to prioritise community and advocacy work by and for young carers. This year will focus on the YCCC's growth and some very exciting partnerships and projects. We are in the process of building our first YCCC project of 2026, featuring a series of digital arts-based workshops. Please stay connected by following us on Instagram and keeping up with our **Upcoming Events**.

<sup>i</sup>Stamatopoulos, V. (2018)

<sup>ii</sup>Lakman, Y., Chalmers, H. & Sexton, C. (2017)


<sup>iii</sup>Joseph, S., Sempik, J., Leu, A., & Becker, S. (2019); Norman, R. A. (2024)



YCCC members and the relatives they care for. Clockwise: Alexis and her mum, Benji and his sister, Camryn and her dad. © YCCC



### Connect with YCCC

 [youngcaregivercouncil.ca](https://youngcaregivercouncil.ca)

 meet the YCCC team:  
[youngcaregivercouncil.ca/about-us](https://youngcaregivercouncil.ca/about-us)

 [instagram.com/  
canadayoungcaregivers](https://www.instagram.com/canadayoungcaregivers)

 [youtube.com/  
watch?v=ifMZVMWWPh8&t](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifMZVMWWPh8&t)