

JANE/FINCH CENTRE



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*Jane &
Finch*

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

When Ontario went into lockdown on March 17, 2020, I thought things would be back to normal by June. Five months later, I've learned two things. One, COVID-19 will be causing problems for quite a while yet. Two, we don't want to go back to "normal."

COVID-19 showed us the meaning of "essential." Those who deliver packages, stock shelves, harvest food, tend to the sick and elderly - workers whose labour is demeaned as "low skill" and whose wages and hours are often suppressed. It was good PR to call them "heroes," and easier than paying them a living wage.

COVID-19 showed us governments spending to keep the economy from collapsing. It showed us the horrible human cost of spending cuts. During these uncertain times, we saw sustained protests which seem to have resonated in the corridors of power.



I believe there is an opportunity for social change like we've not seen in decades. The pandemic has exposed the flaws of "normal," and it has given us information we can use to push forward.

This is where the Jane/Finch Centre comes in. Its mandate is to provide residents with the services and tools they need to bring a positive change in their lives. Thanks to the leadership of Executive Director, Michelle Dagnino, the Centre is up to the challenge. Michelle's skills and foresight have made the Centre more efficient, more effective, and better prepared to face the post-pandemic landscape.

This marks the end of my Board term. It was a fulfilling experience, particularly my time as Chair. I look back fondly on my interactions with Michelle and the skilled and dedicated staff. I thank Board members, past and present, for their dedication and assistance. The Centre is a remarkable organization and I look forward to its future accomplishments.

- **Angelo Furlan**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT



In my almost 20 years of a professional career in the non-profit sector, I have never experienced a year like 2020. And while this annual report covers much of what happened prior to March 2020, I am writing this in the midst of the biggest crisis the Jane/Finch Centre has ever faced and can't ignore what the last 6 months has brought.

COVID-19 has brought to the light the **essentialness** of the Centre's work. We have been at the frontlines of a crisis of food security, economic precariousness, and mental health decline. As an agency that has built a 45 year reputation on its leadership in poverty reduction and community development, our decades of experiences in direct service allowed us to jump into service during this time.

We have distributed thousands of dollars worth of food hampers; moved our programming online; distributed laptops and tablets to families to keep them connected to school and communities; and maintained months of calls to residents to ensure that they were accessing needed resources and keeping safe.

We must also continue to challenge ourselves to be effective advocates for the people who rely on us, to not be afraid to speak truth to power, to admit to our own vulnerabilities, and to learn from our failures. We have much work to do still with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, to be genuine allies to the LGBTQ2SAA community, to stand in solidarity with precarious workers, to stand up against anti-Black racism and xenophobia.

“WE MUST ALSO CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE OURSELVES TO BE EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES FOR THE PEOPLE WHO RELY ON US, TO NOT BE AFRAID TO SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER, TO ADMIT TO OUR OWN VULNERABILITIES, AND TO LEARN FROM OUR FAILURES.”

I am proud to have been here for the past 7 years to have celebrated the success we have met as an agency, the synergy we have found within these walls, the barriers we have knocked down, and the opportunities we have built up. But more than that, this is about the success that we have witnessed in the lives of our residents and their families, and how we can continue to be an asset to the community and all of us who live and work here.

-Michelle Dagnino

MISSION STATEMENT

Jane/Finch Centre is a community based organization driven by passion, innovation and a strong commitment to social justice, community engagement and collaboration.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is a healthy Jane Finch community strong, inclusive, socially and politically active through diversity, opportunity and participation.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Our Vision will inspire and guide us towards the future that we seek to create with our communities. We have identified three strategic directions to support the resilience of our organization and positive change in the community:

1. Strengthening the capacity of our community to contribute to systemic social change
2. Reducing poverty and its effect on physical and mental health in our community, with an emphasis on youth, seniors and families
3. Enhancing the practices of our organization.

All three strategic directions contribute to achieving our vision of a healthy Jane/Finch community. They will enable JFC to continue to build on its strengths and be responsive to the needs and opportunities of our community partners.



Our **Financial Empowerment and Problem Solving** program (FEPS) expanded our service to meet community need from a variety of locations. We also broadened our ability to work with residents by using technology to serve clients who are not mobile. This has enabled us to continue to offer free year round tax filing for eligible residents as well as workshops and one to one support.

Tax time can be a very overwhelming task for many people, but for low income residents it is important to file as it can increase the money coming into their household. Through our work and the support of volunteers from the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program at Revenue Canada, we were able to put \$11.4 million dollars in benefits and credits back into the hands of Ontarians in a single tax season.

Advocacy is also an important part of our work. Almost a decade ago, we brought together community agencies and created the Black Creek Financial Action Network (BCFAN) to advocate for policy change on financial issues faced by low income residents. This year BCFAN held a symposium with members of the banking community to propose policy change in relation to banking fees. At the same time our FEPS program commenced a project that focused on dismantling barriers for youth with criminal records. Based on our research we were able to pilot an initiative that explored the intersection of financial literacy and access to employment. This work led us to develop a resource to support youth and push for change with employers on applicant screening processes.

“YOUR SERVICES ARE GREAT FOR PEOPLE LIKE MY SISTER AND AUNT WHO HAVE DISABILITIES AND UNDERLYING HEALTH ISSUES. YOU HAVE PUT THEIR MINDS AT EASE. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH FOR DOING AN AWESOME JOB.”
-LISA



The **Community Resource Centre (CRC)** continues to be committed to supporting and enabling individuals to access resources and build capacity. The administrative services provided by the CRC to residents, such as photocopying, printing, faxing, scanning, emailing, document vetting and interpretation, bridge a gap in the community where the cost of these services are often a barrier for residents.

We are also deeply committed to bridging the technology gap. This year we intensified our efforts in the Black Creek area to support local community members. Residents accessed our services to help strengthen the ways they were able to communicate with their family abroad and connect with social supports and external resources. Through our work and the development of partnerships, we have provided access to internet, one-on-one computer tutoring and 135 low cost computers.

We have also made significant investments in skills building for people who are ready to enter the workforce. Our work placement program provided students with an opportunity to practice and learn relevant administrative skills. Our staff shared their knowledge and insight and had the privilege of working with the next generation of skilled and diverse employees. For the 2019-2020 year, we were proud to offer placement opportunities to 11 students who logged over 900 work experience hours.

“MY WORK PLACEMENT AT THE CRC WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE THAT WENT BEYOND PRACTICING ROUTINE ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS. THE STAFF WERE CORDIAL AND PROFESSIONAL, AND EXERCISED TRUE CARE FOR THEIR CLIENTS. I RECOGNIZED HOW TRULY IMPORTANT THE WORK OF THE CENTRE WAS TO THE LIVES OF SO MANY PEOPLE.”

-KIM



The **EarlyON Centre** brought families and community together last year to provide children with the tools they need to succeed. Our program provided resources that are culturally reflective of Toronto's diverse communities and we offered our services in a variety of languages to ensure that families have content that is inclusive and relevant. Our Back to School and Holiday events provided us an opportunity to meet over 1300 persons in the community.

We were able to work with our partners to provide school supplies, backpacks, books and treats for children. We also identified a need to provide information and resources to equip parents to better support their children. We know that engaged parents are critical to student success and we were able to provide materials to support them to be partners in their children's education. These resources helped parents to move along the path to effectively and confidently engaging with the school system to support academic success.

The year saw our space and services expand to meet the capacity demand within the community. We began to offer our first ever virtual programs and we increased our service hours. In September our grand re-opening event provided an opportunity to share the new look of the EarlyON Centre as well as the enhanced services we provide. Our new space is larger, more accessible and has a hub of parenting resources.

**OUR BACK TO SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY
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COMMUNITY.**



The Unity in Diversity: Aging at Home **Seniors** programs continued to connect seniors with their community through programming that is culturally relevant. We work with agencies to provide participants with services and programs in a variety of languages and an understanding of their cultural contexts. Our work this year focused on fitness, technology and mental health. We engaged with the seniors to help develop an awareness of the ways that they can lead active and engaged lives. Through a series of sessions they were shown safe ways to exercise and keep their bodies moving.

They also had the opportunity to participate in art therapy classes. They enjoyed the challenge of creating art and we found that it promoted self-expression, helped to relieve depression and improved their physical/motor skills. Many of our seniors participated in our Building Connections: Communication Technology project. Through this initiative 61 seniors were equipped with the tools required to become proficient users of tablets, laptops, computers and smart phones.

Through collaboration we were able to offer programming in various community locations making it easier for seniors to access services. We worked with our partner organizations to hold 525 sessions throughout the community. We also reached out to seniors who are house bound and unable to come out to programs. These one-to-one telephone supports provided reassurance and lessened the feeling of isolation. We look forward to being an essential part of their lives.

OUR EVALUATION SURVEY INDICATED THAT 82% OF OUR PARTICIPANTS FELT THAT OUR PROGRAMS HAVE IMPROVED THEIR ABILITY TO SOCIALIZE AND BE ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY.



Community Mental

Health programs are an important resource to raise awareness about mental health issues for community residents. They provide a place where people can safely interact in social recreational programming. Over the course of the year we provided 280 social engagement activities in our various community programs. These activities enabled participants to maintain their quality of life.

Through the program, they engaged in fun activities that encouraged health living. We led Zumba classes outdoors and went into the community for educational trips where they learned about purchasing healthy items on a budget and how to prepare simple and nutritious meals. Many community education sessions were held on topics related to health and wellness. These sessions were designed to educate and motivate individuals to incorporate wellness into their daily activities. Through our interactions we were able to tailor sessions to meet identified needs and provide information, referrals and additional resources. Through the course of the year, 467 individuals attended these sessions and were able to learn ways to make simple changes to impact their daily experiences.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR WE PROVIDED 280 SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN OUR VARIOUS COMMUNITY PROGRAMS.

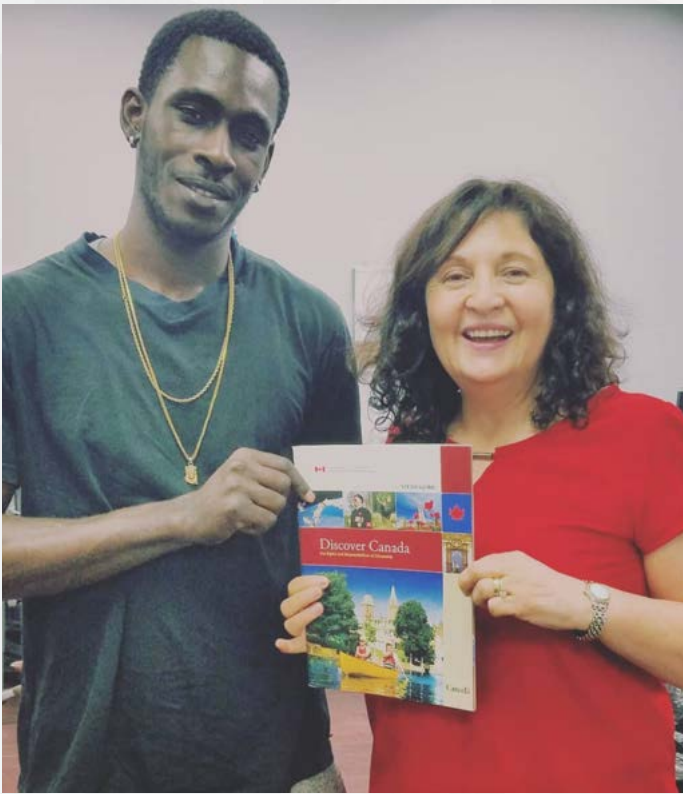


In 2019-2020, our **Community Development** team continued to work with residents, grassroots groups, and other partners to address various systemic issues in the community and advocate for social and economic justice. In total, we reached roughly 30,000 community members through our door-to-door and street outreach. We worked closely with Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAAP) to publish a resident-led report on temporary employment agency work in Jane-Finch.

“Permanently Temporary: Labour, Precarity and Resistance in Jane-Finch” is the result of over two years of community organizing and advocacy around temp agency work, including extensive street outreach, interviews with local workers, and a series of “Know Your Rights” workshops. The report documents the stories and challenges of community members who are working in insecure workplaces with little to no rights or benefits. It also includes a series of recommendations aimed at supporting temp agency workers and holding companies, temp agencies, and governments accountable.

With the Jane-Finch neighbourhood facing rapid growth and displacement, we launched Black Creek Fair Economies, a new two-year project aimed at influencing upcoming developments, ensuring community benefits, and improving economic opportunities. This year, we also responded to community emergencies, such as the massive fire at 235 Gosford Boulevard in November 2019, which impacted over 700 residents. Through our work we will continue to work with community input to shape the growth and change.

**IN TOTAL, WE REACHED ROUGHLY 30,000
COMMUNITY MEMBERS THROUGH OUR DOOR-TO-
DOOR AND STREET OUTREACH.**



This past year our North West **Settlement** Integration Services (SIS) has served over 1100 newcomers in our community and held roughly 200 group sessions. We have worked with our participants in navigating Canadian society, preparing for citizenship tests, gaining an education and finding meaningful employment. Our greatest successes have been supporting newcomers as they land their first job in Canada, graduate post-secondary institutions and become reunited with their families. This past year we also continued our many partnerships in the community. This has enabled us to reach residents who access a variety of different services.

We continued to provide English Conversations Circles at Westview Centennial Secondary School and Emery Collegiate. We also partnered with Working Women Community Centre to support members of the Assyrian community, and continue to partner with the Karen Community of Toronto. As a member of the Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership, we have been able to broaden the scope of our work through active membership on the Service Coordination Working Group.

An exciting endeavor we embarked on this past year, also included working with two community catalysts who were embedded in our agency and conducting research on our outreaching strategies to newcomer communities. This work was a part of the Community Catalyst Partnership with Jobstart. We are excited to implement the insight garnered from this project. In the next year, we will continue to be responsive to our newcomer communities needs especially as they navigate life within a pandemic.

THIS PAST YEAR OUR NORTH WEST SETTLEMENT INTEGRATION SERVICES (SIS) HAS SERVED OVER 1100 NEWCOMERS IN OUR COMMUNITY AND HELD ROUGHLY 200 GROUP SESSIONS.



This past year our **Youth** programs and services grew through new and exciting ventures. We received funding from the City of Toronto and launched a Violence Prevention Project within the Falstaff Community. Weekly, we provided skill-development and social-recreational workshops to youth in the community. These workshops are guided by the Falstaff Youth Council who meet weekly and discuss neighborhood concerns and programming ideas that could respond to the needs of local youth.

Youth also receive guidance from a case worker who supports them in discussing and coping with issues such as gun violence, bereavement and loss, substance misuse and mental health. We also continued to deliver workshops in both Jane and Finch and Kingsview Village through our Community Healing Project. These workshops were well attended by youth in both communities and our community giveback events continued our engagement efforts and recruitment of future cohorts of community healers.

The Spot Youth Centre continues to be a strong partner to community serving agencies. This year we hosted the More Life workshops series facilitated by For Youth Initiative as part of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy. We also worked with Heart-to-Heart to facilitate financial literacy and employment readiness trainings to youth looking for employment. Lastly, our Elevated Women Project was geared solely to black women this year allowing them to have a safe space to connect, learn, and develop tools and strategies specific to their needs. This was an indispensable opportunity for us to learn how to develop and facilitate programming through an anti-black racism lens.

IN THE NEXT YEAR, WE HOPE TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR YOUTH WITH STRONGER AWARENESS OF THEIR SHIFTING AND CHANGING NEEDS AND TO RESPOND TO THOSE NEEDS THROUGH CONSCIOUS AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING AND SERVICE DELIVERY.



In 2019 **Green Change** launched Corner Commons, a community-led project that aims to transform the Jane Finch Mall's parking lot into a new public space. The project will involve enhancing the parking lot through new seating, plantings, community art, and flexible spaces for neighbourhood programming. Corner Commons will also be a space to host important city planning discussions, as the Finch West LRT project brings development and displacement to the neighbourhood.

We hosted a weeklong pop-up in August to test different community ideas for Corner Commons and animating the parking lot. We installed temporary seating and plantings for community members to enjoy throughout the week and held three special events with a range of activities.

OVER 440 PEOPLE VISITED CORNER COMMONS DURING OUR POP-UP EVENTS. THEY DROPPED BY THE SPACE TO PLAY DOMINOES WITH FRIENDS AND STRANGERS, ACCESSED INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONS, WATCHED LIVE PERFORMANCES, AND SO MUCH MORE

Through Project BYLD, our new afterschool design/build program, young people also got involved by designing a photo booth for Corner Commons. Through this hands-on project and weekly workshops, over 50 students learned about architecture, urban planning, graphic design, and animation, while building their skills in design programs like SketchUp, Photoshop, and Illustrator. A more permanent installation of Corner Commons will take place in the summer of 2021.

Our Centre

The 2019 - 2020 fiscal year was a time of reflection for our organization as our strategic plan came to an end. We began a process of consultation with our stakeholders to help us identify ways to increase our impact and address the vulnerabilities that exist in our community. These intense months have also allowed us to reflect on the value of our services. To do this, we continue to review our practices to ensure that we are reflecting a passion that serves the needs of our residents, a presence to command the attention of key stakeholders, including Agency funders, and a purpose that inspires our clients, our staff and the community to push for more.

The accomplishments of this year can be added to a long line of achievements in the history of this organization:

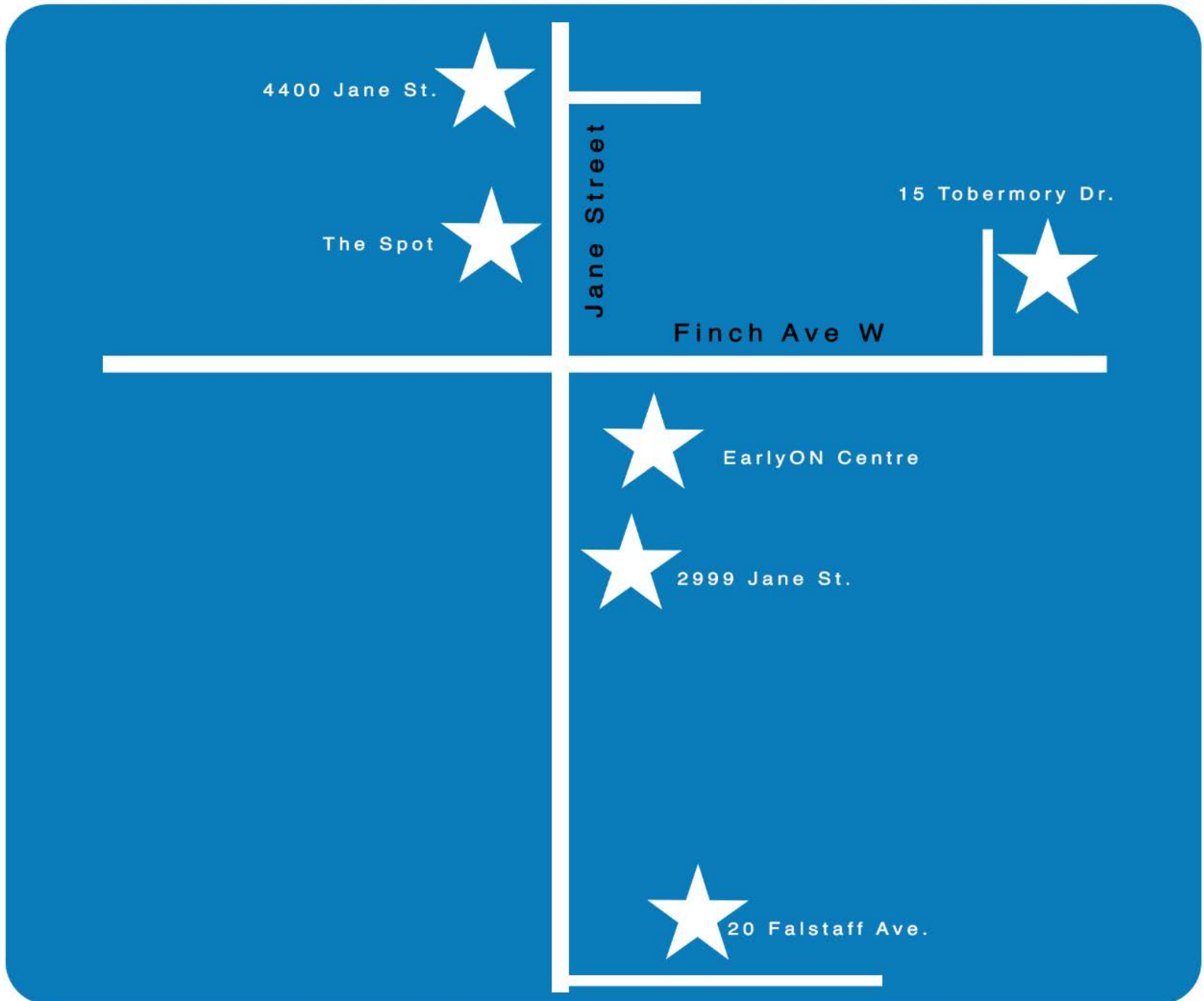
- **LONGEST STANDING MULTI-SERVICE AGENCY IN THE JANE/FINCH NEIGHBOURHOOD**
- **OVER 15 YEARS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS**
- **OVER 30 YEARS OF SOCIAL SKILL BUILDING AND SOCIAL GROUPS FOR CHILDREN, ADULTS AND SENIOR**
- **OVER 12 YEARS OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS**
- **OVER 30 YEARS OF DIRECT SUPPORTS FOR IMMIGRANTS COMING INTO THE BLACK CREEK AREA**

PARTNERS

Access Alliance
Across Boundaries
Agincourt Community Services Association
Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
Anderson College
Arts in the Parks 2019 (Edgeley Park)
BCFAN
Black Creek Community Farm
Black Creek Community Health Centre
Canadian Civil Liberties Association
Caribbean African Canadian Social Services (CAFCAN)
Catholic Children's Aid Society
Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples
Children Aid Society
Commonwealth Games of Canada
Community and Legal Aid Services Programme (CLASP)
Corner Commons
COTA
Early Abilities
Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women
Family Service of Toronto
For Youth Initiative Friends of Chinatown TO
Friends of Kensington Market
George Brown College
Heart and Stroke Foundation
Hospitality Workers Training Centre
Jane and Finch Boys & Girls Club
Jane Finch Community Legal Services
Jane Finch Community Ministry
Jane Finch Crisis Response Table
Jane Finch Ministries
Kids Upfront
Mothercraft
Neighbourhood Action Youth Employment Committee (NAYEC)

North York Community House
North York Harvest Food Bank
Northwood Neighbourhood Services
Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPRIG-York)
Park People
Parks, Forestry & Recreation, City of Toronto
PEACH
Planning Toolkit
Prosper Canada
Renewed Computer Technology
Ryerson University, Act2 Studio Works
San Romanoway Revitalization Association
Skills for Change
SportsWork
The Sick Kids Centre for Community Mental Health
The Working Centre
Toronto Community Benefits Network
Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Toronto District School Board
Toronto Neighbourhoods Centre
Toronto Public Health
Toronto Public Library
VIBE Arts for Children and Youth
West Neighbourhood House
York U LA+PS
York University
York University Faculty Association Community Projects
York-TD Community Engagement Centre
Youth Employment Strategies Project
Youth Violence Prevention Working Group-
City of Toronto - member

Our Locations



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