

MIDAYNTA COMMUNITY SERVICES

ONE PEOPLE | ONE VOICE | ONE COMMUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



Midaynta | A Canadian Charitable Organization established in 1993.



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Malcom Hassan Zoraik
Chairman, Board of Directors

Message from Chairman of Board of Directors

The fiscal year 2022/2023 has been marked by significant growth and progress for Midaynta Community Services. As an organization committed to fostering social and economic well-being in marginalized communities, we continued to advance our strategic initiatives, expand services, and work towards achieving our vision and mission. This report highlights the past year's achievements, programs, developments, and initiatives.

Midaynta's vision is to create thriving communities that support the holistic well-being of individuals across all aspects of their lives. During the past year, we remained committed to our strategic plan and the vision of building solid and empowered communities. Through collaboration with volunteers, staff, and the Board of Directors, we continued to develop and expand our services to meet the evolving needs of our diverse communities. Our engagement efforts remained a cornerstone of our success, promoting positive change and advocating for the rights of marginalized individuals. Volunteers continued to play an indispensable role in driving our programs and services. Their dedication and involvement in outreach efforts and program support have made a lasting impact on the community. Collaborations with other service organizations have further magnified the positive impact we collectively bring to the communities we serve.

The Board of Directors has proactively refined organizational policies to ensure streamlined operations and effective service delivery. This year's notable achievement focused on human resources (HR) policies, resulting in streamlined, understandable, and well-organized guidelines. Staff and Board members underwent training to familiarize themselves with these updated policies, fostering a cohesive and informed work environment.

Building on our success in previous years, we extended opportunities for youth empowerment in different ways. Thanks to the support of Service Canada, we provided employment and skills-building experiences to vulnerable youth during the summer. This initiative allowed them to contribute to various programs while gaining valuable knowledge and community connections.

In the past year, we have witnessed the introduction of several new programs aimed at addressing critical needs within our communities. Notable successes include: The Youth for Change (YFC) program provides access to counselling and support resources to the youth with substance use and mental health issues. Our Eviction Prevention in Community (EPIC) program helps with eviction and prevention of people with housing issues. Additionally, the launch of our Gender-Based Violence program demonstrated our dedication to addressing critical issues within the community.

Our commitment to excellence prompted us to enhance our program efficiency and visibility. We invested in expanding our social media presence and upgrading our website to engage with our community and stakeholders better. Additionally, we hired a consultant who specialized in developing program monitoring tools to improve program effectiveness further. This step enhances program efficiency and aligns with our ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality services.

As we enter the new fiscal year, Midaynta Community Services remains committed to advancing our mission and vision. We will continue to foster community well-being, empower marginalized youth, and provide culturally sensitive programs that create lasting positive impacts. With the unwavering dedication of our volunteers, staff, and Board of Directors, we are confident in our ability to drive positive change and promote social and economic well-being for all members of the communities we serve.

Message From Chairman



Mahad Yusuf
Executive Director

Message from The Executive Director

Message from Executive Director

As we reflect on the past year, it is evident that the journey has been one of both challenges and accomplishments. Despite various hurdles, our commitment to progress has propelled Midaynta Community Services forward. We now offer a range of programs, allowing participants to engage either in person, through a hybrid model, or entirely virtually for select projects. This adaptability has allowed us to serve our community effectively while looking ahead to a future of progress and growth.

Our accomplishments this year have been notable. We welcomed the inception of impactful initiatives such as the Youth for Change (YFC) and EPIC program. The launch of the Gender-Based Violence program further reinforced our dedication to addressing critical issues. Moreover, our Youth Mentorship program (YMP) achieved international expansion, amplifying our reach and impact. These efforts have increased our organizational capacity and addressed critical service gaps within the Black community. However, while celebrating these milestones, we remain aware that challenges persist.

Midaynta has successfully established and maintained connections with stakeholders across various platforms.

Our engagements with the Toronto Police Service Board and Toronto Police Services, alongside our participation in multiple FOCUS tables, underline our commitment to transparency, community safety, and inter-organizational collaboration. Despite the strides we have made, systemic racism, criminalization, violence, and poverty continue to affect the Black community. The organization's dedication to providing access to services without discrimination remains unwavering, and we acknowledge the urgent need to address these systemic issues.

As we look ahead, our focus focuses on the needs that have emerged over the past year. Expanding organizational capacity and developing resources for the community are paramount. Our commitment to program expansion and creating tailored projects aligns with our mission to address the evolving needs of the Black community.

None of our achievements would have been possible without the invaluable support of our partners and stakeholders. I sincerely thank the community, our funding partners, affiliate organizations, supporters, volunteers, and staff. Your unwavering dedication and collaboration have been the driving force behind our success, and together, we will continue to propel this vital work forward.

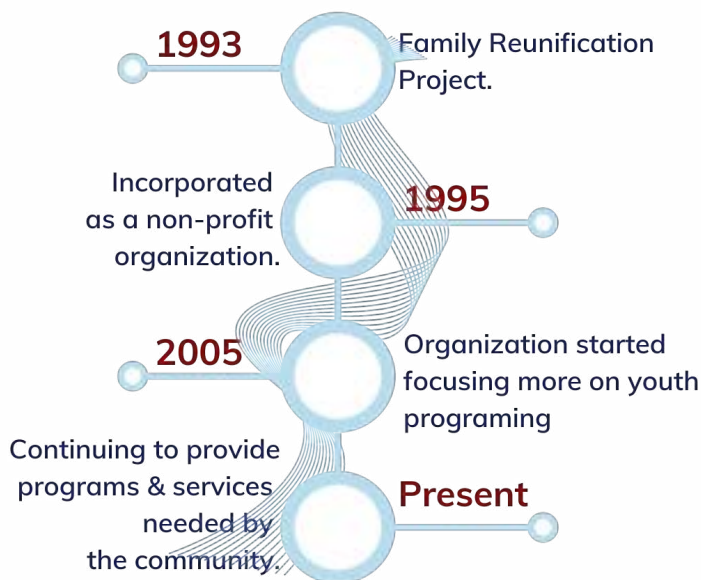


About Midaynta Community Services

“Midaynta has been committed for **over 30 years** to building **vibrant, socially integrated & united communities.**”

Midaynta Community Services is a registered Canadian charitable organization that provides settlement, housing, and youth services. The organization offers meetings, counselling and other support services for refugees, immigrants, and young people across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Midaynta was established in July 1993 as a family reunification project and incorporated in August 1995 as a non-profit organization committed to identifying and responding to the community's needs.

and Family Advocate Program and Project Turn-Around. These programs focus on supporting marginalized youth with mental health and connecting youth to resources such as counselling, employment, navigating the criminal justice system, anger management, gang prevention and intervention services, youth mentorship, stress management, conflict resolution skills, educational services (e.g., sexual health, drug and alcohol addictions, cultural and community) education, internship opportunities and parenting support services. Midaynta has dedicated the last 30 years to understanding and supporting the various structural needs of the Black community, particularly young people in the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). For instance, we have many years of experience delivering services to young people at risk or in conflict with the law through implementing our program 'Project Turn Around.' Project Turn Around is a gang prevention and intervention program which aims to serve Black youth ages 12- 20 who are at risk of or already involved in the criminal justice system. In further detail, most of the Black youth that Project Turn-Around works with are either on probation or at risk of gang involvement or committing a crime. This program is specifically tailored to providing support through case management, counselling, gang awareness education, employment support, cultural and community education, drug and alcohol addiction awareness, workshops, and ultimately supporting youth rehabilitation into a positive community setting. Most of these youth share risk factors that are deeply rooted in poverty, low education attainment, lack of opportunities, social alienation and exclusion. Issues of racism and discrimination are evident in most Black youth we work with across all our youth programs. Considering such problems, Midaynta employs culturally sensitive programs while working with different partners to address issues affecting Black youth and the Black community. Project Turn Around has expanded to include the Youth Justice and Gender-Based Violence programs.



We have been in service for 30 years. Midaynta currently has a team of 16 full-time staff and two part-time staff. In addition, through Service Canada Youth Jobs, we can hire 25 youth to support programming throughout the summer.

Midaynta offers a wide range of services to fit the community's needs. These services include immigration, settlement, counselling, case management, housing and homelessness support, and educational services such as courses and seminars. In addition to these services, Midaynta offers specialized support through programming such as the Youth Mentorship Program (YMP), Youth Outreach Worker Program (YOW), Enhanced Outreach Worker Program (EYOW), Student

Youth Outreach Worker Program

Youth Outreach Worker Program

The Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) program continued its mission to empower and support youth throughout 2022-2023. By equipping young individuals with the necessary tools and resources, the program aimed to guide them toward various education and employment pathways. This report highlights the achievements, challenges, and efforts made by the YOW team in delivering impactful services to the local youth community.

The YOW program remained dedicated to connecting youth with tailored resources and services, enabling them to achieve their goals. Throughout the year, the program incorporated various strategies, including group programs, individual support sessions, tutoring programs, resume and cover letter assistance, and referrals to essential resources and programs.

During this fiscal year, the YOW team witnessed a significant increase in youth seeking services. As COVID-19 restrictions continued to ease, the program anticipated continued growth in participation in its offerings. The YOWs recognized the importance of combining socialization opportunities with pursuing outlined program goals. Thus, initiatives were designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for youth to interact, enjoy activities, and work toward personal growth.

The post-pandemic landscape presented its share of challenges. The initial transition from lockdowns posed difficulties for many local youths, who required additional support and resources. The YOW team responded with adaptive outreach strategies, encompassing diverse communication methods such as phone, email, social media, workshops, and in-person meetings. This approach enabled the team to connect effectively with youth who preferred various modes of interaction. One notable challenge post-COVID was the rise of antisocial behaviour among youth, who had

grown accustomed to staying within their homes. The YOW team devised interactive workshops to re-engage youth with their communities to combat this trend. These workshops, designed to be educational and engaging, facilitated the rediscovery of social skills and the joy of in-person interactions. The program recognized the importance of addressing this issue to foster youth's sense of belonging and emotional well-being.

The YOW team introduced a range of workshops and events during the 2022-2023 period, each tailored to meet the unique needs of the local youth community. These workshops aimed to promote skill development, critical thinking, and exposure to new ideas. The transition back to in-person engagement positively affected the youth community. Through interactive workshops, the YOW program successfully addressed the challenges of post-COVID antisocial behaviour. Youth regained their confidence, social skills, and enthusiasm for engaging with peers. The workshops imparted practical skills and contributed to a sense of community and a renewed spirit of exploration.

Looking ahead, the YOW team remains committed to expanding its impact. The upcoming year will witness increased efforts in community outreach, school engagement, and in-person workshops. By focusing on these aspects, the program aims to empower local youth further, fostering personal growth and providing a foundation for success in education and employment.



Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker

The Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker (EYOW) program focuses on assisting high-risk, high-needs youth dealing with issues like mental health, addiction, trauma, and relationship violence. EYOW offers personalized, one-on-one support and brief counselling to Black youth aged 12 to 25. EYOWs collaborate with Youth Outreach Workers to identify black youth who need more intensive assistance and care. The EYOW program also assists the Mending Crack in the Sky (MCIS) initiative, a healing effort founded by Somali moms in response to youth violence in the Greater Toronto Area. MCIS seeks to address the high rates of male youth violence among Somali Canadians, which has exacerbated community trauma and conflict.

Success:

Youth to Youth Referral: A significant success of the program has been implementing a novel outreach strategy, where youth participants refer their peers to the program. This approach taps into existing peer relationships and has proven more effective in overcoming communication barriers.

Tabling and Community Engagement: Engaging youth through tabling at community events and gathering spaces has yielded positive results. This strategy allows for face-to-face interactions, enabling the program to reach a wider audience and establish a personal connection with potential participants.

Religious and Media Outreach: The program's success has been bolstered by outreach efforts through religious institutions and media channels. Leveraging these platforms has facilitated reaching a broader spectrum of youth, including those who might not be easily accessible through traditional means.

Family Reconnection and Personal Counseling: The Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker program achieved a significant milestone by facilitating the reconnection of a client with his father after a separation of 20 years. The program's personalized counselling and intervention played a pivotal role in this heartwarming success story.

Creation of Job Opportunities: An additional achievement of the program has been creating job opportuni-

ties for community members. By expanding its scope to serve youth and involve community members as outreach workers, the program has contributed to local employment opportunities.

Challenges :

Direct Communication Hurdles: The primary challenge faced by the Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker program was establishing effective direct communication with the youth. Engaging young individuals in meaningful conversations proved difficult, as various factors, such as hesitancy, mistrust, and communication barriers, hindered the outreach process. Gaining the trust of both the youth and the community was a recurring challenge. Many youths and their families were skeptical about the services' effectiveness. This lack of trust often led to a lower level of involvement in the program's activities and services

In summary, the Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker program has navigated communication, referral, and trust challenges to emerge victorious through innovative strategies such as peer referrals, tabling, and media outreach. The program's accomplishments extend beyond its core mission, fostering family reconnections and contributing to local employment. The ongoing commitment to addressing challenges and capitalizing on successful strategies underscores the program's value in positively impacting the lives of youth within the community.





Youth Mentorship Program

The Rites of Passage Youth Mentorship Program is a culturally relevant and responsive mentorship program that supports the positive development and success of African Canadian youth between the ages of 12 and 16 who reside in the Northwest Toronto area and encounter multiple barriers to success. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Rites of Passage Youth Mentorship Program has continuously strived to uplift young individuals by working with them on their self-esteem, self-respect, and community responsibilities. Through this program, mentors work with the youth in leadership, civic engagement, educational achievement, employment, and training. This is accomplished by establishing workshops and building connections with caring mentors who aim to support the youth in achieving and pursuing their goals in a safe and positive environment.

Youth Mentorship Program has had the opportunity to provide a youth sports program for Black girls called Play Again Girls Edition to remove barriers for marginalized and low-income families to allow them to participate in sports-related activities within their com-

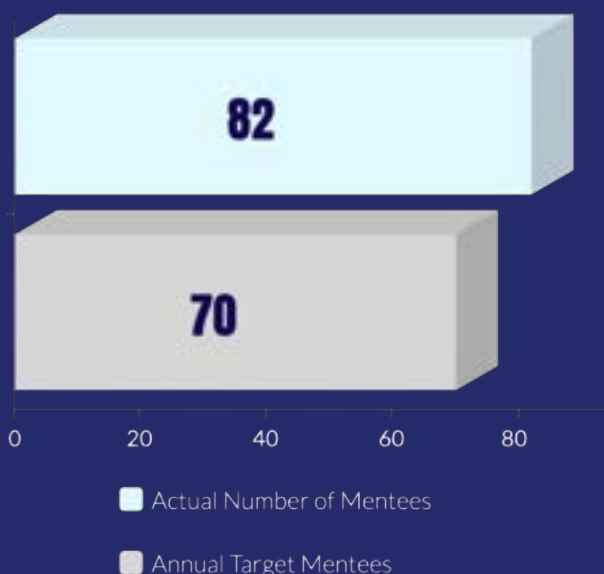
munities. The sports program allowed Black girls to stay active and engage in various sports, such as basketball and soccer while building their confidence and leadership skills to become active community leaders. Furthermore, through the YMP program, the mentees conducted several workshops in which they collaborated with their mentors in creating and presenting their presentations. These workshops enhanced the youth's research, leadership, and presentation skills. Some of the presentations given by the youth were on self-care, mental health, time management, and many more informative topics. A key highlight of this year for the Rites of Passage Program was The "Mentoring through Arts Workshop," which was a series of workshops that were designed to empower mentees to be able to express themselves and their feelings through their artwork, this workshop youth were able to engage in various forms of art activities from painting, drawing, writing, and many more creative activities. This workshop gave the youth transferable life skills to adapt to their daily lives, such as coping skills, self-discovery, and personal growth.

Another highlight of success was that we took several of our mentees and mentors to a Youth Summit hosted by the Toronto Raptors. This summit allowed our youth to share their voices with civic leaders to put forth their concerns and opinions to create safer communities as future leaders of tomorrow.

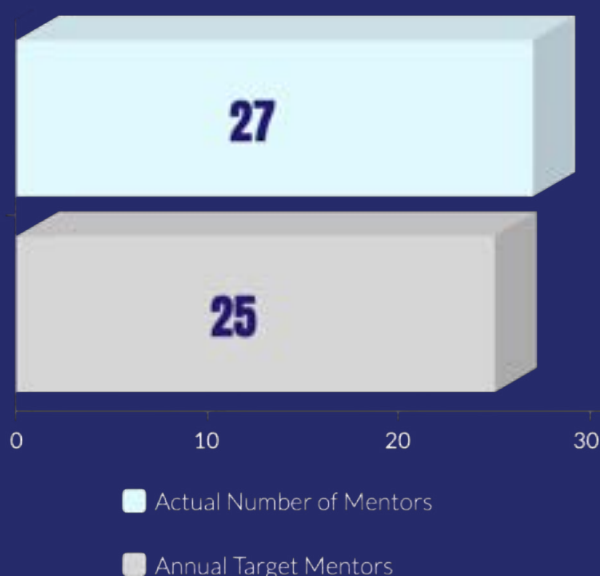
The need for the Youth Mentorship Program has increased with more referrals from community partners. Furthermore, the Rites of Passage Mentorship Program has had continuous collaboration with TDSB, facilitating in-school workshops for the youth and connecting with the youth in the schools through the school social workers and guidance counsellors. During this fiscal period, the Rites of Passage program surpassed its required annual target of 70 and 25 mentors by engaging 82 and 27 mentees through the program. One challenge we encountered with the program was a higher number of mentee enrollments compared to the number of mentors, resulting in our mentors serving more than one mentee. The program is actively working on various means of recruiting more mentors to provide mentorship support to our growing number of mentees.



Mentees



Mentors





Student and Family Advocate Program

The Student and Family Advocate Program for Black students (ages 6 -18) and families is committed to providing support within the education system to ensure that systemic barriers do not impede Black students' academic and social progress. In the current fiscal year, there was a success story through the SFA initiative where a student was bullied, and her safety was concerned. To resolve the conflict between students, the school advised them to keep their distance from each other, but this approach failed to address the underlying problem. Unfortunately, the situation only worsened for my client, causing her to skip classes and experience a decline in academic performance. Concerned for her daughter's mental well-being, her mother sought help from the SFA program. Upon speaking with the student, the coordinator discovered that she was being bullied by a group of nine other students, which was the reason for her reluctance to attend school. Following the discussion with the student, the SFA reached out to the school to address the situation.

During that time, the vice principal was replaced with a new one, and the vice principal needed to be made aware of the details of the situation. Unfortunately, this happens often as many of our Black students fall through the cracks because of a lack of support from teachers, social workers, and guidance counsellors. The issue can be a lack of systemic racism and a lack of resources in neighbourhoods that have a Black student population. To ensure the well-being of the client and student, the coordinator met with all the students and mediated with them. During that

time, the student could return to school and continue receiving one-on-one counselling through the SFA program. During one of the sessions, the student expressed that she wanted to graduate a year early and make that dream possible. After connecting her to tutors and career planning, she was able to make her dreams come true and graduate a year early. Despite her painful year, she could use the community resources and the SFA program to exceed expectations. As for the other nine students, seeing what they did in school was an eye-opening experience for their families. And they could intervene in their children's behaviour before someone was seriously hurt. The client's family was also relieved by the support that the student was receiving.

Culturally, the family believed they should always apologize and forgive regardless of the situation. This time, they saw what that was doing to their daughter and how the school was of no support. Through some sessions, they could understand the system their child was growing up in and how different it was from back home. A year early, the student graduating this year in November invited the SFA coordinator to her graduation, as a program that is one of our biggest successes during this reporting period. Through the relationship built with the new school principal this new year, he invited the student and family advocate coordinator to support the school and the students. After the pandemic, multiple students are facing hardship and need support adjusting to in-person learning. The cooperation of the schools is a step in the right direction for systemic change.



The SFA coordinator participated in the African Canadian Social Development Council's Confronting Anti-Black Racism and Islamophobia in the Ontario education system committee. The planning committee for the conference met every Friday to finalize speakers, vision, report, direction, and more for the program's success. The conference was focused on exploring Black Students' experience in high school and their transition to higher education in Ontario. We discussed ways to promote equity for Black students in Ontario's education system. This conference was influential because of the youth engagement, possibly due to the relationship developed by the student and family advocate coordinator. Many of the youth who participated were students who were suspended, got bullied or were at risk of dropping out. Having them participate in this discussion was not uplifting to see representation but to feel like they are not alone in their experience. This opportunity builds Black students' and family's ability to self-advocate, identify their needs, and respond effectively to barriers to success. They can connect to a more extensive network to combat systemic racism. In addition, they can develop and enhance the knowledge and skills they acquired through the program. During this year, SFA has seen many youths who refuse to attend school because of safety concerns—connecting with guidance counsellors for them to understand better the issues Black students face and using

a culturally appropriate lens to support the students before it becomes too late. The SFA program would benefit from collaborating with grassroots organizations that have lived experience and deal with youth at risk of becoming gang-involved.

Many trends we notice are truancy, lack of motivation in the future, and families trying to return to normal after the pandemic but feeling like it's impossible with the cost of living. Many schools want students to be responsible for their educational success, while they are not creating a supportive learning environment. There is much work to be done in the Ontario education system, and at times, it seems so big. For example, during a meeting with sector leaders from education to child welfare, a superintendent of Equity, Diversity, Indigenous education and community Relations at TCDSB was unmuted and used multiple derogatory terms in the middle of the meeting. The terms were said while my children surrounded him at the time. The reason why I mention this situation is because this is a system failure. The board is conducting an investigation. However, there is a lot to learn. The situation was eye-opening, traumatizing, and upsetting. I mention this because sometimes we don't know who is in the room with our Black families and students. This program allows us to fight for our Black students' success.



Youth For Change Program

This year, Midaynta was able to launch the Youth for Change Program (YFC), through the support and funding of Health Canada, to work towards addressing a significant challenge in the community: the crisis of youth substance abuse, addictions, and mental health. Post-COVID-19, Toronto saw a substantial increase in the statistics for youth undergoing challenges in substance use and mental health, and Midaynta saw the need for culturally relevant and responsive programming for Black youth facing these needs.

The Youth for Change (YFC) Program was then launched to help Black youths aged 15-29 deal with substance use and mental health challenges through educational workshops and resources, focus groups, and one-on-one counselling. The program continues to work to reduce accessibility barriers to mental health and substance use services for Black youth and their families. The YFC Program officially launched at Midaynta's 30th Annual General Meeting on November 23rd, 2023.

At the program's start, we aimed to reach out to the youth to inform them of these new resources. After the launch, we began the first series of workshops to educate the youth about mental health, mental illness, substance use and addiction. Over the past year, we partnered with many organizations to come in and facilitate workshops on harm reduction and mental health. We also provided information sessions for parents about the program, mental health and substance use as we realized that the stigma behind having these critical conversations was blocking connections and support between parents and youth.

Youth who identify as Black share risk factors that are deeply rooted in structural racism, poverty, low education attainment, lack of opportunities, social alienation, youth violence, and radicalization and exclusion. The program works to increase access to culturally appropriate addiction services, awareness and knowledge about substance use and addiction concerns, and reduce the stigma associated with substance use and poor mental health.



While launching the program, there were some challenges regarding the lack of knowledge and resources the Black community has regarding substance use and addictions, including the stigma the community has around having these conversations in the first place. The stigma around the use of substances and mental illnesses, labelling a person a “drug addict” or “crazy,” and fear of being known as someone who uses substances or someone who has a mental illness. One of the goals of this program was to increase access while reducing the stigma around mental health and substance use. Initially, getting referrals for one-on-one counselling was challenging as this project had no referral streams. As we increased outreach, the program began receiving client referrals through connections made in the community and the schools we worked in.

We worked towards overcoming these challenges by creating resources and facilitating several workshops completed with a focus on mental health, mental illness, addiction, substance use and art. The YFC program has received several client referrals for the one-on-one counselling portion of the project.

One major success of the program was the social media campaign launched through the YFC program to reach youth through more accessible platforms. Tips and resources were continually shared through the campaign to give youth another way to access helpful and informative resources.

Another major success of the program was that it held its first Art Exhibition on March 31st, 2023. The Art Exhibition was where the youth participants from the workshops presented and showcased what they had learned from the workshops via an artistic outlet. The Art Exhibition successfully demonstrated the youth’s artwork and knowledge. The art showcased was a mixture of paintings, essays and spoken words.

Over the next year, we look forward to taking the Youth for Change Program to the next level, continuing to build connections with other organizations, youth and families to support and uplift Black youth in our community.



Project Turn Around

Project Turn Around is a gang prevention and intervention program which aims to serve Black youth ages 12- 24 who are at risk of or already involved in the criminal justice system. In further detail, most of the Black youth that Project Turn-Around works with are either on probation or at risk of gang involvement or committing a crime.

This program is specifically tailored to providing support through case management, counselling, gang awareness education, employment support, cultural and community education, drug and alcohol addiction awareness, workshops, and ultimately supporting youth rehabilitation into a positive community setting. Most of these youth share risk factors that are deeply rooted in poverty, low education attainment, lack of opportunities, social alienation and exclusion. Issues of racism and discrimination are evident in most Black youth we work with across all our youth programs. Considering such problems, Midaynta employs culturally sensitive programs while working with different partners to address issues affecting Black youth and the Black community.

Over the last year, our team continued to serve and support the community through educational workshops, community outreach, awareness campaigns, and collaborative partnerships. We conducted workshops and one-on-one counselling throughout the year, covering violence prevention, conflict resolution, communication skills, anger management, and peer pressure. The team has also seen the upsurge of families/youth in need of extra mental health support in the community. We use our connections to various mental health agencies to refer clients needing the services.



Our team engaged with the local communities and other community service agencies through various cluster tables, FOCUS Toronto tables, open forums, and public events. These meetings have been integral in allowing both community agencies and partnerships to have access to organizations that work with a diverse clientele (Black, Muslim, racialized) who provide service delivery through a trauma-informed and holistic lens. We managed to plead extra resources/intervention needs for our clients in dire circumstances. We have also been supportive in picking up clients that require specific language (Somali) or other cultural needs that Midaynta may have access to. These interactions have also facilitated open conversations about current challenges the community is facing, their root causes, and strategies for prevention and intervention.

We continue to use social media to raise awareness, challenge societal norms, and promote alternatives to violence. Our partnerships with local schools, community agencies, law enforcement agencies, and healthcare providers have allowed us to broaden our reach, share resources, and implement comprehensive strategies for violence prevention.

However, despite the program's success, limited resources posed challenges in expanding our activities and providing sufficient support to the community to cover the service gap. To overcome these limitations, we will continue using social media to post educational materials and videos for violence prevention.

Family Support Counsellor



The family support counsellor worked very closely with PTA caseworkers and MCIS mothers to provide comprehensive support, guidance, and assistance to families facing violence and other challenges, thereby promoting healthy family dynamics and overall well-being. The counsellor uses a holistic approach and provides trauma-informed and culturally appropriate support. Also, the counsellor promotes Social Work principles of Anti-racism, Anti-discrimination and strength-based approach. The counsellor was also very instrumental in making the MCIS's "Healing Network Circle" project successful by supporting workshops, facilitation and one-on-one counselling.

The Family Support Counsellor has continued to play a vital role in "Project Turn Around" by strengthening families' well-being through targeted interventions, counselling, and community engagement. Despite challenges, the program has positively impacted families' lives, fostered healthier dynamics and equipped them with the tools to navigate future challenges. Looking ahead, the program remains committed to adapting and evolving to serve better the diverse needs of the families it supports.



Gender-Based Violence Program

Gender-Based Violence Program (GBV) is culturally relevant prevention/intervention programming to justice-involved male youth (12-20 years) in Northwest Toronto who have committed or are alleged to have committed GBV-related offences or are identified as at-risk of offending and self-identify as Black or African Canadian. We successfully re-designed our 16-week program into a more concise 12-week GBV curriculum. The curriculum was cultivated to ensure youth voices and reflections are fostered in each segment in the delivery of the curriculum. Another achievement the program experienced was the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive research study, which allowed for feedback. Therefore, the program obtained insights from youth and community members on their understanding of GBV and its impact on their community.

We established partnerships with Black-led, Black-servicing, Black-focused organizations that facilitated several GBV workshops and information sessions for youth and families. This collaborative platform created a positive atmosphere to tackle complex topics within a GBV lens. Many youths have expressed the importance of having culturally sensitive programming which promotes dialogue and connectivity.

The program Coordinator has connected with probation officers, schools, Community Safety Tables, Focus Tables, Domestic Violence Advisory Committees, Focus Situation Tables, City Cluster Tables, Crisis Response Tables and Neighbourhood Community Officers Tables to raise awareness of the GBV program further and increase the number of youth referrals. We partnered with Weston University and participated in their HRP community of Practice meetings. This space has enabled us to collaborate with other stakeholders and partners who have supported and guided us in developing and designing our GBV curriculum.

The formation of Community of Practice Meetings (CoP) with three other community-based organizations delivering GBV programming. This further enhanced support for shared learning and practices, allowing us to disseminate research, best practices, resources, and training opportunities. This platform also allowed us to involve other practitioners at the table and guide meaningful discussions on GBV. EmpowerMENT was chosen as the official name for the program curriculum, and the GBV case worker has been facilitating workshops based on the EmpowerMENT curriculum for the middle school cohort at

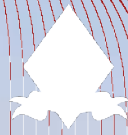
Greenholme Junior Middle School. They also facilitated workshops at West Humber Collegiate Institute and for incarcerated youth at Roy McMurtry Youth Centre.

Some challenges we face include the connection with probation needing to be re-established to ensure better referral pathways—the stigma of GBV within the demographic we serve. A lot of the topics surrounding GBV, unfortunately, are taboo in our community, which has been a hurdle that we are trying to clear as we work to increase awareness about GBV. Some agencies, schools, and organizations have questioned why the program is explicitly targeted toward males when GBV is usually an issue that primarily impacts females. During the fiscal year, this program has faced a high volume of clients and demands due to the need in the Black community. Another challenge we noticed within the program is the ratio of males versus females who seek support. Although females are more disproportionately affected by GBV compared to their counterparts, the males who are involved seem to be less likely to seek support due to patriarchy and societal norms. These pre-existing gender inequalities and regressive gender norms continue to be a challenge in addressing GBV-related topics.

In the future, we intend to facilitate the EmpowerMENT curriculum in more schools, specifically with a high school cohort, and implement programming explicitly aimed at Black female youth in our community. There are not many programs in the Northwest that target this demographic, and the ones that do tend to be intervention-based programming instead of prevention-based. Lastly, we are working on short informational videos for social media to help promote and educate the community about the GBV program.



EmpowerMENT curriculum for the middle school cohort at Greenholme Junior Middle School.





Youth Justice Program

The Youth Justice program is a culturally relevant program that serves Black youth ages 12-17 who live in the Neighborhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). The program supports youth completing their Extra Judicial Measures, and Extra Judicial Sanctions to ensure young persons get their charges dropped while restoring harm done to the community and victims impacted. The program employs holistic, trauma and strength-based approaches that aim to divert Black youth from further criminalization and address their underlying needs. Youth who usually enter the YJ program display multiple risk factors associated with criminal behaviour, such as substance abuse, limited academic engagement, truancy, and early contact with the justice system. Youth with risky profiles often do not have singular causation but a multitude of complexities, such as mental health, unstable housing, poor parental supervision, low literacy rates, and low academic achievement.

Services provided include intensive case management, advocacy support, system navigation/legal supports, court attendance supports, individualized service plans, education and employment supports, access to workshops and seminars and referrals to in-house or external community resources. Service provision continues to be flexible; we offer case management virtually and in person.

The Youth Justice case worker also ensures that families of the young person they serve receive access to wrap-around and family counselling services if permitted. Black families are over-represented in the

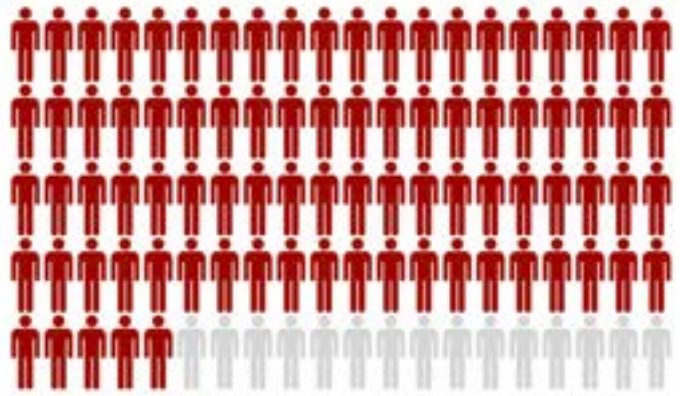
criminal justice system; therefore, families must receive support to combat Anti-black frameworks within system navigation.

2022/2023 was the second year for the Youth Justice Program at Midaynta Community Services. One of the mandates for the program is to ensure its delivery upholds holistic and trauma-informed principles. Many black families have expressed that they have experienced adversarial treatment in navigating the judicial system. Therefore, all families and youth receiving services must be treated with dignity and professional courtesy. All youth referrals receive a tailored case-management plan based on the needs of the youth. Most youth mandated to complete sanctions through our YJ program have completed measures successfully.

In addition, the program adopts creative ways to foster youth engagement through partnerships with Toronto Police Services. We host 'Know your Rights' and 'Game Night' along with the mothers of Mending the Crack in the Sky mothers' program, who also support youth and families in gaining access to programs within the community. The program also fosters leadership incentives through Midaynta's Youth Advisory Panel—a platform for young individuals to engage in community civic engagement. The committee encourages a participatory approach to promoting and teaching decision-making processes, cultivating healthy autonomy, and promoting decision-making processes relevant to youth.

85%

This is the percentage of how many youth in the YJ program caseload are at risk for the School to Prison Pipeline.



Midaynta continues to work with stakeholders such as the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre, whereby Project Turn Around the team, which encompasses the youth justice caseworkers, conducts our annual Black History Month presentations. This year's theme was 'Dreams to Destiny.' We wanted to encourage youth to remain resilient, although they may experience adversity. Our discussion with the youth centred on educating them about Black Canadian accomplishments. We discussed and promoted resiliency within Black Canadians who also overcame their grievances. We reminded youth of the importance of perseverance and hard work in realizing one's potential and achieving one's dreams.

The program continues to receive multiple referrals from multiple channels such as Focus Tables, Toronto Police Service, Children Aid Society of Toronto, Toronto District School Board, Probation Officers (West Region), and Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.



The school-to-prison pipeline is a harsh reality when it pertains to 85 percent of the YJ (Youth Justice) caseload. A sad reality is that black youth are over-policed and disproportionately criminalized for offences in schools over their white counterparts, who receive less adversarial punishments, as per stats. The program continues to see more extra judicial measures with a lower severity threshold versus referrals for additional judicial sanctions reserved for more severe offences. Nevertheless, I believe more youth charges are avoidable if parents are more in tune with the needs of the youth. Most youths lack emotional regulation skills and need to be equipped with the proper skill set that may defuse them from making irrational decisions, thus funnelling them into the criminal justice system.

As the program moves forward, significant work has been done to increase the program's visibility, serve more youth and increase prevention work. Meaningful connections were made with probation managers, youth-serving agencies and programs to ensure more collaborative work can be done with other black-serving agencies doing similar work. Another highlight this year was signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Muslim Legal Support Centre (MSLC) to provide legal support with advocacy, legal advice/consultations, and legal knowledge to families and youth.

Eviction Prevention In Community

Midaynta is pleased to announce receiving funding from the City of Toronto- The Housing Secretariat to initiate the Eviction Prevention in Community (EPIC) Program in October 2022. The Midaynta EPIC project is committed to adopting a Housing First approach, aligning its objectives with the Housing TO 2020-2030 Action Plan's primary goal of reducing homelessness through an intensified focus on prevention and diversion. Utilizing our wraparound services and employing holistic, trauma-informed client management activities, we aim to connect individuals experiencing homelessness to housing and necessary support.

The project also focuses on developing strategies and programs tailored to the Black Community, ultimately enhancing service quality and impact through continuous performance management. Midaynta's Eviction Prevention programs provide crucial support to tenants at risk of homelessness by offering immediate, short-term assistance to sustain their tenancies. This unique project incorporates wraparound eviction prevention services to aid tenants facing imminent eviction risks. Notably, Midaynta distinguishes itself as a B3 organization (Black-focused, Black-led, and Black-serving), playing a critical role in addressing homelessness within vulnerable members of Black communities who face multiple barriers.

These initiatives collaborate directly with housing providers and other relevant service entities, such as the Landlord and Tenant Board and income maintenance programs, employing a Housing First approach in service delivery.

Homelessness Prevention Services:

Our Homelessness Prevention Services department provides holistic and client-centred case management to individuals and households at risk of homelessness. Our comprehensive approach aims to stabilize housing situations, address underlying issues, and facilitate access to necessary resources, aiming to foster greater independence and sustained long-term housing stability.

The Midaynta EPIC project has successfully prevented evictions through educational support and financial literacy training. The project has also forged relationships with landlords to enhance negotiation and prevent evictions, utilizing an anti-Black lens to identify issues related to landlords and service gaps. In-house programs and organizational partnerships have facilitated clients' connection to needed services.

Staff encounter barriers like insufficient funding and limited resources to serve the entire Black community in Toronto. Some clients re-enter arrears despite support due to unforeseen circumstances. The project recommends more cultural support programming/services, mental health and addiction resources, financial literacy training and support, and a trauma-informed approach to address these issues. A trauma-informed approach is crucial for landlords and related staff to ensure tenants are not re-traumatized. Recognizing that anti-Black racism is violence and violence is traumatic, the project emphasizes the importance of safe spaces for Black communities, considering unique cultural and racial circumstances in rehousing. Additionally, rehousing should consider proximity to tenant support and resources.

Key Project Metrics:

Midaynta aims to provide 60-100 clients with Eviction Prevention Services annually.

This project also advocates for collecting and sharing race-based data to inform policies and structural changes at all levels of government, emphasizing Midaynta's commitment to addressing homelessness in racialized communities.

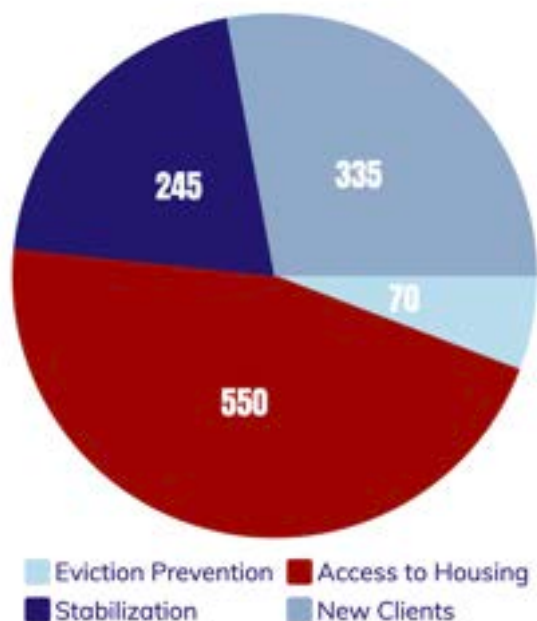
In summary, Midaynta's Eviction Prevention in Community (EPIC) Program is a pivotal initiative that addresses eviction risks and homelessness in Black communities through a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed approach.



Housing and Homelessness Program

In the housing help project, the manager and her team worked with low-income individuals and families who faced many obstacles in finding and maintaining appropriate and affordable housing. They continue striving to strengthen the delivery of efficient and effective services that meet our client's varied and unique needs. While we were actively willing to serve anyone and everyone who needed the service, the program's main emphasis was to provide culturally appropriate support to prevent homelessness in the Somali Community. These services include housing access and maintaining affordable housing, information, referral, eviction prevention, housing stabilization and counselling, and empowering clients and peer-support initiatives.

1200 Individuals received support from the Housing program



To provide high-quality support to clients, we worked in collaboration with several other service providers, including Toronto Community Housing Corporation, which provides social housing, as well as Access to Housing/Housing Connections, which oversees the central waitlist process while also providing educational workshops for housing help centres like Midaynta. Housing project outreach efforts have increased this year by establishing better working relationships with various Community Legal Clinics, which provide conflict resolution and eviction prevention support for tenants facing housing challenges.

Midaynta is also an active member of Landlord Connect, which provides our clients with vacancy listings for affordable private market units and training. The housing program has also conducted various educational workshops, which help ensure that our clients are well-informed about their rights and responsibilities as tenants. We will establish more beneficial partnerships and collaborate with other service providers to better support our clients. One thousand two hundred individuals receive housing support from the housing program, 70 eviction prevention, Access to housing 550, 245 Stabilization, New clients 335. We have seen more clients needing Canada Ontario benefits and rent bank. Many people lost their jobs and struggled to pay the rent and feed their children.





“if people come together,
they can even mend a
crack in the sky.”



Anti-Racism Action Plan (ARAP)

Mending A Crack In The Sky - MCIS

The Anti-Racism Action Program (ARAP) tackled the barrier of policy issues regarding law enforcement and institutional racism by collaborating with the Toronto Police Services Board to determine how the Toronto Police Services Board can provide better services and support to the Somali community, including improving transparency, building trust and enhancing community safety.

Mending a Crack in the Sky (MCIS) is a dynamic program comprised of a dedicated group of mothers passionate about creating safe spaces for the community to heal, mobilize, advocate, and navigate relevant systems. The group is inspired by a Somali proverb: “If people come together, they can even mend a crack in the sky.”

Over the past year, the MCIS program has continued its work by building on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formed with the Toronto Service Police Board (TPSB) by focusing on increasing safety in the community through meetings with officers from six divisions across Toronto, including Divisions 12, 13, 22, 23, 31, and 32. Through these meetings, members of the MCIS program have built trust between the

community members and officers, increasing engagement by holding community events and roundtables, sharing resources, and attending each other’s events.

MCIS continued to hold weekly community safety meetings every Saturday, allowing community members to join an open floor discussion where community safety, community updates and resources are shared. The mothers of MCIS have also continued to attend roundtables, open houses, and community events to work with the community and build rapport with racialized and minority families.

This year, the members’ hard work at MCIS led to them being recognized by the mayor’s office and awarded the mayor’s 2021 Community Safety Award. This award continues to motivate the mothers of MCIS to continue their hard work and dedication to supporting members of the community through peer-led trauma counselling and healing.

Next year, MCIS hopes to continue building on this work and creating more opportunities to increase workshops and training for families in the community.



Healing Network

The Healing Network Circle is a project funded by the Centre for Research and Innovation for Black Survivors of Homicide Victims (CRIB). The project consisted of a series of workshops for MCIS mothers that focused on healing together as a community. The circle created a safe space for mothers affected by violence to recover together, seeking strength from one another. The network facilitated healing by providing weekly presentation learning series and one-on-one counselling.

The official project concluded last year, as the funding was for one year. However, MCIS mothers continue their weekly healing sessions at the Keele St. Hub. These sessions have allowed the mothers to continue making connections, not just to each other, but to expand to more stakeholders and partners. The connections will benefit the target population in accessing different services and allow them to share their stories with the greater public. We also continue to share information on social media platforms to keep the public informed of the challenges survivors of homicide go through, as well as highlight our attempts to address and combat those challenges.

The project has successfully created a safe space for healing for many families. Mothers who could not seek support now have a space to go to. Moreover, this has enabled them to increase their social support. In addition, MCIS has now developed a relationship and expanded its network to provide wrap-around services in advocacy, employment, mental health support, and others for its members. Some of the program's success has been in making services accessible to community members. The focus of the presentations has been to utilize a preventative and intervention-based approach to address the concerns faced by the community. Lastly, many MCIS members have used this space to seek referrals for needed services over many years.

In conclusion, this program's funding conclusion is not an endpoint but a springboard propelling us toward greater heights. The connections forged within our team and with external stakeholders have been invaluable. Collaborative efforts, diverse perspectives, and the exchange of ideas have elevated the quality of our work and enriched our personal growth. The bonds we've cultivated extend beyond the program's confines and will hopefully serve as a foundation for future collaborations and partnerships.



Future Leaders' Camp



This year's Midaynta Future Leaders Youth Camp began under the leadership and supervision of the Midaynta Youth Outreach Workers (YOWs) during the March Break season, where 20 youths were welcomed to take part in an exciting and empowering week of activities, sports, and community engagement. Over the week, the youth had the opportunity to build peer connections and engage in community activities, like badminton, with our kind Neighborhood Community Officers and nature walks around the area.


The next part of the Future Leaders Youth Camp took place over six weeks in the summer months. Staff were joined by a fantastic Focus on Youth

summer student placements team from the Toronto District School Board, who supported the camp and its youth participants.

The primary purpose of the summer camp was to create a joyful and safe environment where kids aged 7 to 12 could engage in fun activities while developing their interpersonal skills. The camp welcomed 25 youth participants this year and was hosted at Kipling Collegiate Institute. The program provided the kids with the chance to deepen their understanding of the city through excursions, in addition to fostering their social skills.

Future Leaders' Camp | Summer + March Break





The Future Leaders Summer Camp ran for six event-packed weeks, culminating with a small celebration for the kids on the last day. A small party was held the previous day at Kipling Collegiate Institute to celebrate and provide a special day for the campers. Goodie bags, cake, and pizza were distributed to the campers.

Throughout six weeks, the campers had many experiences for fun play and socialization. The first week was the opening week of the camp for the kids to familiarize themselves with each other and the staff. During this week, most activities occurred indoors, with the campers playing many games such as basketball, soccer, bench ball, dodgeball, card games, and different arts and crafts activities. The purpose of these activities was to help enhance their ability to connect with others and increase their social confidence.

The second week commenced with the campers attending the Cineplex movie theatre to watch Elemental. Although it's a kid's fantasy movie, it served as a symbolic representation to educate children and other audiences about prejudice, racial divide and the immigrant experience. The importance of sensitivity to others' cultural/racial origin, upbringing, and status is a prominent additional theme. The movie touched on many topics that our campers could relate to, as most are from immigrant, minority or marginalized backgrounds.

They also enjoyed outdoor and indoor activities such as playing at the park, dodgeball, crafting bracelets, and playing board games. For the third week, the kids worked on teamwork and communication skills by playing organized sports in teams such as basketball and soccer. The campers also started swimming and water activities every week, from having fun in local city pools and city park splash pads. I also went to the park playground and enjoyed activities such as playing tag and red-light green-light. During weeks 3 and 4, the campers were visited by Neighborhood Community Officers who engaged them in fun activities such as professional tennis training, bridge ball and

dodgeball. Officers and children participate in healthy social activities, fostering lasting connections and developing a shared respect and understanding that benefits the community. At the end of their visits, as an appreciation reward, the youth campers received coupons for a free slushy.

During the third week of camp, the kids went on a field trip to Riverdale Farm, a working farm in Toronto. The campers got to experience farm life by learning what it takes to care for livestock. The metropolitan lifestyle limits their ability to take in nature in its natural state. It was intended for the campers to become accustomed to spending time in a natural environment and learn fundamental concepts such as where their food originates from and how the life cycle works.

As with the previous weeks, the fourth week included swimming, sports, and park visits, concluding with a trip to the Ontario Science Centre. The campers had a fantastic experience exploring many exhibitions, including the Weston Family Innovation Centre. They explored innovations and problem-solving challenges. Another exhibition was the AstraZeneca Human Edge, exploring all the wonders and possibilities of the human body with intriguing, hands-on exhibits. Through various fields, including neuroscience, physiology, and biomechanics, the kids had insightful experiences about their remarkable human bodies. The kids spent the fifth week swimming and crafting posters with fellow campers.

The last and final sixth week was the most eventful for the campers. Week six started with a book reading by a young student author who wrote and illustrated a children's book based on the water cycle. It was a fun and engaging way for the campers to discover the water cycle process and new and interactive scientific facts. The campers finished the summer camp with a last day of celebration after their exciting trip to Sky Zone, ending this year's Future Leaders Youth Camp. We look forward to extending this successful program through next year's edition!



Somali Heritage Games

The Somali Heritage Games is an intensive annual summer sports program developed by Midaynta Community Services to celebrate Somali-Canadians and their Somali heritage, empower Somali youth through educational workshops, and promote civic engagement within the Somali community. The program combines sports and education while providing a platform for discussing pressing community issues and an opportunity for youth to gain transferable life skills, understand accountability, and develop a strong work ethic. As the Somali community in Canada continues to face multiple barriers and challenges, including high rates of youth violence, increased school drop-outs, and socio-economic challenges, a program like this helps empower Somali youth, teaching them the richness of their Somali heritage to develop positive

identities and engage them in physical activity to disrupt them from taking wrong paths. In addition, it allows youth to gain intercultural understanding and knowledge of their heritage, breaking social and cultural barriers that deter youth from full participation in their communities.

We organize games and workshops for youth every year, incorporating different activities and events to enhance their experience. Sports games include basketball and soccer for both girls and boys. We aim to ensure youth are occupied and engaged in physical activity when not in school and continue to find creative ways to include different sports and introduce them to other sports.



Somali Heritage Games



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Summer Students

Hajjra Abdulle
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Ahlan Hersi
Awad Hassan
Deqa Fatima Abdillahi
Abdullahi Abshir
Sumaya Hassan
Sagal Muhidin
Ahmed Amar Abdulrahman

Mowlid Kulmiye
Abdullahi Osman
Muna Ahmed
Nima Mohamud Gafow
Mariam Mahamed Said
Amiira Yusuf
Yahya Mohamed
Abdiqadir Ismail
Amina Ali

Ali Ahmed
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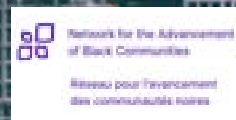
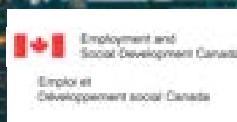
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The Centre for Research & Innovations for Black Survivors of Homicide Victims (CRIB)

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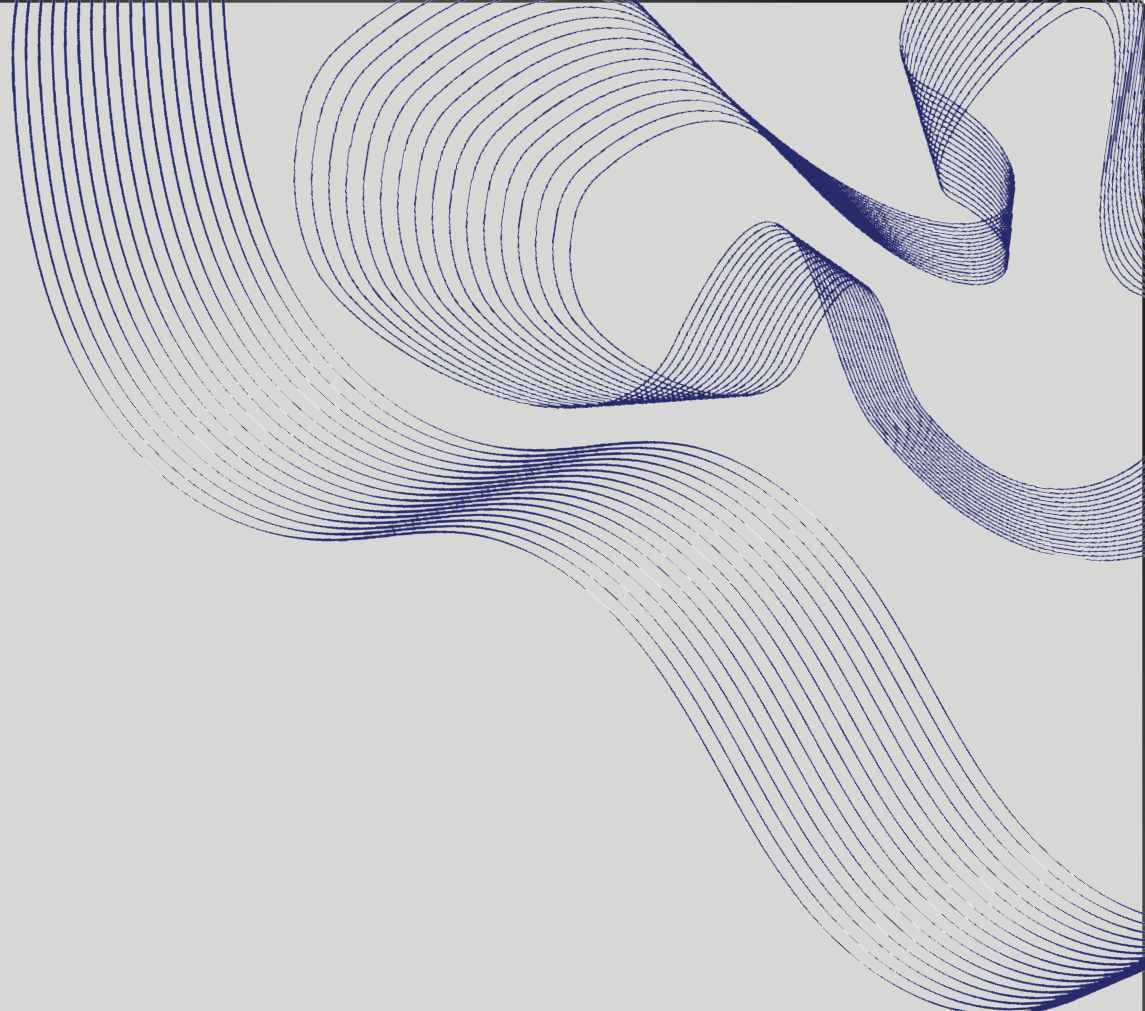
Special thanks to the City of Toronto Community Crisis Response Unit for their Continuous Support











Head Office

2150 Islington Ave #209,
Toronto, ON M9P 3V4
416 544.1992

Satellite Offices

Keele Hub - 1652 Keele St ,
Toronto, ON M6M 3W3
416 635.6464

Jane Hub - 1541 Jane St,
Toronto, ON M8Z 2L3
416 645.7575

 MidayntaCommunityServices    @midayntayouth  www.midaynta.com



Midaynta
Community Services

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Midaynta Community Services
2150 Islington Ave #209,
Toronto, ON M9P 3V4
www.midaynta.com