



Midaynta
Community Services

Annual Report

2024 - 2025

ONE PEOPLE | ONE VOICE | ONE COMMUNITY



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Message from Chairman of Board of Directors



Malcom Hassan Zoraik

This year has been a period of innovation, growth, and renewed commitment for Midaynta Community Services. As the needs of our communities continue to evolve, we have embraced new approaches to deliver programs that truly empower individuals, strengthen families, and bring communities closer together.

This year, we launched two transformative programs to address emerging community needs: the Family Wellbeing Program, which provides holistic support and resources to help families thrive, and the GBV Empowerment Program, which offers education, advocacy, and support for survivors of gender-based violence. These programs, alongside our other ongoing programs, reflect Midaynta's commitment to addressing pressing social issues with compassion, innovation, and measurable impact.

Alongside these initiatives, we focused on strengthening our organization. Enhancements to our digital platforms, improvements in program monitoring, and updates to internal policies have helped our team work more efficiently while maintaining high-quality service delivery. Partnerships with government agencies, schools, and local organizations have also been key in expanding our reach and impact.

We are deeply grateful for the dedication, expertise, and passion of our staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors. Their commitment ensures that Midaynta continues to design and deliver programs that genuinely improve lives, foster resilience, and build stronger, more inclusive communities. As we look ahead, we remain focused on innovation, collaboration, and meaningful engagement, confident in our ability to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.



Message from The Executive Director



Mahad Ali Yusuf

This year at Midaynta Community Services has been truly inspiring. Our team has worked tirelessly to support clients and communities facing homelessness, food insecurity, unemployment, settlement challenges, educational barriers, and increasing mental health needs. Their dedication continues to foster resilience, empowerment, and hope. Despite challenges and opportunities, our mission has remained clear. Guided by equity, inclusion, and social justice, we have adapted, grown, and responded to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

This fiscal year saw the expansion of innovative initiatives tackling pressing issues. The Family Wellbeing Program and Gender-Based Violence EmpowerMEN Program were launched to equip families and survivors with resources and support to heal and thrive. Our Youth Mentorship Program (YMP) guided young people toward leadership and education, with international partnerships like the Mogadishu Youth Mentorship Project in collaboration with SomaliREN. In October 2024, we proudly hosted the Youth Resilience Conference in Kampala, Uganda, bringing together East African youth leaders to share experiences, unlock opportunities, and develop pathways to success. The conference offered mentorship, training, and networking that will continue to empower youth for years to come. In Somalia, the Mudug Peacebuilding Project strengthened our long-term commitment to community-led peacebuilding and development. Working with local leaders, youth, and stakeholders, we mobilized initiatives fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable cohesion.

Cornerstone programs such as the Student and Family Advocate Program, Youth Justice, Project Turnaround, EPIC Prevention, and Mending a Crack in the Sky further enhanced our ability to meet complex community needs and support holistic growth. Together, these efforts reflect Midaynta's commitment to empowerment, opportunity, and well-being across all ages. Beyond program delivery, Midaynta strengthened its role as a bridge-builder and advocate. Collaborations with schools, organizations, institutions, and international partners amplified community voices, influenced systemic change, and promoted accountability in addressing inequities impacting Black and marginalized populations. While celebrating these achievements, we remain mindful of the persistent challenges our communities face—systemic racism, poverty, housing insecurity, settlement struggles, education gaps, and mental health concerns. These realities drive us to be courageous in advocacy, innovative in programming, and compassionate in service. Looking ahead, our priority is to expand organizational capacity, deepen partnerships, and develop culturally responsive, community-driven programs. We are committed to meeting today's needs while building a stronger, more equitable future.

The progress achieved this year is a testament to the passion and dedication of our staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, and the invaluable support of our funders and partners. Together, we will continue building stronger, more resilient, and inclusive communities.

About Midaynta Community Services



Vision Statement

“Empowered Communities Driven by Unity & Opportunity.”



Mission Statement

“Our mission is to cultivate unity and create opportunities by empowering individuals and families through collaboration, education, advocacy, and access to essential resources. We strive to support growth, equity, and accessibility, ensuring lasting impacts for all.”

Midaynta Community Services (Midaynta) is a registered Canadian charitable organization that has been serving newcomer and refugee communities in Toronto and the surrounding area since 1993. Established originally as a family reunification initiative and incorporated in 1995, Midaynta has grown into a leading non-profit organization committed to supporting settlement, integration, and empowerment for diverse communities.

Programs & Services

At Midaynta, we offer a wide range of programs to support youth, families, seniors, and newcomers. Our youth initiatives include Project Turn-Around, Rites of Passage, Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) programs, Enhanced YOW, and the Student & Family Advocate (SFA) program. We provide housing and family support through assistance with affordable housing, counseling, family services, and advocacy. For seniors, our programs focus on well-being, social inclusion, and community engagement. Families in need can access our food bank and emergency support services, ensuring food security and critical assistance. Our international programs connect the local community with global partners, offering cultural exchange opportunities. Additionally,

we provide settlement and integration services—including orientation, referrals, translation, language support, and guidance—to help newcomers successfully integrate into Canadian society.

Our Impact

For over 30 years, Midaynta has supported newcomers, youth, seniors, and families in Toronto, creating meaningful change through diverse programs. Hundreds of newcomers each year access settlement and integration services to navigate life in Canada. Youth gain skills, confidence, and opportunities through mentorship and outreach, while families receive counseling, housing support, and guidance. Community programs foster inclusion and cultural understanding, and our food bank and emergency assistance ensure access to basic necessities. We advocate for youth, families, and newcomers, strengthen global connections through cultural exchange, and build lasting partnerships with schools, government, and community organizations. Together, these efforts empower individuals and families to thrive and build stronger, more connected communities.



1993

1995

2005

Present

Midaynta was established in July 1993 as a family reunification project

Became Incorporated in August 1995 as a non-profit organization.

Focus shifted to youth programming as youth-violence increased in the city

Continuing to provide programs & services needed by the community

New Strategic Direction

In December 2024, Midaynta held a two-day strategic planning retreat in Niagara, funded by Tropicana Community Services. Bringing together approximately 45 participants including staff, community members, management, and governance members, the retreat resulted in a renewed strategic direction and the adoption of a powerful new vision, mission, and core values.

The new vision, “Empowered Communities Driven by Unity and Opportunity,” and the

mission, which focuses on cultivating unity and creating opportunities through collaboration, education, advocacy, and access to essential resources, set a strong foundation for growth, equity, and accessibility.

Guided by core values such as diversity, meaningful inclusion, integrity, commitment, accessibility, transparency, respect, honesty, reliability, and compassion, the five-year Strategic Plan provides a clear and ambitious roadmap to strengthen Midaynta’s impact across northwest Toronto communities and beyond.

Youth Outreach Worker Program

The Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program has continued to be a cornerstone of support for marginalized and at-risk youth across Ontario throughout the 2024–2025 program year. By focusing on outreach, mentorship, and culturally responsive programming, the program created safe, empowering, and inclusive spaces where young people could thrive. The approach remained rooted in meeting youth where they are—whether in schools, in community hubs, or through individualized engagement—while addressing barriers such as unemployment, housing insecurity, and systemic discrimination. This year, YOW staff worked tirelessly to empower youth with the tools, relationships, and opportunities they need to succeed. The results illustrate not only the commitment of our outreach workers but also the remarkable resilience and potential of the youth we serve.

Successes

One of the highlights of the year was the Summer Camp, held from July 10 to August 9, 2024, which brought together more than thirty participants. The camp blended recreational fun with skill-building and included board games, painting, card games, gym activities, and field trips to Skyzone and local movie theaters. More than entertainment, these experiences were structured to build teamwork, communication, and self-confidence. A shining example of impact came from a participant who began camp hesitant and withdrawn but grew into a confident leader who guided group games and supported peers by the end of the program. The program also delivered larger events designed to unite communities through sports and recreation.

Midaynta's youth initiatives created meaningful opportunities for growth and connection. Thirteen youth attended the Canada vs.

Suriname soccer match, strengthening social bonds and creating lasting memories. The Jumpstart Basketball program, designed for Black youth, reduced barriers for low-income families while promoting mentorship, resilience, and school engagement. A highlight of the summer was the Soccer Festival (July 27–28, 2024), hosted with Horseed Youth Development Organization, which drew over 400 children and youth from Toronto, Scarborough, Hamilton, and Ottawa. As one of the largest youth sporting events of the year, it offered multiple age categories and gave participants a rare chance to compete, learn, and celebrate together. Employment readiness was another key focus, with the YOW Program offering group training and one-on-one career support. In July 2024, an Industry Professional Workshop introduced youth to construction sector experts through panels, Q&A sessions, and networking. Over 80 youth aged 20–35 joined a Construction Skills Session to learn about certifications, training, and apprenticeships—many for the first time. Outreach workers also provided individualized support, helping youth secure jobs, such as one participant who obtained a security license and employment. Partnerships with organizations like YMCA, Career Foundation, and Frontlines further connected youth with tailored job opportunities.

These initiatives reinforced the program's commitment not only to providing immediate support but also to building long-term pathways to financial stability and independence. Cultural identity is at the heart of empowerment. The YOW Program recognized that when youth feel connected to their heritage, they are more confident in navigating broader society. This year, Somali Heritage events celebrated identity through sports and cultural showcases, creating opportunities for youth to experience pride in who they are.

The Back-to-School Backpack Giveaway on September 2, 2024, at West Humber Collegiate distributed over 100 backpacks with essential supplies, easing financial strain on families and showing strong community care. Partnering with the Somali Student Association, a Toronto Metropolitan University campus tour inspired youth to envision post-secondary education. Participation in the Raptors Youth Summit connected youth with motivational leaders, emphasized representation, and encouraged leadership development.

School Engagement

Outreach workers maintained a biweekly presence at West Humber Collegiate, North Albion Collegiate, and Greenholme JMS, delivering 72 workshops on leadership, communication, and self-confidence. Educators noted improved behavior, stronger peer relationships, and increased student leadership—evidence of culturally responsive, relationship-centered programming fostering safe and empowering environments.

Community Collaboration

Partnerships strengthened the program's impact. At the Keele Hub, YOW staff supported the Ambassador Program with creative workshops like braiding, DJing, and crochet. YOWs contributed to the Midaynta Capri Food Bank, reinforcing community care, and led workshops at the October 2024 Community Safety Meeting on trust and safety. A Careers in Construction Panel showcased trades as rewarding career paths while challenging stereotypes.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite successes, barriers remained: inconsistent attendance from transportation costs, mental health crises, and housing instability; outreach staff facing community violence and secondary trauma; employment barriers for high school students and newcomers; critical housing shortages; fragmented support systems; and transportation challenges limiting participation.

Conclusion

The 2024–2025 YOW Program proved vital in empowering youth, strengthening community ties, and tackling systemic barriers. From sports festivals and backpack giveaways to construction workshops and school mentorship, YOWs created opportunities for growth, connection, and leadership. While challenges persist, the program's achievements showcase youth resilience and staff dedication. With more resources, partnerships, and youth voices at the center, the YOW Program is positioned to continue transforming lives and building stronger, more resilient communities across Ontario.



Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker

The Enhanced Youth Outreach Assistant (EYOW) program has played a vital role in supporting youth and families within our community throughout 2024–2025. With a culturally responsive and community-centered approach, the program has provided safe spaces for healing, growth, and empowerment, helping young people and their families navigate challenges while building resilience.

Traditional healing circles remained at the heart of this work, offering youth and their families meaningful opportunities to share experiences, learn from one another, and begin their healing journeys. These gatherings not only fostered connection and trust but also encouraged more youth to seek additional services and continue engaging with traditional forms of support. Alongside this, the program worked closely with Somali mothers facing challenges such as youth violence and substance abuse, with weekly Somali Mothers' Healing Circles offering nurturing spaces where mothers could heal, share stories, and build strength together.

Youth outreach and awareness efforts were expanded in collaboration with outreach partners, emphasizing prevention, education, and empowerment. Youth were guided on the risks of violence, encouraged to make safe and positive choices, and introduced to constructive opportunities. Special attention was given to newcomer youth and families, who were welcomed into awareness sessions and connected to vital resources and supports. At the same time, strong parental engagement initiatives helped to strengthen relationships between outreach workers, parents, and families, with healing circles and formal review sessions creating opportunities for shared goal-setting and unified support for young people's growth.

Over the past year, the Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker served more than 50 young people, offering one-on-one, short counseling, guidance, and tangible opportunities for advancement. Through employment workshops on resume writing and job search strategies, at least 15 youth were able to secure paid jobs and internships. Support was also provided to youth in crisis through shelter connections and housing application assistance, ensuring stability and safety. Volunteerism and community engagement were promoted by helping youth obtain verification letters for academic and career goals, as well as connecting them with volunteer opportunities and food bank initiatives, encouraging positive involvement in the wider community.

The 2024–2025 year reflects the collective resilience of our youth, families, and community. Through healing, awareness, and empowerment, the EYOW program continues to create pathways for hope and opportunity, ensuring that young people are supported as they grow into confident, capable, and engaged members of society.



Youth Mentorship Program



The Rites of Passage Youth Mentorship Program continues to empower African Canadian youth ages 12 to 16 in Northwest Toronto through mentorship, cultural enrichment, and skill-building opportunities. The program supports young people in strengthening their self-esteem, cultural identity, and leadership while fostering educational achievement, civic engagement, and community connection.

This year, the program expanded its presence in local schools, delivering biweekly workshops at Greenholme Junior Middle School, West Humber Collegiate Institute, North Albion Collegiate Institute, and Elmbank Junior Middle Academy. These sessions created safe spaces for youth to discuss leadership, peer relationships, self-esteem, financial literacy, and career planning, while also building trust and engagement with educators and peers.

Beyond the classroom, youth engaged in a wide range of activities that combined culture, creativity, recreation, and mentorship. Program highlights included Somali Heritage Week celebrations, career exploration panels, recreational programs such as Jump Start Basketball and Soccer Saturdays, creative workshops like hair braiding, DJing, and graphic design, as well as mental health discussions and seasonal events including Summer Camp, March Break activities, the Winter Party, and Black History Month celebrations. Together, these experiences provided opportunities for youth to express themselves, connect with their heritage, ex-

plore career pathways, and build confidence in supportive environments.

For the 2024 to 2025 program year, the Rites of Passage Program engaged 27 mentors and 82 mentees, exceeding its annual target. The mentorship model, delivered both in person and virtually, helped address challenges around self-confidence, academic achievement, leadership development, and cultural identity. Educators observed improvements in student participation, attendance, and self-expression among program participants.

At the same time, new challenges emerged. Many youth faced increased mental health concerns, trauma, and socio-economic barriers, often turning to mentors as their primary support. While mentors offered vital guidance, the need for professional mental health partnerships became clear. Additionally, the demand for mentorship continues to outpace capacity, underscoring the importance of sustainable mentor recruitment, family engagement, and improved mentor to mentee ratios.

Looking forward, the program will continue strengthening partnerships with schools and community organizations while seeking additional resources to expand staffing, embed mental health supports, and train mentors. With sustained investment, the Rites of Passage Youth Mentorship Program is poised to grow responsibly and ensure every youth has access to culturally relevant mentorship that empowers them to thrive.

Student and Family Advocate Program

The SFA program achieved remarkable successes in advancing equity, fostering school-family partnerships, and empowering Black youth and their caregivers. Over the course of the fiscal year, the SFA team conducted 117 intake assessments and provided tailored advocacy support to students and families. These supports included one-on-one guidance, attendance at 46 school meetings, and referrals to both internal and external resources. A major focus of the program was ensuring that students and parents felt equipped to advocate for themselves and navigate the educational system with greater confidence and clarity.

The Youthful Connections initiative was another highlight, offering workshops centered around self-care, creativity, and family bonding. Participants engaged in activities such as baking, painting, DJing, and yoga, all designed to foster wellness and connection. These sessions not only supported youth but also strengthened intergenerational communication between parents and children. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many participants reporting increased self-confidence, resilience, and a stronger sense of community belonging.

Standout Success Story: Cyberbullying Case

A standout success story came from a family dealing with prolonged cyberbullying. After being turned away by both her former school and local authorities, the student and her mother turned to the SFA team. The advocate helped navigate the system, secured a coordinated response from both the current and previous schools, and ensured that the student's safety and dignity were prioritized. This case powerfully illustrates the SFA's unique ability to bridge institutional gaps, restore trust, and deliver culturally responsive crisis support. The student has since reported improved mental well-being and is now thriving in her new environment.

Community Engagement Excellence

The program's outreach efforts also extended into broader community engagement. The SFA team facilitated 18 dynamic workshops across various schools and hosted two major community forums that brought together students, parents, educators, and community leaders. Topics ranged from anti-bullying and emotional regulation to gang prevention and civic engagement. Events like the Black History Month Career Panel and Family Fun Day drew high attendance and successfully fostered both pride and advocacy among Black youth and their families.

Family Fun Day Highlight

A notable highlight of the year was the Family Fun Day, held during March Break at West Humber Collegiate Institute. This vibrant event brought together over 165 students, parents, and community members, including local Neighborhood Community Officers (NCOs), for a day of celebration, bonding, and connection. Families participated in a wide range of interactive games, entertainment booths, and cultural activities designed to encourage positive parent-child interaction and build stronger community ties.

Alongside this, the SFA program facilitated 18 targeted workshops across various school sites, tackling topics such as emotional regulation, anti-bullying, gang prevention, and academic success. These sessions were delivered in collaboration with school staff, local organizations, and mental health professionals, ensuring that content was culturally relevant and community-informed. Workshops such as the Youth Career Panel and Black History Month presentations empowered youth by spotlighting Black professionals, fostering identity pride and future-focused conversations.

Strategic Partnerships

Moreover, the program's success was enhanced through ongoing strategic partnerships with institutions like For Youth Initiative, Caring & Safe Schools (TDSB), and Smile Canada. These partnerships enabled SFA staff to participate in parent council meetings, educational forums, and school board events, strengthening collaboration between families, schools, and service providers. These collective efforts created inclusive environments that valued Black students' voices and experiences, further cementing the SFA program's reputation as a trusted community ally.

Broader System-Level Achievements

Beyond direct service delivery, the SFA program made a meaningful impact on school system capacity and inter-agency collaboration. Staff worked closely with school boards to offer equity-based workshops for educators and staff, co-developing training on anti-Black racism, emotional regulation, and culturally relevant teaching practices. This ongoing capacity-building ensured that school environments were more inclusive and better equipped to meet the unique needs of Black students. Strong partnerships with social workers, grassroots groups, and organizations such as For Youth Initiative and Smile Canada allowed Midaynta to expand the program's reach. These collaborations brought added value in the form of mentorship, academic support, recreational activi-

ties, and mental health resources—all tailored to the cultural and emotional needs of Black youth. As a result, families received wrap-around support that extended beyond the classroom and into their communities.

In quantitative terms, 117 students and 47 parents received individualized SFA services, with 67 successful referrals made to external supports. Among surveyed participants, 107 reported feeling respected and supported in school, while 98 said they made progress toward their personal goals. These numbers reflect both the reach and the depth of the program's impact.

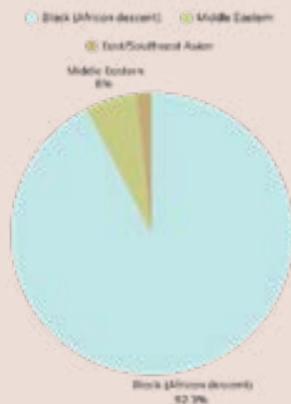
Challenges

Frequent turnover of school administrators in both the TDSB and TCDSB disrupted program continuity, especially in equity-deserving communities where SFA is most active. Each leadership change required the team to reintroduce the program, rebuild relationships, and regain momentum—delaying services and weakening long-term partnerships.

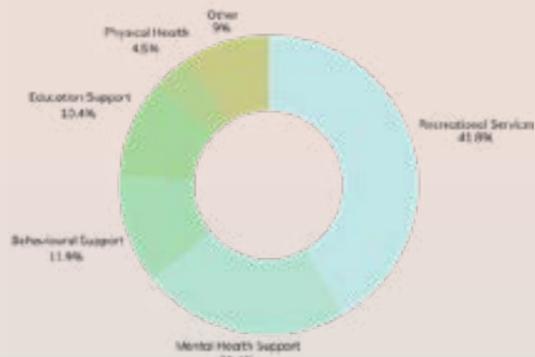
Additionally, some staff perceived the SFA program as criticism rather than support, particularly around issues of anti-Black racism and systemic inequities. This resistance sometimes excluded the team from key meetings, delayed access to students, and hindered trust-building with families, reducing the program's overall impact.



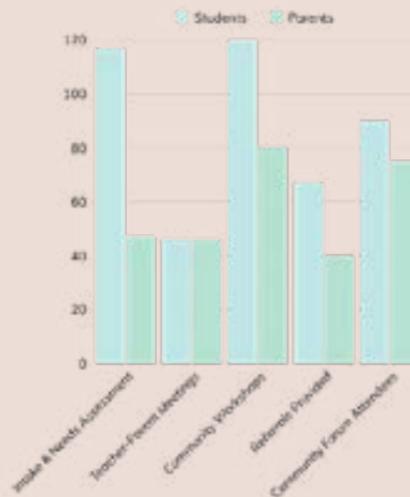
Participant Racial Background



Types of Referrals Provided to Students & Families



Program Participation Breakdown



Monthly Engagement Growth (April 2024 - March 2025)



In conclusion, the 2024–2025 SFA program year demonstrated the power of culturally responsive advocacy in transforming outcomes for Black youth and their families. While significant challenges persisted—particularly within the school system—the program’s successes far outweighed its limitations. Through community-rooted approaches, cross-sector partnerships, and a deep commitment to equity, Midaynta’s SFA team strengthened systemic accountability, fostered belonging, and empowered participants to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

The data clearly shows the program’s impact: from serving 117 students and 47 parents through individualized support, to facilitating 18 workshops with high attendance rates, to achieving a 91% satisfaction rate among participants who reported feeling respected and supported in school. The Family Fun Day alone brought together over 165 community members, demonstrating the program’s ability to build meaningful connections and foster community pride.

Moving forward, the SFA program will continue to advocate for systemic change while providing direct, culturally responsive support to Black youth and their families, ensuring they have the tools and resources needed to succeed in their educational journey and beyond.

Key Performance Indicators

- **Total Students Served: 117**
- **Total Parents Engaged: 47**
- **School Meetings Attended: 46**
- **Workshops Facilitated: 18**
- **Community Forums Hosted: 2**
- **External Referrals Made: 67**
- **Family Fun Day Attendees: 165+**
- **Students feeling respected & supported: 107 (91%)**
- **Students making progress toward goals: 98 (84%)**
- **Program growth: 485% increase from April to March**

Project Turn Around

Project Turn-Around is a holistic and culturally responsive initiative that supports youth aged 12–20 and their families across Northwest Toronto. It addresses systemic barriers through mentorship, counselling, and skill-building opportunities, and operates three key streams: the Gang Prevention Intervention Program (GPIP), the Gender-Based Violence Program, and the Youth Justice Program.

During the 2024–2025 fiscal year, GPIP continued to make a meaningful impact in communities such as Mount Dennis, Kingsview Village, and Black Creek. Staff worked closely with schools, principals, and teachers to support students at risk of falling behind, building trust with families and creating pathways to mentorship, workshops, and case management. Workshops on leadership, conflict resolution, and healthy relationships were delivered in both schools and community hubs like the Mount Dennis Library, while one-on-one guidance provided additional tailored support. By being consistently present during and after school hours, staff created safe spaces for youth who might otherwise have been isolated or disengaged.

Partnerships remained central to GPIP’s success. Collaborations with Fred Victor provided mental health supports and grief counseling following a community tragedy; MLSC offered legal guidance for youth and families navigating the justice system; and the Toronto Public Library hosted programming and served as a bridge to services. New partnerships with OJEN expanded opportunities for legal education, mock hearings, and career exploration, while participation in FOCUS meetings and City of Toronto Safety Committee sessions strengthened collective community responses.

The impact of this work is seen in youth

success stories. One young person, previously disengaged from school, regained confidence through mentorship, re-enrolled, and is now on track to graduate. Another youth, struggling with financial pressures and considering unsafe alternatives, was supported through outreach and community initiatives such as a jacket drive, which encouraged them to make safer, more positive choices. GPIP also played a critical role in responding to crises, offering trauma-informed, culturally relevant support to youth and families navigating grief and violence. Over the year, GPIP delivered a wide range of programming including Black History Month presentations at Terry Fox House, Fernie, and Turning Point, as well as a professional session for TPS Police College to foster youth-police dialogue. Staff also invested in professional development, completing training in Crisis Prevention and Intervention, Anti-Black Racism, and emergency preparedness. Engagement continued to grow, with high completion rates and many youth returning for multiple sessions, highlighting the effectiveness of GPIP’s outreach, mentorship, and collaborative approach.

Challenges remain, including housing and food insecurity, incomplete referral information from police, scheduling conflicts for youth, and limited access to private counseling spaces. GPIP continues to adapt programming to address these barriers. Looking ahead, the program aims to expand outreach to additional schools and after-school programs, extend evening services, and develop mobile outreach to better reach families across neighborhood boundaries. Strengthening partnerships with schools, courts, and community hubs, alongside greater focus on family engagement, mental health supports, and trauma-informed programming, will remain priorities as GPIP works toward building safer, more resilient communities.



Family Support Counsellor

The Family Support Counsellor has played an integral role in supporting families involved with Project Turn Around (PTA), working closely with PTA caseworkers and MCIS mothers to provide holistic, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed support. This support includes guidance on issues such as domestic violence, housing insecurity, income instability, and other socio-economic challenges. Through this collaborative approach, the counsellor has helped promote healthier family dynamics and enhance overall well-being within the community.

A key contribution of the Family Support Counsellor has been their involvement in the success of the MCIS “Healing Network Circle” initiative. By facilitating workshops and offering one-on-one counselling sessions, the counsellor has provided a safe and supportive space for healing and empowerment, particularly for mothers navigating trauma

and change. Throughout their involvement in Project Turn Around, the counsellor has continued to be a vital asset in strengthening families through targeted interventions, personalized counselling, and meaningful community engagement. Despite ongoing challenges, the program has consistently demonstrated a positive impact—helping families build resilience, improve communication, and access essential resources.

Looking ahead, the program remains committed to evolving in response to the changing needs of the families it serves. Special attention is given to newcomer families, who often face unique barriers as they adjust to life in a new country. By offering culturally sensitive and trauma-informed care, the Family Support Counsellor helps these families navigate complex systems, build connections, and adapt more successfully to their new environments.

Youth Justice Program

The Youth Justice Program is a culturally relevant diversion initiative serving Black youth (ages 12–20) in Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). We provide meaningful alternatives to formal justice involvement through Extrajudicial Measures (EJM) and Extrajudicial Sanctions (EJS), restorative practices, and tailored supports that emphasize accountability, healing, and reintegration, often resulting in withdrawn charges and restored community trust. Grounded in a holistic, trauma-informed, strengths-based model, caseworkers co-create individualized plans that can include restorative activities, mentorship, leadership development, and skills training. This approach addresses the systemic over-representation of Black youth in the justice system while strengthening coping skills, family and peer relationships, and a sense of belonging. A growing number of participants have successfully completed EJM/EJS requirements. Many had charges withdrawn after demonstrating accountability; others repaired harm through community service, mediation, and restorative circles. Beyond legal outcomes, youth show increased school engagement, employment readiness, and leadership. Staff observe higher self-confidence, improved family/peer relation-

ships, and reduced repeat justice involvement among participants.

Youth Success Highlights

- **Client Highlight 1:** Entered the program highly engaged, completed all requirements, and graduated from middle school, showcasing how consistent mentorship, structure, and positive reinforcement translate into academic and personal milestones.
- **Client Highlight 2:** Began quiet and hesitant; with steady support and safe spaces, built confidence to contribute in groups and successfully secured and completed a school co-op placement—demonstrating readiness for future pathways.

When culturally relevant, trauma-informed supports are in place, Black youth not only meet justice obligations but also build pathways to futures defined by confidence, accountability, and community connection. Our next-year roadmap: advance restorative justice, expand pathways to education and work, partner more closely with families, and upgrade data tracking to measure and reduce repeat involvement!



EmpowerMENT Program

EmpowerMENT is a culturally relevant prevention and intervention program designed to reduce gender-based violence (GBV) offences among Black male youth ages 10–24 living in Northwest Toronto. The program is rooted in holistic, culturally appropriate approaches and a strength-based model to ensure Black male youth are meaningfully supported. Through workshops and one-on-one counseling, EmpowerMENT equips youth with tools to build healthy relationships, strengthen emotional regulation, and develop confidence in their personal growth.

Over the past year, EmpowerMENT delivered workshops in five schools: Greenholme JMS, Lawrence Heights MS, West Humber CI, North Albion CI, and Dixon Grove JMS. EmpowerMENT Workbooks were introduced to guide reflection and self-discovery, while pre- and post-surveys were piloted to track impact across both group and individual sessions. A major milestone was securing new provincial funding through Ontario’s Action Plan to End GBV, which allowed us to expand staff capacity. To better address participants’ intersectional needs, a trauma-informed clinician was hired to provide in-house mental health support, short-term counselling, and psychoeducation for youth and staff.

This year also marked a cultural shift in how parents and caregivers engaged with the program. Families—particularly within newcomer and Black communities are increasingly seeking GBV programming without fear of stigma, reflecting deeper trust in EmpowerMENT’s services. Food vouchers further reduced barriers for youth facing food insecurity, helping create safe, welcoming spaces where boys could consistently show up, participate, and engage. In total, EmpowerMENT engaged five schools, served 78 youth through workshops and one-on-one sessions, and built more than ten active partnerships with schools, social workers, and probation services. Evaluation tools were strengthened through the introduction of surveys, interviews, and observation guides to better capture participant needs and outcomes.

In the coming year, EmpowerMENT will ex-

pand preventative GBV workshops in collaboration with school social workers and probation partners, while developing youth-led outreach strategies to reduce stigma and increase participation. Evaluation tools will also be refined to ensure they are age-appropriate and culturally sensitive for younger participants. Lastly, we will be contracting external GBV and trauma-informed specialists to design and deliver three full-day training sessions focused on trauma-informed care, culturally safe practices, and gender-based violence prevention. Sessions will target frontline staff, peer mentors, and partner organizations to strengthen capacity across all service delivery touchpoints.

With new staffing, clinical expertise, and strong community partnerships, EmpowerMENT is well-positioned to continue growing and meeting the needs of Black and newcomer boys through a culturally relevant, strength-based approach.



Mending a Crack in the Sky

The MCIS program exists to support mothers, families, and vulnerable community members across Toronto through peer-led, trauma-informed healing, safety education, and community engagement. It serves primarily Black and newcomer mothers, many from Somali backgrounds, who are acting as caregivers and grassroots leaders.

Key Highlights

- Delivered 70+ sessions, including workshops on hate crimes, legal rights, mental health, and safety.
- Held 30 Healing Circles and 3 large community healing events with 700+ participants combined.
- Mobilized 50+ mother volunteers city-wide across six TPS divisions.
- Partnered with Toronto Police Services Board, Police College, MLS Community Legal Services, TDSB, Unison Health, and cultural/faith groups.
- Provided trauma-informed crisis response for major incidents, including shootings and child protection cases.

Community Impact

Mothers have become trusted leaders in safety and healing, offering rapid crisis response, peer support, and advocacy. For example, after a tragic Rexdale shooting, MCIS mobilized trauma counselling, financial and emotional support, and community healing circles, helping the family and neighbourhood cope with loss.

By the Numbers

- 200+ unique participants engaged
- 70+ sessions/workshops held

- 50+ active mother volunteers
- 6 TPS Divisions engaged
- 300+ reached through Somali Heritage Week cultural/wellness events

Looking Ahead

MCIS will continue expanding its Healing Circles, legal rights workshops, and parent network while strengthening partnerships with schools, police, and community agencies. Priorities include addressing sustainability through staff support, transportation access, and stipends for mothers who dedicate extensive voluntary hours.

Acknowledgment

MCIS is made possible through the support of the City of Toronto and our community partners.



New Roads Program: Youth Violence Prevention

The New Roads Youth Violence Prevention (YVP) Program continues to serve MVP (Most Vulnerable Population) Black youth ages 12 to 29 in Zone 2, offering culturally relevant, trauma-informed supports that reduce violence risk factors while promoting positive engagement, mentorship, and leadership opportunities. Through a blend of counselling, recreation, and skills-based workshops, the program provides safe spaces for youth to connect, learn, and thrive.

In 2024–2025, New Roads engaged 148 unique youth, surpassing annual participation goals. Activities included weekly basketball scrimmages at Elm Bank Middle School, a Back-to-School Drive & Sports Event, a Toronto Metropolitan University campus tour, and an End-of-Year Go-Kart trip voted on by participants. Youth also took part in educational workshops such as the OJEN Legal Education Series, Resume Tips & Job Search (resulting in 21 completed resumes), Careers in Film, Career Exploration, Effects of Vaping, Mental Health & Addiction, and a powerful Effects of Gun Violence workshop featuring the MCIS documentary and lived experiences.

The program provided ongoing one-on-one counselling to 23 youth, offering individualized case management, mentorship, and wraparound supports. Trusted facilitators and youth workers played a critical role in fostering safe, comfortable environments where youth felt welcomed and supported. Feedback consistently highlighted improved coping skills, stronger peer connections, and increased awareness of community resources. Youth leadership was a key feature this year. Five New Roads participants served on the City of Toronto’s Youth Advisory Committee, gaining training, civic engagement experience, and opportunities to shape city-wide youth initiatives. The program’s commitment to youth-led decision-making continues to empower participants to take ownership of

their growth and contribute positively to their communities.

While achievements were significant, challenges remained. Many youth experienced persistent barriers related to mental health, trauma, and socio-economic instability. Staff provided consistent support, though the demand underscored the need for expanded partnerships in mental health services and sustained program resources.

Looking ahead, New Roads will continue strengthening relationships with schools, community agencies, and civic partners, while deepening supports for youth mental health and career pathways. With ongoing investment, the YVP program will build on its strong foundation to ensure vulnerable youth in Zone 2 have the tools, mentorship, and opportunities needed to succeed.



Eviction Prevention In Community

Overview

The Midaynta Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC) Project is an eviction prevention initiative supporting tenants at risk, particularly Black and marginalized communities across Toronto. EPIC provides rapid, client-centered support, including financial assistance, legal aid, and mental health services. Staff meet clients in person, traveling across the city and offering after-hours and weekend support when needed. Through collaboration with community organizations, housing providers, and legal aid services, EPIC connects tenants to resources to help them maintain housing and prevent eviction.

Key Services Provided

- Eviction Prevention Support
- Financial Assistance
- Legal Aid & Tenant Rights Support
- Mental Health Support
- Employment + Education Support

Impact and Outcomes

EPIC has strengthened housing security for vulnerable tenants across Toronto, particularly Black and marginalized communities. Through direct support, partnerships, and culturally responsive services, the program:

- Helps clients avoid eviction
- Connects tenants to financial, legal, and mental health resources
- Promotes self-sufficiency and community integration



HomeSafe York

HomeSafe York is a culturally responsive and trauma-informed housing support program delivered by Midaynta Community Services for marginalized individuals aged 18+ in York Region. The program supports Black and racialized communities, newcomers, and low-income individuals by increasing awareness of housing rights, strengthening housing stability, and addressing barriers to equitable access. Services include housing counselling, landlord-tenant advocacy, language support, community referrals, and educational workshops. Funded by the York Region Community Investment Fund, the program aims to prevent homelessness and promote long-term housing stability, independence, and dignity.

2024-2025 At a Glance

178

Total Case Clients Served

129

Info Session Participants (12 sessions)

107

Skill-Building Workshop Participants (12 sessions)

53

Housing Hub Clinic Clients Served (12 Clinics)

Housing Outcomes

178

Clients Obtained Housing

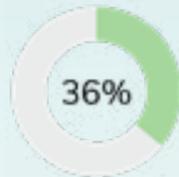
178

Clients Remained House

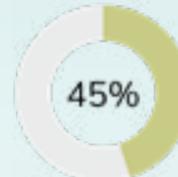
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Referrals Made to External Supports (Legal, financial, food, etc.)

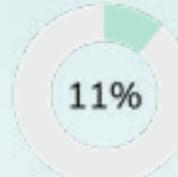
Top Housing Barriers



Financial Constraints



Lack of available housing



Poor Credit

Client Voice

"I was sleeping in my car. [Staff] helped me find housing, food, and support. He's a rare Gem."

- HomeSafe York Client

"As a single mom, I was burning out. My worker filled out forms with me and even helped find legal support. I'm so grateful."

- HomeSafe York Client

Key Highlights



Office Launch in Vaughan: Fully accessible and centrally located.



Staff Training: Ontario housing law, trauma-informed care, crisis response.



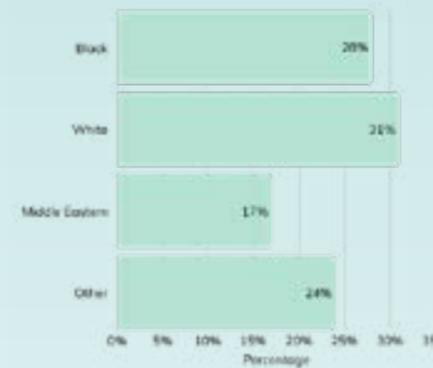
Evaluation: Mixed-method strategy (admin data, surveys, focus groups) with TMU research consultants.



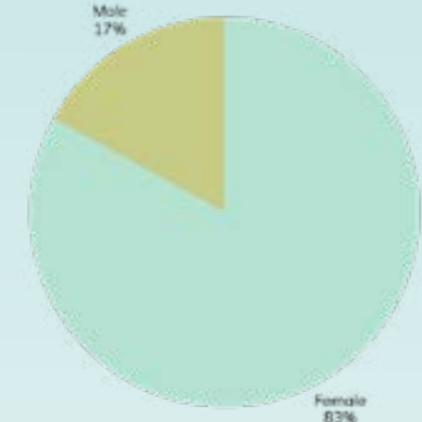
Outreach: Partnerships with York Region agencies, libraries, legal clinics, and community safety tables.

Who We Served

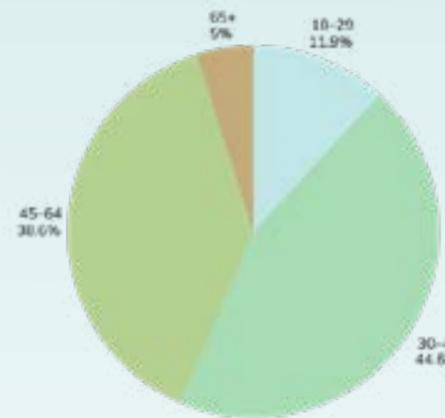
Case Management Demographics



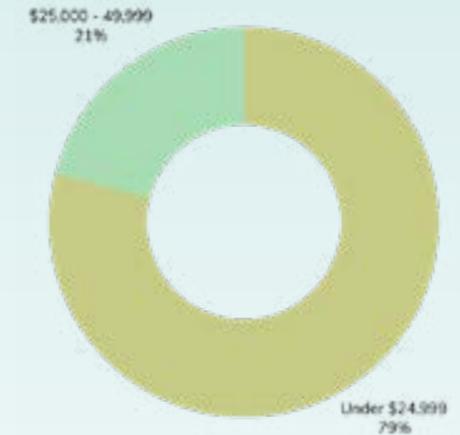
Gender Distribution



Age (Average Age:40)



Annual Income



Challenges & Recommendations:

Systemic Barriers:

- Rising rental costs & income inequality
- Racial discrimination by landlords
- Inaccessible housing programs (strict eligibility, long waitlists)

2025 Priorities:

- Expand steering committee & peer tenant support network
- Scale up services & build new partnerships
- Improve evaluation data collection (e.g., incentives for post-surveys)

Food Bank

The Midaynta-Capri Food Bank, launched on June 26, 2024, has become a vital resource for individuals and families facing food insecurity in Northwest Toronto. Operating every Wednesday from 7 Capri Road, in partnership with Daily Bread Food Bank and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), the initiative serves approximately 100 households weekly. Through its consistent and organized services, the food bank provides fresh and non-perishable food items, helping to meet nutritional needs and reduce the stress of food insecurity for everyone in the community.

The food bank operates through a structured registration and distribution system. New clients register through Daily Bread's online platform, ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and equitably. Volunteers play an essential role in this process, assisting with sorting, packing, and distributing food each week. Their dedication ensures that the food bank operates smoothly and maintains a welcoming environment for all clients. Beyond distributing food, the initiative serves as a hub for community connection. Everyone who accesses the program benefits not only from the resources provided but also from the sense of support, safety, and belonging fostered by the food bank. Over the past year, the program has successfully navigated challenges such as volunteer recruitment, cold-weather logistics, and space limitations by working collaboratively with TCHC and local partners.

Looking ahead, the focus is on expanding the program's reach through increased outreach efforts. By raising awareness and connecting with more individuals and families in need, the food bank aims to grow its impact and ensure that more people have access to reliable and consistent food support. The initiative continues to demonstrate the power of collaboration, volunteerism, and community-driven solutions, making a meaningful difference in the lives of people across Northwest Toronto.

100
HOUSEHOLDS SERVED WEEKLY



Future Leaders Camp

One of our most notable accomplishments this year was the successful execution of our Summer Camp, which hosted over 30 children from July 10, 2024, to August 9, 2024. The camp provided a supportive and engaging environment where campers could explore new activities, build friendships, and strengthen their skills. The camp focused on team-building and fun activities such as board games, physical gym games, painting, card games, and exciting field trips to places like SkyZone and the movie cinema. While these activities were fun and engaging, they also served a deeper purpose—helping participants develop teamwork, communication, leadership, and self-confidence. A powerful example of this growth was seen in one participant who started the camp shy and reserved, with little interest in joining group activities. By the end of the program, this participant was not only actively engaging in games but also leading their team and showing remarkable improvements in self-esteem.

Over the six weeks, campers had many opportunities to play, learn, and socialize, while each week brought unique experiences:

- **Week 1:** Introductory week where campers met the staff and built initial friendships. Activities were mostly indoors and included basketball, soccer bench ball, octopus, detective, and creative arts and crafts projects.
- **Week 2:** Campers enjoyed a mix of outdoor and indoor activities such as park play, painting and a movie screening.
- **Week 3:** Focus shifted to teamwork and communication, with organized sports like basketball. Weekly swimming activities were introduced at local city pools, giving the campers a refreshing and fun experience. The week also included a picnic at High Park, where the group explored the High Park and enjoyed the natural surroundings.
- **Week 4:** Campers continued strengthening their physical and creative skills through soccer, basketball, and a variety of arts activities. Swimming lessons re-

mained a weekly highlight. This week also featured an exciting field trip to SkyZone, where campers bonded while jumping, playing trampoline dodgeball, and testing their agility in a new environment.

- **Week 5:** The focus shifted toward leadership and problem-solving skills. Campers engaged in group challenges, strategy-based activities that encouraged cooperation. Another fun outing was the trip to the movie cinema, where the children enjoyed a film together, sparking discussions about storytelling and creativity.
- **Week 6:** The final week celebrated the campers' achievements and growth. Activities included a mix of the campers' favorite games from previous weeks, swimming, and arts. The program ended with a closing celebration, where campers reflected on their experiences, shared their favorite memories, and celebrated their new friendships.

The 2024 Summer Camp was a tremendous success. Over the six weeks, participants not only enjoyed engaging activities and exciting field trips but also built valuable life skills including teamwork, communication, leadership, resilience, and confidence. The growth of the children, especially those who began camp shy or hesitant, highlighted the impact of a supportive, inclusive, and engaging program. This year's camp has laid a strong foundation for future programs, and we look forward to continuing to create safe, fun, and empowering spaces for children in our community.



Youthful Connections

The Youthful Connections program, formerly known as the Keele Hub Youth Access Project, has transformed the Keele Community Hub into a vibrant, youth-centered space. Designed to engage youth—particularly those of African descent—the program created opportunities for connection, skill-building, and leadership while aligning with the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy and the Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. At the heart of the program are trained Youth Ambassadors, who welcomed participants, co-facilitated activities, and acted as bridges to resources and services. Their leadership ensured that youth were not only engaged but also felt ownership of the Hub and its programming.

Engagement and Impact

Over the past year, Youthful Connections hosted 24 workshops and sessions, engaged 346 registered participants, and facilitated 9 cluster meetings, 20 city staff/trustee check-ins, and 19 brainstorming sessions. These numbers reflect the momentum built throughout the year, as the Hub grew into a trusted anchor for young people in the York–Weston–Pelham cluster. Programming ranged from creative arts and cultural workshops to wellness, employment, and digital skills. Highlights included:

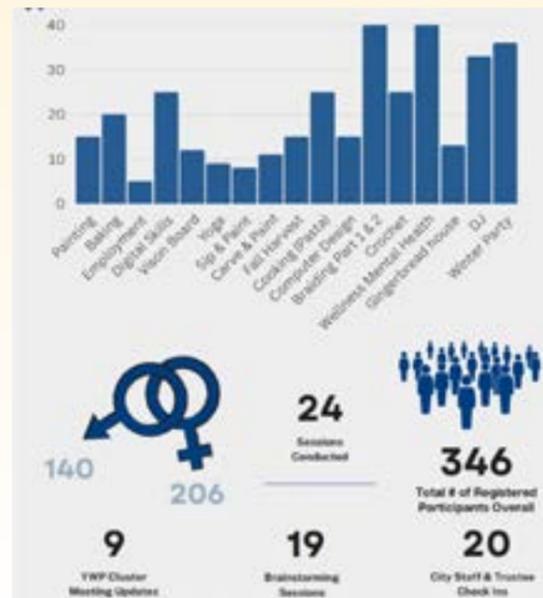
- Painting and Baking Cafés that turned underutilized Hub spaces into lively gathering places.
- Digital Skills sessions led by media professional Akil Augustine, equipping youth with content creation and production tools.
- Cultural workshops such as braiding and crochet, with peer-led facilitation that empowered youth to share knowledge and lead.
- Wellness activities including yoga and a mental health workshop led by therapist Greg Leslie.
- Community celebrations such as the Gingerbread House Contest and Winter Party, which strengthened connection and belonging.

Youth consistently expressed how these experiences boosted confidence, built friendships, and created a sense of belonging. One participant reflected, “Before the Digital Skills Workshop, I had no clue how to edit videos. Now I’ve already made a few short films.” Another shared, “The Baking Café was amazing! By the end, we were laughing, sharing recipes, and I even made new friends I still hang out with.”

Building Belonging and Leadership

The program’s success lay not just in numbers but in the transformation of the Hub into a welcoming and inclusive space. Youth felt encouraged to shape programming, share ideas, and take ownership of the space. Activities like vision board workshops and youth-led Sip & Paint sessions highlighted the power of peer leadership and community-driven design. Youth Ambassadors played a pivotal role in this transformation.

As one Ambassador shared, “This role gave me the confidence to excel in the Child and Youth Care field. I was able to design workshops, support youth after school, and gain experience that launched my career path.”



Challenges and Lessons

Like many youth programs, Youthful Connections faced challenges in maintaining consistent engagement. Attendance fluctuated due to school, work, and family commitments, and some youth were initially hesitant to use the Hub’s spaces. These challenges were addressed through outreach, honorariums, and partnerships with organizations such as For Youth Initiative, which boosted participation.

The project also highlighted the importance of continuous, youth-informed programming to sustain momentum. By creating a culture of openness and hands-on support, the program gradually built trust and comfort among participants.



Looking Forward

As the year concludes, Youthful Connections stands as a strong example of how community hubs can be reimagined into youth-driven spaces. Through creative programming, skill development, and authentic relationship-building, the Hub is no longer just a place—it has become a community anchor where youth feel safe, celebrated, and inspired to grow.

The lessons learned this year will inform future investments in youth-led initiatives across Toronto’s community hubs, ensuring that spaces are not only accessible but also shaped by the voices and aspirations of the young people they serve



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 Hana Elmi - PTA Case Worker
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 Youthful Connections
 Dejhamque (Dejha) Setal – Youth Ambassador
 Sagal Hussein - Youth Ambassador
 Marayam Ulusow - Youth Ambassador
 Kanyae Thomas - Youth Ambassador

Summer Students

Abdiwahab Ali
 Muna Hassan
 Ruqiarun Hassan
 Manisha Karwal
 Anas Mohamed

Hawo Said
 Mohamed Abdurrazzaq Siddiqui
 Hanad Warsame
 Hussein Hareer Abdillahi
 Amir Anwar Sharif Hassan

Our Partners

- Diversity Institute
- Toronto Metropolitan University
- The Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- The Canadian Council of Imams
- Strides Toronto
- Colour of Poverty-Color of Change
- African Canadian Community Organizations (ACCO)
- African Canadian Social Development Council of Ontario (ACSDC)
- Black Action Defense Committee (BADC)
- Caribbean African Canadian Social Services (CAFCAN)
- Somali Immigrant Aid Organization (SIAO)
- KIDS UPFRONT TORONTO
- MOSAIC Institute
- University of Toronto
- U.S Consulate
- The Centre for Research & Innovations for Black Survivors of Homicide Victims (CRIB)
- Toronto Police Services Board
- Tropicana Community Services
- Progress Place
- Children, Youth and Families (CYF) Situation Tables
- York Region Centre for Community Safety
- Muslim Legal Support
- SomaliREN
- Welcome Centre Immigrant Services (York Region)

Acknowledging Our Funders







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