

**A World Within a Block.**



## **Annual Report 2015 – 2016**

**St. James Town Community Corner**



# Message from the Steering Committee

The St. James town Community Corner (The Corner) continues to grow and to thrive thanks to the participation and support of community residents, tenants and service provider partners. It is a truly inclusive and accessible space that “is owned by nobody”, yet “belongs to everybody”

In the summer, The Corner was a recipient of a city sponsored Pan-Am Games grant initiative which supported a number of local activities in the St. James Town community. In addition, new programs and partnerships through Yonge Street Mission and the Kiwanis Boys and Girls club were launched.

This year, The Corner intensified its focus on exploring the feasibility of developing the basement space at 200 Wellesley as The Corner Plus. The growth of The Corner and demand for use of its space has reinforced the need for expansion. Over the past year, we have been in conversation with Toronto Community Housing and provincial government funders to discuss potential development of this resource for local community needs. The proposed focus for development includes food security, community kitchen/social enterprise and youth engagement initiatives.

Health Access St. James Town, a cross-sectoral, multipartner initiative funded by the TC LHIN continues to operate from The Corner as its primary site and is doing a great job of connecting residents to appropriate health and social services at their doorstep

The Corner has championed the capacity of the people living in St. James Town to make a difference in building a strong community. We will be seeking a Collective Impact grant from the Trillium Foundation to explore the feasibility of bringing residents and service providers together to form a collective vision for a proud St. James Town.

A very special thanks to all our partners on-site, our funders and Toronto Community Housing for their ongoing support of The Corner.

**Children of St. James Town with Mehdiya working on the mural**



Youth Participants at Pan-am Activities

## **PAN AM GAMES**

The St. James Town Community participated in celebrating the Pan Am/ Para Pan Am Games in the Summer of 2015. The community had activities to celebrate the diversity of St. James Town and to celebrate the Games with residents. In order to create meaningful programming, 175 residents of all ages participated in 14 focus groups to inform the planning of the activities. In addition, 10 Activity Ambassadors were recruited from the community to help plan the activities. They represented the different cultural groups in the community.

## **MURAL-PAN AM LEGACY**

The design of the Pan Am Legacy Mural, chosen by The Corner, was one of the many versions we presented. It celebrates the wonderful legacy that the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Para Pan Am Games left behind in our community, embracing its inclusivity and diversity, which are some of St. James Town's greatest features. The colourful buildings with different patterns and designs, the accessibility button, the Aboriginal Healing Circle, and the LGBTQ colours, portray the tremendous diversity and multiculturalism of the neighbourhood, proving that St. James Town is definitely "A

## PAN AM HIGHLIGHTS:

People participated in 9 community walking tours:

**87**

People who participated in sporting activities:

**170**

People who participated in mosaic-making activities:

**51**

People who participated in digital story telling workshops:

**16**

Residents who were given Pan Am tickets to attend games:

**750**

Residents who participated in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Pan Am Games:

**200**

Residents and volunteers who attended a “Thank You” camping trip in Cobourg, Ontario:

**51**



Pan Am mural

world Within A Block.” This mural taught us so much about what community engagement is all about! There were so many community members interested and eager to contribute to our design, even individuals who do not live in the area. Whether it was contributing by physically painting a section with us, suggesting which colours to use, or simply observing for hours and keeping us company, we were glad to have your support!

Moreover, thank you for sharing your inspirational stories with us! Stories of how art plays an important role in your life. Stories of how art can allow us to cope with illness. Stories of how art can express feelings about social inequality. We were so touched to know that we even inspired some individuals to go back to making art and embrace their creative side again.

This mural was also special in the sense that not only did the youth from Serendipity Visual Arts have the opportunity to make a contribution, but other children and youth passing by also had the chance to leave their mark. We were able to see the impact of visual arts as an effective health intervention that improves the community’s overall health and wellbeing through boosting social and cultural capital and community engagement.

— Mehdia Hassan and Maryam Hassan, Serendipity Visual Arts

## STUART'S STORY

Addiction can affect anyone, anytime, anywhere and for any reason. As a child, I did not dream of becoming homeless and an addict, but that's exactly what I became. I could not function without getting high and I would do anything to get it. Fortunately, when everything was crumbling around me, I decided to get support, and got into a treatment program that helped me realize that I suffered from addiction. I was worthy and deserving of asking for help. I felt hope and I felt empowerment for the first time in 28 years. I thought I would like a more meaningful job where I could be of help to others, so I decided to go back to college for a diploma in social service work. I took advantage of a program called Investing in Neighbourhoods and started to work at The Corner as a Resource Worker. I have found the strength to turn my experiences into hope, compassion and understanding for those who battle with many issues on a daily basis. I was part of a support team at The Corner and provided support to community members. Working at The Corner, I was able to get support to enhance my career. When I finished my one-year contract with The Corner, I was offered a job at Progress Place. From the streets, to a recovery home, to a college diploma, to SJT and now Progress Place, I am doing what I love and am now over six years clean and giving back what was given to me.



Stuart

“Addiction can affect anyone, anytime and for any reason”

## IMPACT – THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

### The Corner + HASJT 2011–2016 Snap Shot

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Total # of Units Served (Including Front Area Services)	4,910	39,110	36,071	36,264	34,496	29,315	180,166
# Of Clients in Group Program	1,075	9,750	4,775	13,315	10,927	10,070	49,867
# Of Clients in One on One Service	28	960	1,841	2,118	2,636	2,474	10,057
# Of Unique Clients	–	–	48	607	1,253	1,469	3,377
# Of Programs / Services	27	318	317	427	309	222	1,620
# Of Unique Programs / Services	27	–	–	73	38	22	160
# Of Partners	8	28	28	14	17	19	114
# Of Volunteers	61	123	91	74	45	13	407
# Of Placement Students	–	2	12	20	8	16	58



Outreach Ambassadors

**COMMUNITY FEEDBACK:**

**What was said:**

- This is the best community corner ever
- Computers to be fixed
- New computers working everyone's happy
- Public Phone
- Home business ideas
- Computer Very Slow
- Extending the time for the public phone use
- Chess games for Adults
- Public Phone (private Line)
- Expansion of Epic After-school program

**What we have done:**

- EPIC program continues
- Computers updated

**AMBASSADORS**

- The purpose of the Outreach Ambassador Project was to connect residents of St. James Town to programs and services in the community and increase social connectivity. Outreach Ambassadors conducted outreach in the building lobbies and connect isolated or hard to reach residents with services in and around the community. Outreach Ambassadors were recruited from diverse backgrounds within the St. James Town community. Outreach Ambassadors attended training and capacity building sessions, specializing in crisis de-escalation, outreach and community engagement, interpersonal communication, mental health and community services. A total of 18 ambassadors were hired, speaking over 24 languages. During the annual Spring Gathering, Ambassadors led discussions in language specific groups in order to help identify culture and language specific needs and assets. Ambassadors successfully engaged over 800 residents in St James Town.



Residents and Safety Committee working on Neighbourhood Safety Plan

## **MAKING SAFETY A PRIORITY – ST. JAMES TOWN SAFETY PROJECT**

Phase one of the St. James Town Safety Project began in October of 2015 with the hiring of a Community Safety Coordinator and five diverse Safety Ambassadors from within the community. They developed a Community Engagement Tool, with contributions from Toronto Police Services, Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the City of Toronto Crisis Response Coordinator, to focus on issues of safety and security in the community. Using the tool developed, the Safety Ambassadors were trained and began engaging with residents in preexisting groups and sub-communities. Safety Ambassadors attended training sessions and workshops and were active in the community through outreach and participation in safety audits, some of which were completed in collaboration with the City of Toronto. Audit findings were then sent to the Steering Committee where the needs and concerns of the community were discussed and a Community Safety Plan was drafted.

### **GOVERNANCE**

The Corner is governed by a resident- and service provider-led Steering Committee. There are 8 residents and 5 service providers on the committee which is co-chaired by a resident and service provider. The governance model ensures resident voices are heard, there is leadership in decision making, and a true collaboration between residents and service providers.



St. James Town residents at The Annual Spring Gathering

## 2015 FESTIVAL AWARDS

### YOUTH

Torja Istiaque

### SENIORS

Estela Campusano

### NEWCOMER

Mary Dalreen Paul

### LGBTQ

Suhail Abual Sameed

### WOMEN

Rasathy Yogaraja

### MEN

Tom Haung

### ADVOCATE

Shirley Roberts

### LOCAL BUSINESS

Dominos Pizza

### BIG BUSINESS

Medallin Corporations

### CREATIVE/ARTISTIC:

Maryan Hassan

## SPRING GATHERING

The Spring Gathering at Rose Ave P.S on Thursday April 16th, 5:30-8:30pm, was held in order to engage residents in a community development and information sharing process. 109 residents in St James Town participated. 18 Ambassadors conducted outreach and facilitated the small group discussions during the event. Some of the emerging themes from the 2015 Spring Gathering included:

- Service access needs: child-minding supports and interpretation needed during programs
- Recommendations around information sharing and community outreach: door-to-door flyers and email communication to residents about programs and services will be more effective
- Physical infrastructure & safety needs: residents felt buildings are unsafe and voiced a need for traffic control and streetlights to ensure street safety. In addition, residents highlighted the need for better waste removal in neighbourhood and buildings
- Service needs: free dental care, summer programs for young children, legal support for newcomers, swimming classes and languages classes
- Residents also reported on the changes over the past year: more medical services/options available which were helpful; the community was becoming more diverse and cultural; there were more activities noticeable at The Corner; and the Health Access Intake Workers were really helping residents connect to services.

Overall it was a successful gathering. Results from the annual Spring Gathering consultations are used to inform planning for service provision and coordination, amongst service providers within St. James Town.



Children having fun getting their faces painted

## **SJT FESTIVAL / CABBAGE TOWN FESTIVAL**

On Saturday, September 12th, 2015, members from the St. James Town community came together for the annual St. James Town Festival, which was held from 1:00pm to 7:00pm at St. James Ave and Ontario Street. Celebrating “A world within a block,” community members experienced the rich diversity and multiculturalism of their neighbourhood through music, dance, arts, crafts, food, and sports competitions. There was something for everyone, whether it was button making, face painting, henna, or even bouncy castles. There were also 16 performances from local artists belonging to various cultural and ethnic groups, including Hula performances, First Nations drumming and dancing, spoken word poetry, and classical Indian dancing and singing, amongst others. Festival goers were also able to learn about the many services and resources available to them in the neighbourhood, as agencies from the St. James Town Service Providers’ Network also hosted tables at the event. Overall, the event was a great success—even the cold weather and rainy conditions couldn’t dampen community members’ spirits or enthusiasm as they came together to celebrate their vibrant neighbourhood.



St. James Town youth during the exchange program along with local youth at Nunavut

## FACTS ABOUT THE TRIP TO SANIKILUAQ

### Location:

North coast of Flaherty Island in Hudson Bay, on the Belcher Islands

### Area:

114.9km

### Population:

850 - 95% Inuit

### Language:

Inuktitut - English

### Number of schools:

2

### Medical facilities:

1

## • YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAM

• In the Spring of 2015, fifteen St. James Town youth participated in an exchange program to Sanikiluaq and hosted fifteen youth from Sanikiluaq, Nunavut, through the YMCA Canada exchange program.

## • STORY FROM ONE OF THE PARTICIPANT

• To me, the 2015 YMCA Youth Exchange to Sanikiluaq, Nunavut was a refreshing and eye-opening experience. The exchange allowed me to witness and learn about the lifestyles and the culture of the Indigenous people. It also gave me a chance to meet and hear about the lives and experiences of youth my age. I particularly enjoyed being with the youth at Sanikiluaq because they were always friendly and welcoming, and they had a lot of interesting topics to talk about. In addition to meeting new people, I also learned about how things worked in Sanikiluaq. For instance, I was shown how they hunted, processed, and divided food among the inhabitants of the community. Something that surprised me was the fact that smoking was very common among youth in the community. Apart from that, I also had the chance to play badminton in the school gym, as well as go ice skating in the hockey stadium in Sanikiluaq. Moreover, thanks to the teachings of the elderly, I was able to discover and grasp many traditional minigames including a game played with strings. All in all, the exchange to Sanikiluaq was what I consider to be one of my best experiences and I enjoyed the short but worthwhile exposure to Indigenous culture and tradition.

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## FUNDERS

Toronto Central – Local Health  
Integration Network (TC-LHIN)  
Ontario Trillium Foundation  
United Way Toronto

City of Toronto  
Government of Ontario  
Government of Canada

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## SERVICE PARTNERS

Anishawabe Health Centre  
CCAC – Community Care Access Centre  
City Hope  
City of Toronto  
CNH – Central Neighbourhood  
Elephant Space  
Fred Victor  
Growing Together  
Hospice Toronto  
Leacock foundation

Progress Place  
SHC – Sherbourne Health Center  
TCHC – Toronto Community Housing  
TNO – Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office  
Toronto City Mission  
Toronto Public Health  
WHIWH – Women’s Health  
in Women’s Hand  
YSM – Yonge Street Mission

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## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Wilma R. Sinnathurai – Resident  
Vickie Rennie – Resident  
Hai Yan (Susan) Huang – Resident  
Abinaya Balasubramaniam – Resident  
Amna Shah – Resident  
Pradeep Poudyal – Resident  
Suchana Pandey Pokharel – Resident  
Yograjah Chelladurai – Toronto  
Tamil Seniors Association

Veronica Macdonald – Central  
Neighbourhood House  
Nalini Pandalangat – Sherbourne  
Health Centre  
Criss habal-Brosek – Progress Place  
Shirley Roberts – Coordinator (Volunteer),  
Steering Committee  
Ravi Subramaniam – Thorncliffe  
Neighbourhood Office



**ACCESSIBLE | COMMUNITY DRIVEN | EQUITABLE | DIVERSE**

**St. James Town Community Corner (The Corner)**

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