



Doing Right Together for Black Youth



What We Learned from the
Community Engagement Sessions for
the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan



YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange

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**About the Ontario
Black Youth Action Plan**

Introduction and Background

ABOUT THE ONTARIO BLACK YOUTH ACTION PLAN



Decades of persistent and untiring advocacy by community stakeholders led to the launch of *A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan*, which includes the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan.

Released in March 2017, *A Better Way Forward* includes measures to help identify and eliminate systemic racism. It is also an acknowledgement that systemic racism - including anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia, and racism experienced by other communities, including the Jewish community - is real, and can act as a barrier to achieving opportunity.

ABOUT THE ONTARIO BLACK YOUTH ACTION PLAN

Part of Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategy, the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan (BYAP) is a four-year, \$47 million commitment to help reduce disparities for Black children, youth, and families.

CI²

The BYAP is framed by a Cultural Identity + Collective Impact (CI²) approach.

Cultural Identity is defined as the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is symbolic of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. Cultural Identity works to protect against anti-Black racism.

Collective Impact refers to the commitment of a group of stakeholders from different sectors to a set of principles for solving a complex social problem.



“Black youth in Ontario continue to experience disproportionately negative outcomes, including unemployment, violence, and a lack of opportunity.”

- *A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan*

ANTI-BLACK RACISM IS...

- Prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping, and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement.
- Deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, such that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society.
- Manifested in the legacy of the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians in society, such as the lack of opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

ANTI-BLACK RACISM leads to “a lack of equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for Black people” (Dei & Calliste, 2000).



Black youth make up **41%** of the youth in the care of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (*Toronto Star*, 2014) – **five times** their representation in the overall population (Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, 2015).



Black boys in Ontario are admitted to prisons at a rate that is **four times higher** than their White counterparts (*Toronto Star*, 2013), and are stopped by police **2.5 times more** than White males of the same age (*Toronto Star*, 2010).



Although Black youth only account for 12% of students in Toronto public schools, they represent **more than 31%** of all suspensions (*Toronto Star*, 2013).



Black youth across the province are unemployed at nearly **two times** the provincial rate (*Government of Ontario*).

QUICK FACTS

Examples of the disparities Black Torontonians face

Stats from *Toronto's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, 2017*

01.

Black Torontonians were victims of 85% of hate crimes in Toronto where racism was the motivating factor.

02.

27% of all carding incidents are focused on Black Torontonians, three times their representation in the overall Toronto population.

03.

Black women and girls are one of the fastest growing incarcerated groups.

04.

Black students become “early leavers” of high school at higher rates – in Toronto, 23% – compared to 12% of White students.

Well-documented disparities in outcomes for Black youth coexist with a long history of Black youth being labelled “troubled” and “troubling” – as “problems” and as “dangerous” to society.

The devaluing of Black youth as disposable, as lives that don't matter, has devastating consequences for Black youth who experience anti-Black discriminatory and racist practices.

**“I want Black youth in
this province to know that
their lives matter.”**

- Hon. Michael Coteau
Minister of Children and Youth Services
Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism

ABOUT THE ONTARIO BLACK YOUTH ACTION PLAN

The Black Youth Action Plan will:



INVEST IN BLACK YOUTH

in communities across Ontario, including Ottawa, the Greater Toronto Area, Hamilton, and Windsor



SUPPORT THE EMERGENCE

of new Black youth voices across sectors



REDUCE DISPARITIES

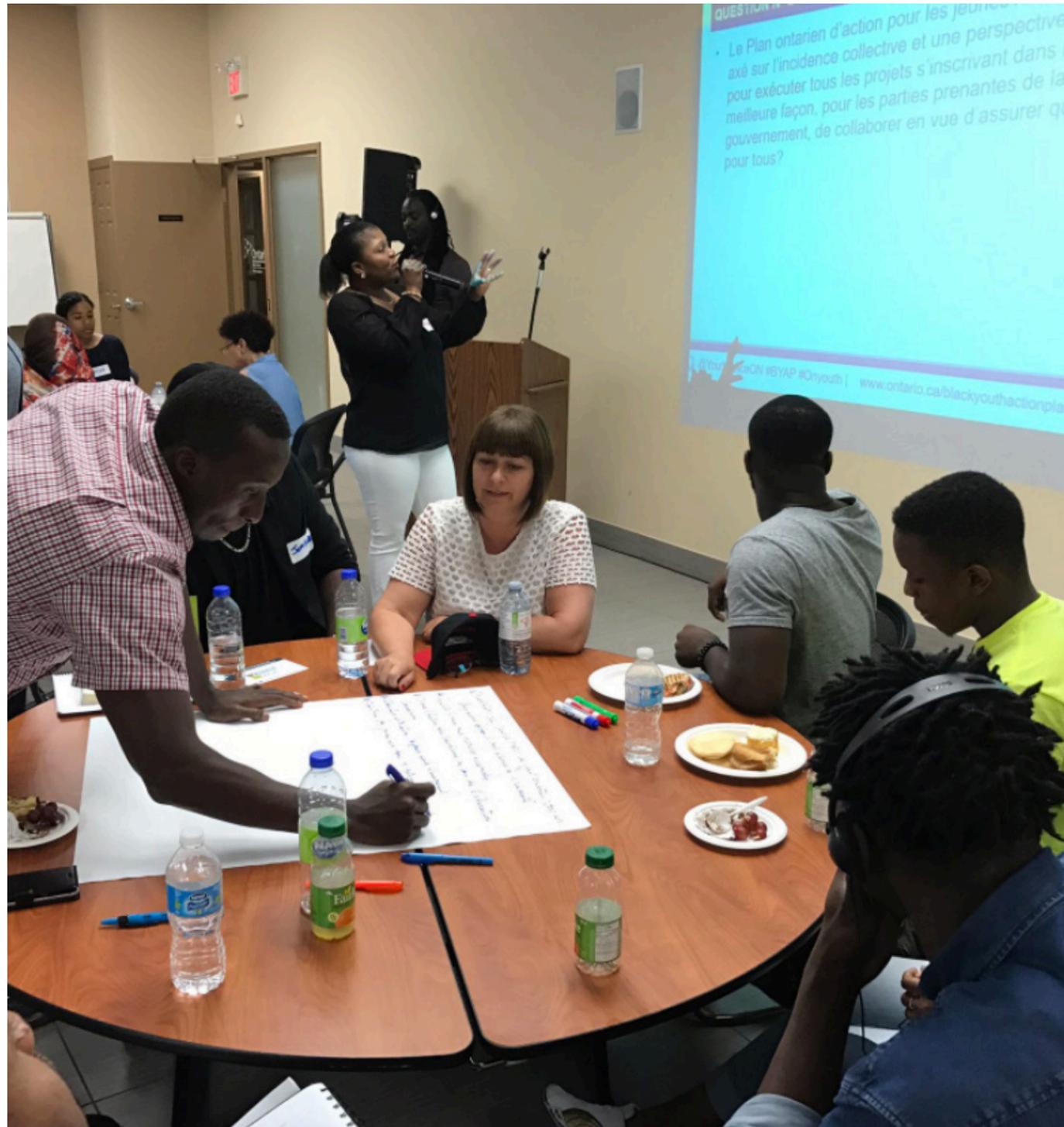
for Black children, youth, and families by increasing support in key areas

2.0

How Community Shaped the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan

Overview of Community Engagement Sessions

HOW COMMUNITY SHAPED THE ONTARIO BLACK YOUTH ACTION PLAN



@MFLALONDE

The Black Youth Action Plan (BYAP) will increase access to supports and opportunities for Black children, youth, and their families in Ontario across life stages, from early childhood to the transition to school and/or work.

The BYAP is responsive to communities, and has been guided by input from **Community Engagement Sessions** and an **External Implementation Steering Committee**, comprising systems experts from the Black community. This input has informed – and continues to inform – the development of the applications for programs funded by BYAP.

HOW COMMUNITY SHAPED THE ONTARIO BLACK YOUTH ACTION PLAN

The BYAP is a collective effort that prioritizes the input of Ontario's Black communities. In the spirit of collective action:



15 community engagement sessions were held with Black youth, community members, and service providers in cities across Ontario.



Over 1500 community members participated in the community engagement sessions or sent in written submissions.



Written submissions from community members and **key informant interviews** were also included.

Community members were asked to discuss and provide input on four questions:

1. What are the most important issues that affect children and youth in the Black community today?
2. What are the best ways to engage Black children and youth to hear their voices and learn about their experiences?
3. Describe the characteristics of an organization that meets the needs of Black children and youth.
4. What is the best way to work together in order to make sure that the Plan works for everyone?

15 Community Engagement Sessions

Greater Toronto Area

NORTH YORK

- March 21
- May 18

BRAMPTON

- May 9

- MISSISSAUGA
May 10

- VAUGHAN
May 13

- SCARBOROUGH
May 16
- June 22

DOWNTOWN TORONTO

- May 24
- July 20

MARKHAM

- May 30

AJAX

- June 13

Windsor

- June 6

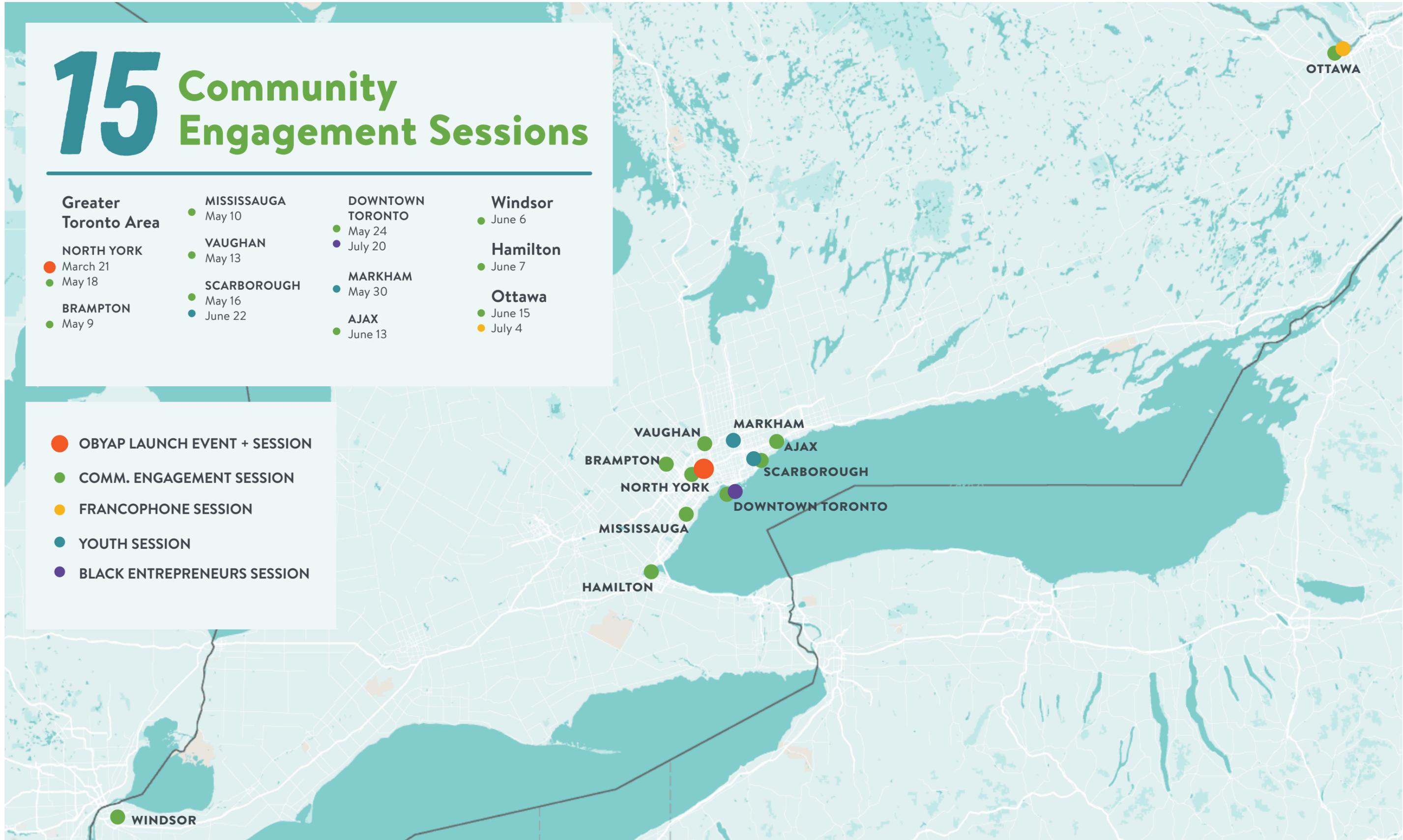
Hamilton

- June 7

Ottawa

- June 15
- July 4

- OBYAP LAUNCH EVENT + SESSION
- COMM. ENGAGEMENT SESSION
- FRANCOPHONE SESSION
- YOUTH SESSION
- BLACK ENTREPRENEURS SESSION

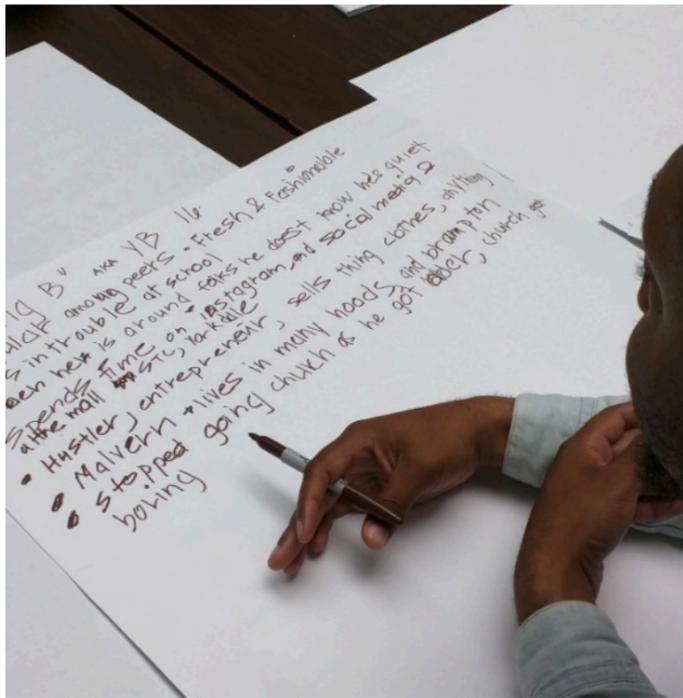


HOW COMMUNITY SHAPED THE ONTARIO BLACK YOUTH ACTION PLAN



@TWYFORSE

During the community engagement sessions, community members organized themselves around working tables and documented their dialogue onto flip charts and sticky notes.



@IRONICE



@IRONICE

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services shared anonymized data (without any identifying personal information) captured at these community engagement sessions, as well as written submissions, with Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX) to analyze, interpret, and summarize.

This report shares back with communities the summaries of these community conversations.

3.1

What We Learned from the Community Engagement Sessions Top Ten Issues for Black Youth and Their Families

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

Community members were asked to identify and prioritize the most important issues affecting Black children and youth.

This section discusses the top ten issues that community members identified, why these are issues for Black youth, how these issues are experienced, and the impacts on their wellbeing.

Community members also discussed how to create a more equitable Ontario for Black youth. Many of these suggestions echo and reaffirm past recommendations from previous consultations with Black communities.

Top Ten Issues for Black Youth

Identified by community members at the engagement sessions.

01
Widespread Anti-Black Racism

02
Black Excellence Not Recognized

03
Lack of Black Representation in Leadership Roles

04
Anti-Black Racism in the Educational System

05
Anti-Black Racism in the Child Welfare System

06
Anti-Black Racism in the Criminal Justice System

07
Trauma of Racialized Policing

08
Poverty and Economic Barriers

09
Mental Health

10
Wellbeing of Black Youth, Families, and Communities

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

01. Widespread Anti-Black Racism

Community members overwhelmingly described how anti-Black racism runs through all of Ontario's institutions and systems, including the educational, child welfare, and criminal justice systems, as well as the labour market.

Stereotypes and microaggressions* shape the daily experiences of Black youth in Ontario. The cumulative impacts of anti-Black racism include disempowerment, isolation, internalized racism, and poor self-esteem.

This widespread anti-Black racism interlocks with other structures of oppression. Community members described how the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion shape the unique experiences of Black youth.

For example, Muslim and male Black youth are subjected to increased criminalization and surveillance, while gender shapes the ways in which female Black youth are constructed as over-sexualized.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Community members expressed the need for widespread acknowledgement of and action towards ending anti-Black racism across multiple systems. Strategies should adopt an intersectional approach that understands diverse youth are impacted by anti-Black racism.

They also highlighted the importance of having access to race-based data throughout Ontario's systems.

*Microaggressions are comments or actions that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally express a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

01. Widespread Anti-Black Racism

"Systemic racism in schools."
TORONTO

"Systemic racism in the justice system."
BRAMPTON

"Systemic racism in child welfare."
BRAMPTON

"There is racial inequality at schools."
YOUTH SESSION
MARKHAM

"Systemic racism especially in the school system, by police, in the justice system."
BRAMPTON

"Systemic racism in accessing employment opportunities."
OTTAWA

"Systemic racism in the community."
HAMILTON

"Lack of acknowledgement of internal biases and how they get manifested in our institutions."
VAUGHAN

"Racist language happens daily."
TORONTO EAST

COMMUNITY VOICES

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

01. Widespread Anti-Black Racism

"We walk in somewhere and we're looked at differently; we get stared down."

TORONTO EAST

"We are labeled upon first look, even when successful. If you drive a nice car, they ask, 'Where did you get it?'"

MISSISSAUGA

"Disrespect or lack of respect for Black youth/families."

TORONTO

"Assumption that Black youth in groups is a problem."

HAMILTON

"People who make decisions for us don't like us."

OTTAWA

COMMUNITY VOICES

“Young Black Canadian-born adults are more likely to identify racism as an obstacle they face; more likely to say they experience some forms of unfair treatment because they are Black; and more likely to be adversely affected by these experiences. It appears, therefore, that young Black adults are more impatient with the failure of Canadian society to deliver on the country’s promise of equality.”

- The Black Experience Project in the GTA: Overview Report

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

02. Black Excellence Not Recognized

Community members discussed how Canadian society does not recognize the achievements, successes, contributions, hopes, and dreams of Ontario's Black communities.

This lack of recognition stems from a deficits-based view of Black children, youth, and their communities, magnifying shortcomings and undervaluing their assets.

Knowledge of the rich culture and history of Ontario's Black communities was identified as crucial to supporting a positive identity for Black youth in Ontario. Community members recognized there are significant knowledge gaps, particularly in the education system, in addition to the police, child welfare, and other institutions.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

02. Black Excellence Not Recognized

"Media representation: how Black people are represented."

MISSISSAUGA

"Students never see successful Black people come to their schools as part of a career day, or as guest speakers on a particular topic - only for Black History Month."

VAUGHAN

"There are negative stereotypes of the Black community."

BRAMPTON

"Share positive work being done by Black youth and the community."

VAUGHAN

"They don't see us as beautiful people."

TORONTO EAST

"Re-instill socio-cultural processes, which strengthen their sense of self, increase pride in their history and the contributions made by people of African descent to world development."

VAUGHAN

COMMUNITY VOICES

“Why do we need a Black arts centre? There’s this little box that they’re trying to put us all in.”

“We needed a place where we’re not shy or intimidated by telling our own stories. I think it’s about time we did. Our stories have been told for us for far too long.”

- Quotes from artists, elders, and alumni, NIA Centre

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

03. Lack of Black Representation in Leadership Roles

Community members identified the lack of representation of Black people within leadership roles in society as one of the consequences of systemic racism in education and the labour market.

This lack of representation means that Black people are absent from the decision-making processes of various systems, which frequently leads to recommendations that are fueled by stigma and labeling. This also leads to a disconnect between Black youth and social institutions.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Community members expressed the need for strong representation and meaningful involvement of Black youth within the BYAP, and the community projects it will support.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

03. Lack of Black Representation in Leadership Roles

"We need to see successful Black professionals."

BRAMPTON

"[There is a] lack of representation of Black voices in decision-making across organizations."

HAMILTON

"Lack of representation in fields apart from music and sports."

WINDSOR

"Not having Black people at the top, who stay at the top in an organization to give a connection to Black youth."

OTTAWA

"Lack of institutional representation."

OTTAWA

"Lack of representation in different fields/sectors."

OTTAWA

"No representation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)."

TORONTO EAST

"Lack of minority representation everywhere (ex. schools, media, community, etc.)."

MARKHAM

COMMUNITY VOICES

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

03. Lack of Black Representation in Leadership Roles

"Lack of representation on city councils, provincially, and federally in the Peel Region."

MISSISSAUGA

"The lack of Black representation means there is no one who will understand us."

AJAX

"When youth go to school, they do not meet many Black teachers, but many Black supply teachers."

HAMILTON

"Black people need to work harder to be at the same level as White people."

OTTAWA

"White privilege: certain number of seats at the top that White people want."

OTTAWA

COMMUNITY VOICES

QUICK FACTS

Black people have a long history in Canada

01.

The first Black person in Canada was reported in **1608**. From 1628 until the 1800s, Black slavery existed, particularly in Eastern Canada. Loyalists emigrating from the United States included Black Loyalists who had fought for independence

03.

Black people are the **third largest racialized group** in Canada, behind Chinese people and South Asian people (Statistics Canada, 2004).

02.

Black people have **diverse backgrounds and experiences**. Some can trace their roots in Canada back several centuries, while others have immigrated in recent decades and are just putting down roots.

04.

The Black population is **growing** and is concentrated in Canada's largest cities, especially in the Greater Toronto Area.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

04. Anti-Black Racism in the Educational System

Community members described schools as sites of contention for Ontario’s Black communities, where Black children, youth, and their families experience painful, everyday racism from teachers, administrators, counsellors, and peers.

They pointed out how the curriculum and lesson plans – which exclusively focus on Eurocentric values, history, and worldviews – devalue, belittle, and erase Black identities, cultures, and histories.

They described how the educational system engages in race-based streaming practices,* which ultimately constrain the hopes, dreams, and possibilities of Black children and youth.

Community members also noted the silencing and willful blindness of Black students’ realities within the educational system.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

There were discussions about redesigning the curriculum in Ontario schools so they are inclusive of Black histories, cultures, and accomplishments. Community members also emphasized the need to expand Black youth’s notions of what is possible in their education and careers to tackle the violence of low expectations about what Black youth can do.

* Academic streaming based on race; Grade 9 students are streamed into “applied” or “academic” courses, reinforcing educational disadvantages experienced by Black youth.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

04. Anti-Black Racism in the Educational System

"As Black youth, we feel the system is flawed because schools usually do not consider what we as Black youth face in the community. We do not get the information."

TORONTO EAST

"Students need to see themselves (and have their identity) reflected in the educational experience, the learning space, the curriculum, and the staff."

OTTAWA

"What's in the curriculum does not reflect who we are."

WINDSOR

"Lack of trust between Black students and school staff, education system."

TORONTO EAST

"Systemic racism in schools."

TORONTO EAST

"An education system that doesn't recognize the inherent racism of systems and White privilege."

VAUGHAN

"Starting with the education system, this is the first entry for children into systemic racism. From early education, Black children are faced with inequity. From there, other systems get involved. Schools then start engaging [in anti-Black racism]."

TORONTO EAST

COMMUNITY VOICES

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

04. Anti-Black Racism in the Educational System

"Many guidance counsellors are giving our youth information that is not in their best interest. I have spoken to many successful Black people and they all have a story to tell about how there were people in the school system who tried to pressure them not to take the required courses that they needed."

TORONTO

"A Black youth is oriented towards a college even if he wants to study in university."

OTTAWA

"Youth not supported or encouraged by schools and guidance counsellors to be successful."

VAUGHAN

"The school doesn't provide a lot of opportunities to pursue goals."

MARKHAM

"School system = streaming (when Black youth are encouraged by educators to take applied vs. academic); we should work with parents to identify how to support youth, especially those with language barriers."

MISSISSAUGA

COMMUNITY VOICES

“Black students are as capable, as competent, as creative, and as determined as all other students. The ways that Black students are constantly misjudged and mistreated by teachers and guidance counsellors is an injustice to our community.”

- Towards Race Equity In Education: The Schooling of Black Students in the Greater Toronto Area

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

05. Anti-Black Racism in the Child Welfare System

Community members identified the overrepresentation of Black children and youth in care as an important issue that impacts Black families.

Though child welfare interventions are aimed at supporting child and youth safety and wellbeing, Black children and youth who come into care experience limited positive outcomes and successes. Community members attribute this to the fact that child welfare organizations do not meet the needs of Black children and youth.

They also noted that protective factors, such as a sense of cultural identity, are compromised when Black children and youth go into care.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Community members stressed the importance of involving the Black community in child welfare matters, whether through preventive and supportive organizations or culturally and community appropriate placements for Black children and youth.

One Vision. One Voice: Changing the Ontario Child Welfare System to Better Serve African Canadians provides recommendations that address concerns expressed by community members.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

05. Anti-Black Racism in the Child Welfare System

"In the child welfare system, the needs [of Black youth] are not met."

TORONTO EAST

"Losing their cultural identity while in care."

HAMILTON

"Systemic racism in child welfare."

BRAMPTON

"Youth involved in care, cycle of their dependents entering care; higher percentage of Black youth entering care."

HAMILTON

"Over representation in the child welfare system."

TORONTO EAST

COMMUNITY VOICES

“People of African descent make up 8% of the population of the City of Toronto, yet they are 41% of children and youth in care. We’re over-represented by five times in child welfare. We also know that the experience of children and families in child welfare is often negative.”

- Kike Ojo, Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies (OACAS)

Taken from an interview about *One Vision. One Voice: Changing the Ontario Welfare System to Better Serve African Canadians*

“Police use of discretion powers in determining who gets charged and who’s not, who is followed and who is not, is very questionable. In the majority of cases that I’ve seen, Black mothers were more likely to be charged than White mothers for the same type of abuse.”

- Child Welfare Worker, as quoted in
*One Vision. One Voice: Changing the Ontario Welfare System
to Better Serve African Canadians*

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

06. Anti-Black Racism in the Criminal Justice System

Community members highlighted racism and discrimination within the criminal justice system, including the use of racial profiling to target marginalized youth.

They connected profiling and the use of unjust sentencing practices (i.e. maximum sentences, zero tolerance) when dealing with racialized communities with the issue of overrepresentation of Black youth, and the higher percentages of Black youth in the prison system, compared to other races.

These unfair practices are employed by various arms of this system (the criminal system, the court system, policing, etc.). Community members noted that the ultimate issue within the criminal justice system is that the needs of Black youth are not being met.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Community members suggested that access to support services for Black youth, such as competent legal supports and diversion programs, are necessary for combating profiling and unjust sentencing.

Transitional programs that ease reentry back into society upon release are also important.

By emphasizing restorative justice practices, the number of Black youth diverted from the criminal justice system can be increased.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

06. Anti-Black Racism in the Criminal Justice System

"Jobs help keep people busy. Crime is an expression of pain."

TORONTO EAST

"Black community issues are life threatening, [such as] crime among youth."

YOUTH SESSION, MARKHAM

"Discrimination within the judicial system that targets marginalized youth."

TORONTO WEST

"Increasing number of youth/men/women in prison; unfair sentencing for Black people in comparison to other races."

TORONTO WEST

COMMUNITY VOICES

QUICK FACTS

Black people experience racism in the criminal justice system

01.

Black inmates are one of the fastest growing groups in federal corrections. The federal incarceration rate for Black people is three times their representation rate in general society - and rapidly increasing (The Black Experience Project, 2017).

03.

The Black inmate population is a young one. One-half of federal Black inmates are 30 years of age or younger. By comparison, only 31% of the general inmate population is 30 years of age and under (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013).

02.

Between 2002 and 2012, the number of federally incarcerated Black inmates increased by 75%. In 2012, Black inmates accounted for 9.3% of the total federal prison population (up from 6.1% in 2002/03), while representing approximately just 2.9% of the Canadian population (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013).

04.

Black inmates are resilient. They appear to fare better post-discharge and have better release outcomes, despite inequitable treatment within institutions (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2013).

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

07. Trauma of Racialized Policing

Community members stressed that the practice of random stop-and-searches, also known as “carding”, is an example of systemic, racial profiling of Black youth by the police force.

They pointed out that racial profiling creates a lack of trust between Black youth and the police, and makes it difficult for the police to be a symbol of safety and protection for Black youth and their communities.

“Carding” causes Black youth to be concerned for their safety when in the presence of police officers, and to fear that they will be wrongfully targeted or apprehended. This leaves them with the debilitating feeling that there are no “safe people” to turn to, and that they do not have a voice. The lack of trust and feelings of safety can lead to violent confrontations with police that feed the seemingly never-ending cycle of conflict.

Community members pointed out how the presence of police in the school system means that schools are no longer places where youth should feel safe and not be in fear of being unjustly apprehended.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Recommendations from *This Issue Has Been With Us For Ages: A Community-based Assessment of Contact Carding in 31 Division* can be implemented to stop carding practices.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

07. Trauma of Racialized Policing

"People can't just stop you and question you. 'Where are you going? Who are you going with? Why do you need to go there?'"

VAUGHAN

"Police brutality has psychological effects."

TORONTO

"Police relations = lack of respect, trust."

TORONTO

"Police distrust interferes with knowing your rights, feeling youth have a voice, that it is safe to speak up."

HAMILTON

"Police not acknowledging their role in negative interactions (e.g. arresting in schools)."

BRAMPTON

"Distrust between community and the police."

TORONTO EAST

COMMUNITY VOICES

“The *Toronto Star* crunched the numbers and found that in 2013, 25 per cent of people carded were Black. At that time, I was 17 times more likely than a White person to be carded in Toronto’s downtown core.”

– Desmond Cole in *Toronto Life* (April 21, 2015)

“This issue [carding] has been with us for ages – I remember people talking about changing this when I was a teenager. Nothing has changed.”

– Survey Respondent, 31 Division,

This Issue Has Been With Us for Ages: A Community-Based Assessment of Police Contact Carding in 31 Division

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

08. Poverty and Economic Barriers

Community members described the multiple barriers to employment that Black youth face.

Community members frequently pointed out that poverty was a major barrier faced by Black youth in Ontario that limits their ability to meet their basic needs (food, housing, etc.).

They explained that poverty was a systemic barrier to achieving wellbeing and success for Black youth. They described how poverty results in differential access to resources, such as income and jobs, therefore limiting developmental opportunities for Black youth with disempowering impacts.

They also described how Black youth often experience discrimination and segregation throughout the job selection process (i.e. judgment of their names, physical appearance, assumed backgrounds, etc.).

Community members pointed out that the inappropriate streaming that Black youth experience in school limits their ability to strive for meaningful career choices, often leaving them in precarious jobs with little security, benefits or stability.

They identified jobs as an important developmental milestone that keep youth busy and that the lack of access to meaningful jobs contributes to youth taking part in illegal activities that can offer stable income.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Equitable hiring practices and policies need to be enforced to eliminate racial discrimination in hiring and compensation processes.

The presence of successful role models is extremely important to support youth to overcome the stigma of how they are portrayed.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

08. Poverty and Economic Barriers

"Systemic racism denies Black youth access to the labour market."

BRAMPTON

"We only get the precarious jobs."

TORONTO EAST

"Employers will not hire based on name, skin colour, gender, even postal code."

TORONTO EAST

"Narrative about Black youth not being suited for some jobs, but only for sports, entertainment, etc."

TORONTO EAST

"Black people only portrayed successfully in creative ventures."

HAMILTON

"Lack of opportunities given to Black youth to enter the workplace, especially in the skilled trades and professions."

TORONTO EAST

"Poverty - underemployment - unable to access resources."

MISSISSAUGA

COMMUNITY VOICES

“Black students who whiten resumés get 2.5 times more callbacks. For Jamal to be considered equal to Greg, he needs eight more years of experience. Companies say they want diverse candidates, but the numbers don’t bear the claims out. Whitening is just one of the many ways we try to fit into these worlds when we would rather they expand to include us.”

– Hadiya Roderique in *The Globe & Mail* (November 4, 2017)

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

08. Poverty and Economic Barriers

"Access to resources and opportunities are disproportional among Black youth compared to other White youth."

TORONTO EAST

"Lack of financial literacy."

TORONTO EAST

"Access to the labour market and the systemic racism that denies them."

BRAMPTON

"Opening paths and doors to success."

TORONTO EAST

"Discrimination based on: geographic location, preferences, race, name."

TORONTO WEST

"Forming a bigger picture for futures."

TORONTO EAST

COMMUNITY VOICES

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

09. Mental Health

Community members pointed out that Black youth affected by mental illness are stigmatized and marginalized.

They noted that there is a lack of positive supports to help youth cope with mental illness, pointing out that there is not enough acknowledgment of mental illness by the Black community.

Youth are often forced to deal with their mental illness on their own, because of fears of being judged and penalized by the community. The criminalization of mental health by various organizations within the community further discourages youth struggling with mental illness to seek help.

The compounding effects of the community's lack of acknowledgement of mental illness and the presence of systemic oppression have a significant impact on Black youth, such as in turning to substance use as an alternate form of coping.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Community members encouraged greater understanding and acceptance of mental health to combat stigma and increase use of services.

They also highlighted the importance of building capacity in mainstream organizations to provide and improve access to mental health services that meet the needs of Black youth.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

09. Mental Health

"Physiological effects of police brutality."

TORONTO

"Lack of acceptance within the community."

TORONTO EAST

"Lack of support for the mental health of youth, marginalization in the system."

OTTAWA

"Acknowledge the importance of mental health services to traumatized youth."

TORONTO EAST

"Mental health, sexuality, etc., are not openly expressed in our community."

TORONTO DOWNTOWN

"Effects of profiling and racism, and the after effects."

MISSISSAUGA

"Racism affects self-esteem, and can lead to challenges with mental health."

TORONTO

"Lack of Black mental health professionals."

VAUGHAN

COMMUNITY VOICES

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

10. Wellbeing of Black Youth, Families, and Communities

Community members emphasized that Black children and youth are members of families and that oppressive experiences of Black children and youth are not an individual youth issue. Anti-Black racism faced by Black children and youth impacts the wellbeing of entire families and communities.

Community members noted that there is a great need for support and engagement of parents and caregivers, who are often rendered invisible when Black youth are being discussed. They stressed the importance of supporting and engaging parents and caregivers and the wider family and community in working towards positive outcomes and wellbeing for Black youth. Such supports should take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity within Black communities. They emphasized the need for services and supports that are respectful towards parents and caregivers.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Community members suggested that policymakers should expand the notion of ‘family’ to be inclusive of a variety of caring relationships within Black communities, as the nuclear family structure may not reflect family structures in Black communities, and does not recognize informal parents or caregivers.

Black communities need to be supported to better navigate and engage with systems that are not set up by or for Black people. Community members highlighted the importance of Black youth knowing their rights and how to exercise them.

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

10. Wellbeing of Black Youth, Families, and Communities

"Need surrogate family in community to support parents as advocates."

TORONTO EAST

"Understanding of how systems oppress by dividing the family."

TORONTO EAST

"Divisive mentality stemming from institutionalized oppression."

TORONTO EAST

"Young Blacks depend on their parents. When the parents are deprived, the youth will have difficulties becoming integrated in the community."

OTTAWA

"Systems dividing generations: Black youth and elders, direct result of systemic racism."

HAMILTON

"Lack of advocacy knowledge of parents."

HAMILTON

COMMUNITY VOICES

TOP TEN ISSUES FOR BLACK YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

10. Wellbeing of Black Youth, Families, and Communities

"Culturally-focused family support."

TORONTO

"Parental advocacy and involvement."

BRAMPTON

"We should work with parents to identify how to support them, especially with language barriers."

MISSISSAUGA

"Parental literacy in terms of how the school system actually works."

TORONTO EAST

"There is nothing [mentioned] of Black parents in any way or shape. How are we going to solve these issues if parents are not at the centre?"

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

"Intergenerational balance between elders and youth."

TORONTO EAST

"Need to get parents involved; they have a role to play."

BRAMPTON

"Create programs targeting families and parents so they can provide for their children and encourage children."

VAUGHAN

"Parenting, in all aspects of the word; meaning there need to be programs that educate young people on the importance of being a parent, and to help young single mothers and fathers make better choices. Preventing the breakdown of parent-to-child relationships is very key to the rebuilding of our community."

VAUGHAN

COMMUNITY VOICES

3.2

What We Learned from the Community Engagement Sessions Working Together To Do Right for Black Youth

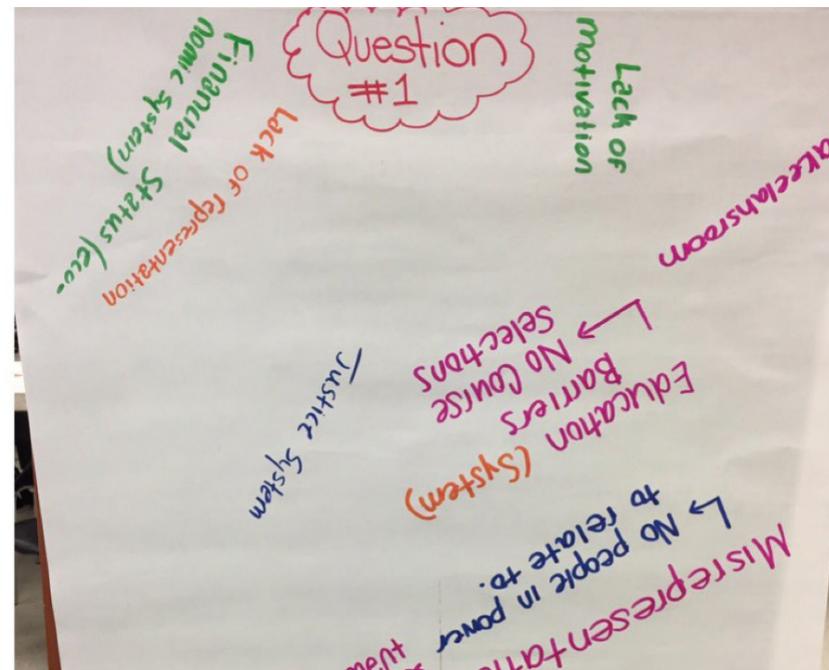
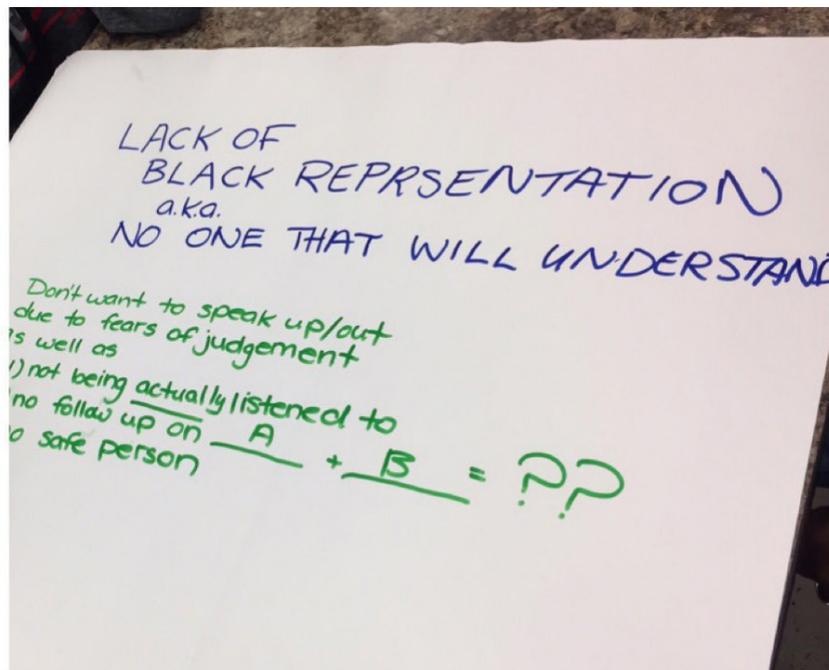
WORKING TOGETHER TO DO RIGHT FOR BLACK YOUTH



Community members were asked to reflect on the best way to work together to ensure that the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan works for Black youth and builds the capacity of Black organizations.

This section discusses their suggestions on:

- The best ways to engage Black youth to hear their voices and learn about their experiences.
- The characteristics of organizations that can meet the needs of Black youth.
- The criteria that define a Black organization.



@TENTHLETTER

3.2.1

Working Together To Do Right for Black Youth

Centering Black Youth Voice and
Leadership in the Ontario Black
Youth Action Plan

The Black Youth Action Plan (BYAP) is committed to reflecting the voices and experiences of Black children and youth.

What are the best ways to engage Black children and youth to hear their voices and learn about their experiences?

CENTERING BLACK YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP IN THE BYAP



Community members emphasized the importance of understanding how youth communicate, to be able to communicate *with* them and not *at* them. Black youth are online and can be engaged through social media.

Community members noted that engaging Black youth voices within youth spaces requires providing accessible information and reducing barriers that limit participation opportunities.

They suggested that a way to ensure Black youth voices are engaged and heard is through storytelling and representation of Black youth voices in the public sphere, including in the media.

FIVE WAYS

to center Black youth voice and leadership in the BYAP:

- 01.**
Nothing About Black Youth
Without Black Youth
- 02.**
Communicate WITH Youth,
Not AT Youth
- 03.**
Reduce Barriers & Provide
Accessible Information
- 04.**
Create Opportunities
for Storytelling &
Representation
- 05.**
Prioritize Black Youth
Voices and Develop Black
Youth Partnerships

CENTERING BLACK YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP IN THE BYAP

"Youth need to be at all the decision-making tables."

TORONTO WEST

"Youth should be engaged in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of this initiative."

OTTAWA

"As a youth, I can coordinate discussions among my peers so we can discuss the issues we face."

TORONTO EAST

"Giving youth opportunities to speak, creating a comfortable place to speak."

WINDSOR

"I want to be a part of the decision-making process to build my community."

TORONTO EAST

COMMUNITY VOICES

CENTERING BLACK YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP IN THE BYAP

"Build trust with the community by keeping us informed and involved. Youth must be involved [in] every step of the process, as well as parents and community stakeholders."

TORONTO EAST

"Engage Black youth and listen to the issues they're facing."

HAMILTON

"As a Black youth, I want to be an investor in designing programs. I want to be a part of the decision-making process to build my community, have an action plan and check to see if these things have been done."

TORONTO EAST

"[Remove] barriers that exclude youth from communicating their experiences, like transportation, language, food security, isolation, depression."

OTTAWA

"A best way to engage Black children and youth to hear their voices and learn about their experiences is to have them artistically convey what they want to say. Some Black children enjoy rap or writing poems. [It's] easier for them to tell their stories in a way they feel comfortable."

TORONTO

COMMUNITY VOICES

“I would just like to tell anyone who is in a position to help a young person that if they try to speak to you, make sure to properly listen and take everything they say seriously. The most important thing is to be there for them, especially if you’re an adult, because finding good people to talk to is tough as a youth. Sometimes it is better for them to talk to someone with more experience than another youth, who may not be able to help them as much in the long run.”

- Benjamin Jacobs, Grade 12 Student – Emery Collegiate Institute & YouthREX Youth Research Assistant
Youth Perspectives | Speaking Up: Youth Voice & Ontario’s Black Youth Action Plan

“This ageism silences our youth and makes them consider going to other places to voice their ideas and opinions with people who are more likely to listen or agree with them. This is sad because a lot of the wisdom that the elderly and other adults can provide is ignored due to this repeated treatment of the youth.”

- Benjamin Jacobs, Grade 12 Student – Emery Collegiate Institute & YouthREX Youth Research Assistant
Youth Perspectives | Speaking Up: Youth Voice & Ontario’s Black Youth Action Plan

CENTERING BLACK YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP IN THE BYAP



Black youth-centered initiatives challenge discrimination, power structures, and unfair resource distribution, and provide a space for questioning the reproduction of systems and ideologies that have negatively impacted their lives and communities.

Youth have a unique voice and are finding imaginative and creative ways of telling new stories, participating in political activity, responding to complex social problems, and advocating for change.

“The Ontario Black Youth Action Plan must engage and involve Black youth in the development and implementation of the plan, as this is crucial for creating a sustained effort and legacy. Black youth as having a stake in, and the skills and experience to contribute to, the issues that impact their daily lives is an important way to resist the stigma associated with ‘Black youth at risk’, a stigma that wrongly and violently tells a single story of Black youth in media and public discourses.”

– Uzo Anucha, Academic Director, YouthREX

Youth in the News: Ontario Launches Ontario Black Youth Action Plan

3.2.2

Working Together To Do Right for Black Youth

Five Characteristics of Organizations
That Meet the Needs of Black Youth

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS

of organizations that meet the needs of Black youth:

01.

Black Leadership
and Direction

02.

Diverse Authentic
Representation

03.

Sustainability

04.

Responsiveness
and Accountability

05.

Youth Development

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH

01. Black Leadership and Direction

Community members described an organization that can meet the needs of Black youth as one where there is Black leadership and that has a majority of staff and clientele who are Black.

They also noted that such an organization will have culturally-relevant services and well-defined parameters for engaging non-Black allies.

"Black staff -
relatable Black person,
Black leadership,
Black decision-makers/
directors, Black
programs."

HAMILTON

"Black Executive
Director, larger
percentage of clients
are Black, majority of
staff are Black.
For us, by us."

BRAMPTON

"Allow the
Black community
to take the
lead."

OTTAWA

"Provide culturally-
appropriate service
to Black people, by
Black people. Culture
is interwoven into
service delivery."

BRAMPTON

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH

02. Diverse Authentic Representation

Community members emphasized that organizations that can meet the needs of Black youth must have diverse and authentic representation of Black communities - going beyond having just Black front-line staff to having Black representation at all levels within the organization and within all guiding mandates, visions, and missions.

Community members also stressed the importance of such Black-run and operated organizations taking direction from the community.

"Recognizing diversity within the Black community."

TORONTO WEST

"Representation of staff (front-line, senior management, board), the majority need to be Black. Mission, vision, mandate focused on Black people's cultural identity."

MISSISSAUGA

"Composition and mandate - not just racialized but your awareness and experience of the population served "authentic" ... equitable, accountable to Black community, programs that reflect the needs of the Black population and issues that impact them."

MISSISSAUGA

"An organization that is developed within the community with the purpose to serve the community, and directed and operated by the community."

BRAMPTON

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH

03. Sustainability

Reflecting on the failures of past initiatives for Black youth, community members stressed the importance of sustainability for organizations focused on serving Black communities. They pointed out the challenges of sustainability when an organization is dependent on grants.

They defined sustainability as involving both trust and support from the community, and that it requires connections to other organizations.

Lastly, they stressed the value of having long-term outcomes and ongoing capacity-building, particularly for smaller organizations.

"How do we reinforce emerging low-capacity ethnic communities and make their voices heard? If a big organization applies for xyz, because they have experienced grant writers, etc., they will have more access than smaller, newer organizations. Creating space and opportunities for small/new organizations."

OTTAWA

"An organization that values sustainable outcomes rather than adhoc problematic short-term outcomes. An organization that is open to failing yet doing things in alternative manners to learn the lessons from failing and improving."

TORONTO WEST

"Sustainable - does not follow the money/grants. Community-centric, focused, and aware. Cross-generational. Conscious, consensus decision making. Financial literacy."

TORONTO WEST

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH

04. Responsiveness and Accountability

Community members emphasized that to meet the needs of Black youth, there is a need for coordinated responses across sectors and between organizations. There is also a need for organizations to be responsive to current and emerging trends amongst different demographic groups within Black communities.

They emphasized that organizations that can meet the needs of Black youth must be “proactive” in accessing and monitoring data and issues pertinent to Black communities.

Continuous education and awareness of evidence-based outcomes that inform work with Black communities were described as important for achieving results.

“Organizations that have demonstrated consistent success with evidence-based outcomes where Black youth development is concerned.”

TORONTO WEST

“Grounded in research and [is] relevant. Organizations must have the capacity to do research. Good success indicators. Diverse Black experiences. Different types of multidisciplinary roles. Orientations that take different critical justice approaches.”

TORONTO EAST

“Must keep in mind that there are Black people everywhere, can’t only have programs in what are considered priority neighbourhoods. Ex. minorities are being pushed out of the Toronto core due to land ownership and cost-of-living issues.”

TORONTO EAST

“Up to date on current racial issues, continuous education. Periodic check-ins for accountability.”

HAMILTON

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH

05. Youth Development

Community members noted that meaningful engagement invites Black youth to leadership roles on conversations about their development, gives them access to mentors and role models, and exposes them to activities and environments they wouldn't normally have access to. Meaningful youth engagement and development expands their notions of possibilities.

Community members strongly suggested that organizations must move past conventional ways of speaking and working with Black youth by exploring and addressing how systemic barriers and histories of oppression impact their present-day conditions.

They stressed the importance of the engagement and healing of “high-risk youth” or “street-involved youth” by grounding this work in strong Black identities while providing them with meaningful roles.

“Invite them to conversations just like these. Let youth facilitate their own discussions. Give youth leadership roles in which they can contribute change.”

TORONTO WEST

“Start where they [Black youth] are at... move past conventional ways of collecting youth experiences. Find out the things that are prohibiting Black youth from being engaged. Honest historical contexts. Looking at things that aren't often brought up (i.e. looking at African civilizations). Slavery interrupted our history. Work with them to bring out that excellence. Help them develop positive characters. Utilize media channels to communicate positive messages about their history and heritage. Enable them to deconstruct and analyze media and culture. Connect youth with resources such as the eXchange.”

TORONTO WEST

4.0

**From Collaborative Learning
to Collective Action**

FROM COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TO COLLECTIVE ACTION

The findings from the community conversations are guiding the implementation of the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, including the funding requests that were rolled out over the Summer and Fall (2017) to support communities to work collectively on the following program themes and initiatives:

1. Culturally focused parenting and mentorship programs

A) Together We Can Youth Mentorship Program will fund up to 21 new mentorship initiatives for Black children and youth.

B) Innovative Supports for Black Parents will fund and evaluate existing community-led innovative models of supporting Black parents.

2. Prevention programming

A) Stop Now and Plan will expand family-focused mental health intervention programs for children aged 6-12 in Black organizations.

3. Access to higher education and skills development

A) Industry-Led Career Initiative will fund the expansion of proven industry-led initiatives to improve employment outcomes and representation in select industries for Black youth.

B) Post-Secondary Education Connectors will fund a network of workers to conduct culturally-relevant, community-based outreach to increase pathways to post-secondary education.

4. Community outreach and anti-violence promotion

A) Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker Program will expand the network of youth workers providing intensive intervention supports to Black youth.

B) Violence Prevention Campaigns Initiative will undertake public awareness campaign(s) focused on reducing youth violence and victimization.

FROM COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TO COLLECTIVE ACTION



@COTEAU

To increase awareness about these funding opportunities, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services hosted another 20 Community Co-Design Sessions to provide an opportunity for community members to network with each other, form partnerships, and explore if they are interested in applying for funding.

When fully implemented, the four-year, \$47 million Ontario Black Youth Action Plan will support **10,800 Black children, youth, and their families** annually - in schooling, postsecondary education, and employment, as well as those in conflict with the law.

The work continues and conversations are ongoing.

To stay informed, please join the Ontario Black Action Plan list by emailing youthopportunities@ontario.ca today!

HOPES ABOUT THE ONTARIO BYAP

"This is an opportunity for us to work together within the Black community."
HAMILTON

"Caters to the needs within the Black community."
YOUTH SESSION- MARKHAM

"Choosing specific needs to address that are critical in the Black community."
TORONTO - WEST

"Recognizing diversity within the Black community."
TORONTO

"Allow the Black community to take the lead."
OTTAWA

COMMUNITY VOICES

5.0

Acknowledgments

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report, *Doing Right Together for Black Youth*, reflects the collaborative and collective work of so many individuals who are personally and professionally invested in the wellbeing of Black youth.

We acknowledge the contributions of the over 1500 community members who either participated in the 15 Community Engagement Sessions organized by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), sent in written submissions or had extensive conversations with MCYS staff.

We thank you all for sharing your insights and stories to ensure that the priorities of the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan (BYAP) reflect the realities of Black youth and communities.

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The analysis and the development of this report was led by Dr. Uzo Anucha, the Provincial Academic Director of YouthREX / Associate Professor of Social Work at York University, with contributions from staff and research assistants at YouthREX.

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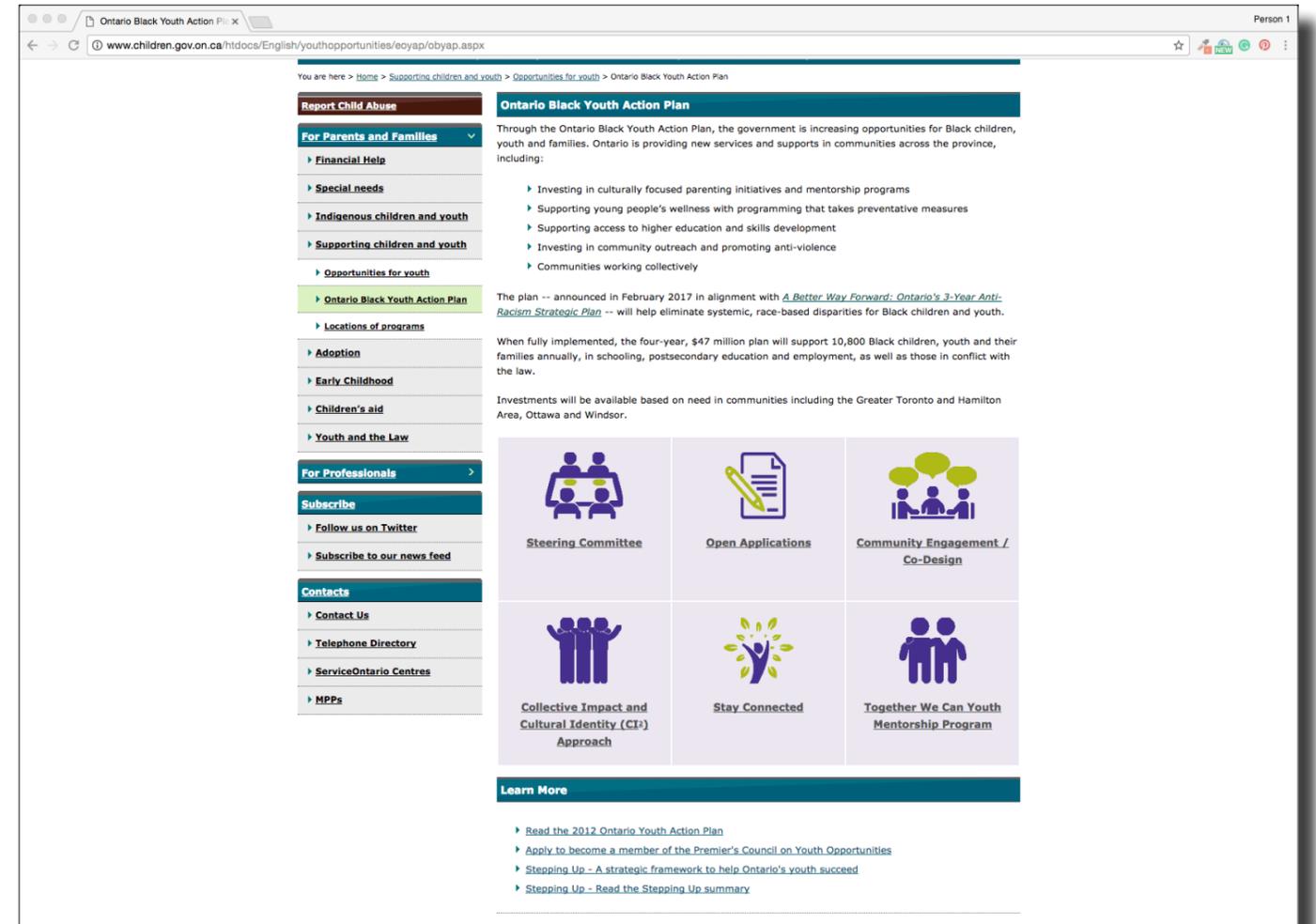
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Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange. Ontario Black Youth Action Plan Related Resources, Industry-Led Career Initiative: <http://exchange.youthrex.com/tags/obyapindustry>

Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange. Ontario Black Youth Action Plan Related Resources, Innovative Supports for Black Parents Initiative: <http://exchange.youthrex.com/tags/obyapparentsupport>

Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange. Ontario Black Youth Action Plan Related Resources, Together We Can Youth Mentorship Program: <http://exchange.youthrex.com/tags/obyapmentorship>



YOUTHREX

Research &
Evaluation eXchange

The Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX) is a province-wide initiative based at the School of Social Work at York University, with regional hubs at Carleton University, King's University College at Western University, and Laurentian University.

OUR MISSION is to make research evidence and evaluation practices accessible and relevant to Ontario's grassroots youth sector through capacity building, knowledge mobilization, and evaluation leadership.

OUR VISION is an Ontario where shared knowledge is transformed into positive impact for all youth. Our Stakeholders include grassroots youth-led and youth-serving initiatives (frontline staff, program staff, leadership), funders, and policy makers.

YouthREX is primarily funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, with contributions from the four partner universities.

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