

THE BLACKCREEK
YOUTH INITIATIVE



BLACK CREEK YOUTH INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD



I am honored to welcome you to the Annual General Meeting of the Blackcreek Youth Initiative. Today, we reflect on the past year, celebrate our achievements, and look forward to future opportunities. Blackcreek Youth Initiative is more than an organization – it's a community dedicated to empowering youth, helping them reach their potential, and overcome challenges.

This year has brought both growth and challenges, from expanding programs to launching new initiatives. I want to acknowledge the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and partners, whose efforts have made a meaningful difference in the lives of our youth.

Looking ahead, we are excited to innovate and adapt, ensuring our programs meet the evolving needs of our youth. We will continue to foster partnerships and expand our impact, with the goal of creating lasting positive change. However, we cannot do this alone – it's through the collective efforts of our entire community that we will succeed. Thank you all for your unwavering support. Together, we are making a significant difference, and I look forward to another year of progress and success.

Thank you.

Dalubuhle Ndlovu
Black Creek Youth Initiative Board Chair

dalubuhle/ndlovu

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community Members,

Reflecting on this past year, I feel deep gratitude and pride for what we've achieved together at the Black Creek Youth Initiative (BCYI). Through 2023-2024, our journey has been marked by inspiring growth and a renewed commitment to the youth we serve. With the expansion of our weekly programs to a second location, we've doubled our capacity to provide a safe, consistent space for young people—a space where they can find belonging, guidance, and the tools to build brighter futures.

Our partnerships have been a cornerstone of our progress. Through the Canada Summer Jobs Program, youth members gained employment, using the skills from that experience to now secure full-time roles. And, with York University, we launched a powerful awareness initiative on gun violence, amplifying the voices of our youth to spotlight this critical issue. Our ongoing work with the Borderless Access to Education (BATE) project, now in its third year, continues to provide young people with pathways to education and professional growth, breaking down barriers and opening doors to opportunity.

This year also brought heartbreak with the loss of Mario Giddins, a peer leader and dedicated member, to gun violence. Mario's legacy strengthens our resolve to tackle this issue head-on, serving as a reminder of the urgency and importance of our mission.

However, the needs of our community continue to grow, and we're reminded daily of our essential role. Many youth in Black Creek rely on BCYI's wraparound support, which pushes us to build more capacity, expand our team, and deepen our impact in the year ahead.

Thank you to everyone—our supporters, partners, volunteers, and community members—who make our work possible. Together, we are creating change, and I am hopeful and energized by the possibilities we'll achieve in the coming year.

Destin Bujang
Executive Director

Destin Bujang

BCYI

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

VISION

A world in which
all young people
have the
opportunity to
achieve their full
potentials.



MISSION

Engage young people with tools
and resources needed to
address systemic barriers and
develop leadership skills through
community building.

OUR VALUES

- Love, respect, kindness and support for one another.
- Creating inclusive, safe and brave spaces for young people to flourish.
- Youth-led/Youth decided, youth centred.
- Culturally responsive.
- Community focused.



BCYI

Annual Report 2023-2024

A BRIEF HISTORY AND OUR UNIQUE APPROACH

Founded in 2018, the Black Creek Youth Initiative (BCYI) emerged from a grassroots effort to address the pressing needs of youth in the Black Creek community, a neighbourhood often impacted by systemic challenges, including poverty, violence, and limited access to resources. BCYI was built on the belief that young people deserve spaces where they feel safe, valued, and empowered to overcome obstacles, both personal and systemic.

Our approach combines a deep understanding of the intersecting challenges youth face with practical, community-driven solutions. We recognize that issues like systemic racism, violence, and economic disparity are intricately linked to individual struggles, such as mental health, self-esteem, and access to education. To address these layers, BCYI provides comprehensive support through weekly programs, individual case management, and partnerships with local organizations. Our youth violence prevention and one-on-one support programs offer youth not just a refuge but also a launchpad for personal growth and community leadership.

What makes BCYI unique is our holistic, wraparound model. By combining culturally sensitive spaces, trauma-informed practices, and system navigation services, we help youth navigate immediate crises while equipping them with the tools to pursue long-term goals. Our collaborative approach, including partnerships with schools, local agencies, and advocacy groups, enables us to connect youth to essential services—whether healthcare, employment, or mentorship—and break down the barriers that have historically held them back.

At BCYI, we remain committed to empowering our youth, not only as individuals but as community members poised to drive positive change for generations to come.



WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO... THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Weekly Youth Program

Serving youth ages 12 to 29, our weekly program provides a supportive and culturally sensitive space where young people connect, learn, and grow. Now expanded to two locations, this program offers youth numerous opportunities: mentorship, field trips, fun activities, and more. Participants build meaningful connections and gain access to resources and guidance that help them develop essential life skills and navigate personal and systemic challenges.



Borderless Access to Education (BATE)

BCYI's BATE project is part of an extensive, six-year research initiative funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, in collaboration with Justice for Children and Youth and S4 Collectives. This project focuses on understanding and addressing the barriers to education faced by young non-status individuals in Ontario. By gathering data on these challenges and their impacts, BATE aims to provide insights that will inform policy changes, improving educational access for youth across the province at all levels. Through mentorship, support services, and skill-building workshops, BATE empowers youth to envision and work toward brighter, barrier-free futures.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO... THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Youth Violence Prevention (YVP)

Funded by the City of Toronto and now in its second year, the YVP program addresses the critical issue of youth violence in the Black Creek community. Through trauma-informed workshops, case management, and partnerships with local organizations, YVP equips youth with tools to break cycles of violence and heal from trauma. By fostering resilience, positive coping strategies, and community engagement, YVP empowers young people to envision a safer and brighter future.

International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP)

As a partner of the ICCRP, BCYI empowers youth to actively participate in shaping child rights initiatives on a global scale. Three young people from BCYI serve on the advisory committee, engaging in monthly meetings where they share insights, advocate for youth issues, and contribute to program development. This involvement has a profound impact: it amplifies the voices of Black Creek youth on international child rights issues, enhances their leadership skills, and fosters a strong sense of agency. By participating in ICCRP, BCYI's youth members gain invaluable experience in advocacy, collaboration, and public engagement, positioning them as changemakers within their community and beyond.



WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO... THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Youth Presentation at York University Master's Class

This year, BCYI youth were invited to present at a the Masters of Leadership and community Engagement class at York University, where they shared their experiences and insights as young leaders within the Black Creek community. The presentation allowed our youth to discuss the impact of BCYI's programs on their personal growth, community engagement, and leadership skills. Their stories were met with a warm and enthusiastic reception, resonating with students and faculty alike.

The opportunity to present in an academic setting not only gave our youth a platform to amplify their voices but also fostered their confidence and public speaking skills. The experience showcased the strength, resilience, and potential of BCYI's young leaders, who left a lasting impression on attendees. This engagement underscored the power of BCYI's holistic approach and the profound influence it has on developing capable, empowered leaders prepared to inspire change in their communities.



Impact Metrics and Success Stories

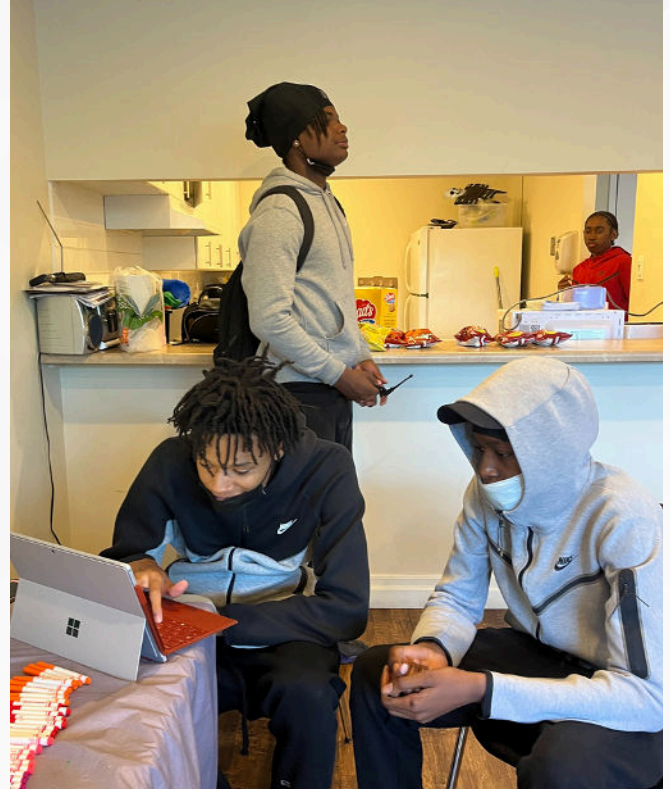
In 2023-2024, BCYI provided over 1,000 touchpoints for youth through weekly programs, workshops, and community events. With an average of 20 young people attending each session, BCYI offers consistent, meaningful support that fosters personal growth and community connections. Highlights include the successful employment of two youth members through the Canada Summer Jobs Program, who now hold full-time roles, and the impactful involvement of youth on the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership advisory committee, amplifying their voices on a global stage.

BCYI's programs have yielded measurable positive outcomes: youth report increased self-confidence, access to vital resources, and strengthened peer support networks. These successes reflect BCYI's role as a community anchor, creating pathways to opportunity, resilience, and long-term empowerment for young people in Black Creek.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO... THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Community Partnerships and Collaborations

BCYI's success is strengthened through vital partnerships that enhance our programs and expand our reach. The Vitanova Foundation, one of our main partners, provides essential support to our weekly youth program, helping us deliver consistent, impactful services. Additionally, BCYI collaborates with local agencies and educational institutions to create meaningful learning opportunities for students. Through partnerships with York University, Toronto Metropolitan University, Seneca College, Guelph-Humber, and Humber College, we welcome practicum students who gain hands-on experience in community service, while our youth benefit from the added resources and mentorship these students bring. These collaborations not only support BCYI's mission but also build a strong network of future leaders equipped with community-centered skills and perspectives.



LOOKING AHEAD 2025



In 2025, BCYI aims to expand its capacity, secure sustainable funding, and enhance youth programs to meet the growing needs of our community. By increasing staff, adding resources, and strengthening partnerships, we can extend our reach and provide deeper support for youth. We're committed to enriching our programs with skill-building workshops, mentorship, and culturally relevant activities that equip young people with the tools for future success. Pursuing consistent funding will ensure the sustainability of these efforts, empowering BCYI to continue creating positive change in Black Creek.

Additionally, we plan to introduce new initiatives such as digital literacy training and entrepreneurship programs to prepare youth for the evolving job market. Collaboration with local businesses and organizations will help us provide internships and job placements, creating pathways to meaningful careers. We'll also prioritize mental health advocacy, ensuring accessible resources and support for all youth. By fostering community-led projects and amplifying youth voices, we aim to inspire a generation of leaders ready to shape a brighter future for Black Creek and beyond.

Thank you!



Thank you to our incredible staff, volunteers, partners, and donors for your unwavering dedication and generosity. Your contributions make everything we do at BCYI possible. Together, we've empowered youth, fostered inclusivity, and created meaningful change in the Black Creek community.

From supporting programs to mentoring and funding initiatives, your belief in our mission drives our success. As we look to the future, we're inspired by your commitment and honored to have your support. Together, we're building a brighter, more equitable future for our youth. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey. We couldn't do it without you!



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