



**BLACK CREEK
YOUTH INITIATIVE**

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 – 2025



www.blackcreekyouthinitiative.com

✉ info@blackcreekyouthinitiative.com

Message from the Board Chair

It is an honour to share this message as we reflect on another year of growth, learning, and resilience at the Black Creek Youth Initiative. BCYI continues to be a space where young people feel seen, supported, and encouraged to lead, and this year reminded us why our work matters so deeply.

Across our weekly programs, youth demonstrated remarkable leadership, creativity, and courage. Whether through mentorship, education pathways, arts-based activities, or community safety discussions, young people shaped the direction of our work and reminded us that BCYI is strongest when youth voice guides the way.

Our community also faced real challenges this year. Many young people continue to navigate housing instability, food insecurity, mental health pressures, and the ongoing impact of systemic barriers. These realities reinforce the importance of safe, consistent spaces like BCYI, where youth can connect with peers, access caring adults, build skills, and find community. Their resilience fuels our commitment and strengthens our resolve.

We are deeply grateful to our staff team and volunteers for showing up every week with dedication and compassion. Your commitment to building meaningful relationships, delivering trauma-informed support, and creating welcoming spaces makes a lasting difference in the lives of the youth we serve.

This year also marked strong collaboration with our partners — from schools and service organizations to funders and community groups. These partnerships allowed us to expand programming, increase access to resources, and deepen the supports available to young people. We thank each partner for believing in our mission and for standing with our youth.

As a Board, we remain focused on responsible governance, financial sustainability, and long-term planning that positions BCYI for continued growth. We are excited to support the expansion of the Youth Violence Prevention Program, strengthen pathways for leadership and education, and continue investing in mental health and trauma-informed programming. Most importantly, we are committed to ensuring youth leadership stays at the centre of everything we do.

Thank you to our youth, families, partners, staff, and supporters. Your belief in this work makes it possible. BCYI is more than a program: it is a community, a family, and a place where young people can imagine new possibilities for their futures.

Here's to another year of empowerment, learning, and building a stronger Black Creek together.

With gratitude,

Dalubuhle Ndlovu
Board Chair, Black Creek Youth Initiative



Dalubulhe Ndlovu

Message from the Executive Director

This year marked one of the most important milestones in our journey. The Black Creek Youth Initiative officially became a **registered charity**, a moment that solidifies everything our community has built together. This is more than a change in status. It is a step toward long-term stability, expanded opportunities, and a future where young people in Black Creek continue to have a place that sees them, hears them, and supports them.

With this milestone came significant growth. We expanded our Youth Violence Prevention Program to a second weekly site and strengthened the supports we offer to young people navigating mental health challenges and systemic barriers. We invested deeply in leadership development, mentorship, and creative programming, guided by the voices and experiences of the youth who shape the heart of this initiative.

This year also held moments of deep grief. Our community experienced the loss of young people to gun violence. These moments stay with us. They remind us why spaces like BCYI must exist and why we must continue building environments where youth can feel safe, grounded, encouraged, and connected. In response, we created space for healing, honest conversations, and intentional support. The strength that young people showed through it all continues to move us forward.

At the same time, we witnessed powerful moments of leadership. Our youth presented in university classrooms, contributed to international conversations on education and rights, and continued to guide our work through the BATE Youth Advisory Committee. These moments reflect the courage and brilliance that live within the young people of Black Creek. Our partnerships also grew this year. From community organizations to service providers, academic partners, funders, and grassroots leaders, we expanded the network of people who stand with our youth. Together, we opened doors to learning, mentorship, mental health supports, and meaningful opportunities that help young people feel seen and supported in every part of their lives.

As we look ahead, our priorities remain clear. We will strengthen mental health and trauma-informed supports. We will continue expanding YVP across both program sites. We will deepen pathways for education access, leadership, and creative expression. We will work toward sustainable funding systems that protect the future of this organization. And we will continue centering youth voice in everything we do.

To our youth, families, partners, staff, volunteers, and placement students, thank you. BCYI exists because of the people who pour love, time, and purpose into this work. Together, we are building a community where young people can grow, lead, and imagine a future filled with possibility.

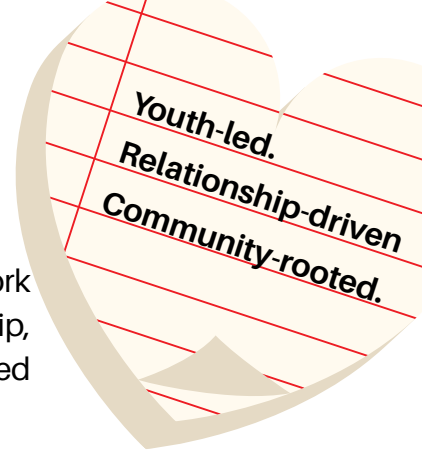
With gratitude,

Destin



Destin Bujang

ORGANIZATION PROFILE



Black Creek Youth Initiative is a community-driven organization in North York supporting youth ages 12 to 29 through leadership development, mentorship, arts-based programs, education access, and community safety. Our work is rooted in relationships and creating safe, empowering spaces for young people.



OUR MISSION

To empower youth through relationship-based programming that nurtures leadership, confidence, and community resilience.



OUR VISION

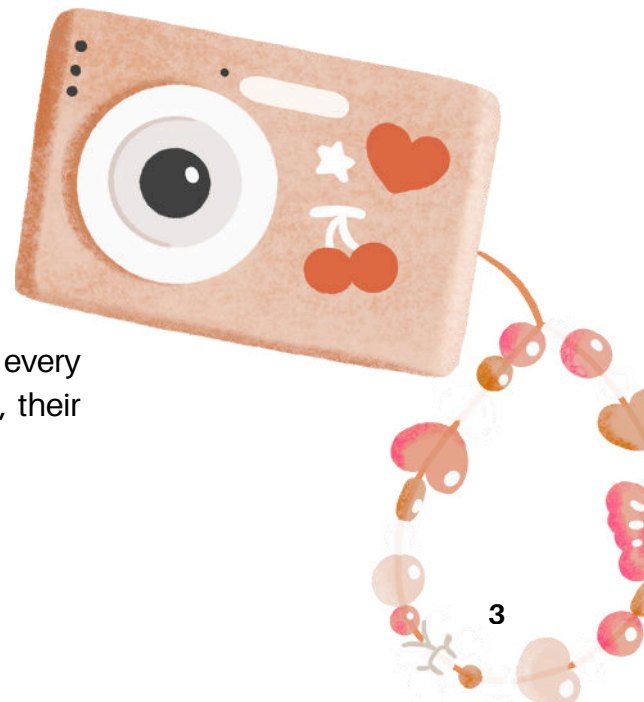
A world in which all young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potentials.



OUR VALUES

- Youth-led leadership
- Community care
- Trauma informed
- Creativity and expression
- Anti-oppressive practice

We believe youth deserve to feel seen, heard, and supported in every part of their journey. Our programs are shaped by their voices, their experiences, and their vision for a stronger community.



ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Our Story

BCYI began as a small gathering of young people in the Black Creek community who needed a safe place to talk, connect, and support one another. What started as a simple summer program grew into a non-profit built from relationships, trust, and the leadership of the youth themselves.

Over the years, BCYI has evolved into a community-driven organization that provides mentorship, education support, creative opportunities, and safe spaces for young people ages 12 to 29. Our growth has always been shaped by the voices of the youth we serve and the families who believe in our work.

Today, we are proud to be a registered charity, continuing to stand on the same foundation we started with: community, connection, and the belief that young people deserve spaces where they can grow and lead with confidence.



Program Highlights

Youth Violence Prevention Program (YVP)

Weekly Reach: 25 to 30 youth

The YVP Program is the core of BCYI's weekly work, offering a safe and supportive space where youth build confidence, connect with mentors, and navigate challenges such as mental health, community violence, and systemic barriers.

Highlights

- Expanded weekly programs to a second location.
- Strengthened trauma-informed and healing-centered practices.
- Weekly mentorship, leadership circles, food sharing, sports, and creative activities.
- Support for youth and families navigating school, immigration, and social services.
- Youth presented at a York University Master's class, sharing their lived experiences.

The YVP program continues to be a lifeline for many young people, providing consistency, belonging, and opportunities to grow.



BORDERLESS ACCESS TO EDUCATION (B.A.T.E)

The BATE project is a multi-year partnership focused on improving education access for young people who face barriers due to immigration status and systemic challenges. Youth play a central role in shaping this work through storytelling, research, and policy conversations.

Highlights

- Continued youth leadership through the BATE Youth Advisory Committee
- Monthly youth-led discussions on education access, rights, and lived experience
- Strengthened collaboration among all partner organizations
- Ongoing research and data collection to better understand barriers in the education system
- Growth in confidence as youth shared stories, advocated for themselves, and learned about navigating complex systems

BATE continues to empower young people to understand their rights, share their experiences, and influence meaningful systems change in education.



Program Highlights

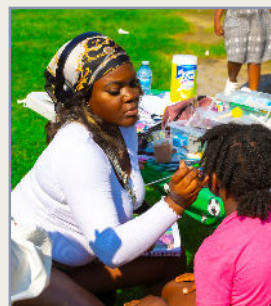
COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community events remained an important part of BCYI's work this year, helping us create meaningful spaces for youth, families, and neighbours to connect and feel supported.

Highlights

- Our Annual Community BBQ saw one of its largest turnouts, bringing together youth, families, and partners.
- We hosted four community dinners, creating warm spaces for families to connect.
- Seasonal events, including Halloween and our Holiday Dinner, provided safe and joyful moments for youth.
- Info sessions supported families in understanding BCYI programs and community resources.
- Parent engagement increased across both sites, strengthening relationships with staff.
- Youth helped plan and participate in every event, building leadership and confidence.

These gatherings helped build trust, deepen relationships, and strengthen the sense of community at both program locations.



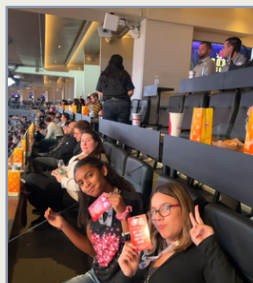
OUTINGS AND EXPOSURE THERAPY

Outings played a meaningful role this year, giving youth the chance to experience new environments, build confidence, and imagine possibilities beyond their everyday surroundings.

Highlights

- Visit to Little Canada, sparking creativity and curiosity.
- Toronto Argos suite experience, where youth also met Argos players after their championship win
- Raptors, 905, Blue Jays, Toronto FC and more.
- Conversations during travel that encouraged youth to ask questions about careers, representation, and opportunity

These outings continue to serve as exposure therapy, helping young people see themselves in new spaces and expand their sense of what is possible.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

OTHER PROGRAM RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Youth Leadership & Mentorship Development
- Peer leadership, facilitation opportunities, skills-building.
- Arts-Based and Creative Programming
- Photography, storytelling, spoken word, digital media, film exploration.
- Employment & Skills Development.
- Trauma-Informed Supports & Wellness Activities
- Healing circles, grief support, wellness conversations, connection-building.



CANADA SUMMER JOBS

BCYI hired two youth who took on roles in programming, social media, administration and community engagement. Both have since transitioned into full-time jobs and School, using skills gained at BCYI. Their growth is a testament to what happens when youth are trusted, supported, and given room to lead.



PARTNERS AND FUNDERS



PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

BCYI's work is strengthened by a wide network of partners who contribute expertise, resources, and community connections:

- Justice for Children & Youth
- S4 Collective
- CASA
- Jane and Alliance Neighbourhood Services (JANS)
- Mayabel Movement International (MMI)
- Kids Up Front
- The Vitanova Foundation
- Equitas
- Eva's Initiative for Homeless Youth
- Prime Luminisce Rwanda
- Black Creek Community Health Centre
- York University, University of Toronto, Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), Seneca Polytechnic, Humber College
- Local community leaders and property managers



These relationships expand opportunities for youth and enhance the quality and reach of our programs.

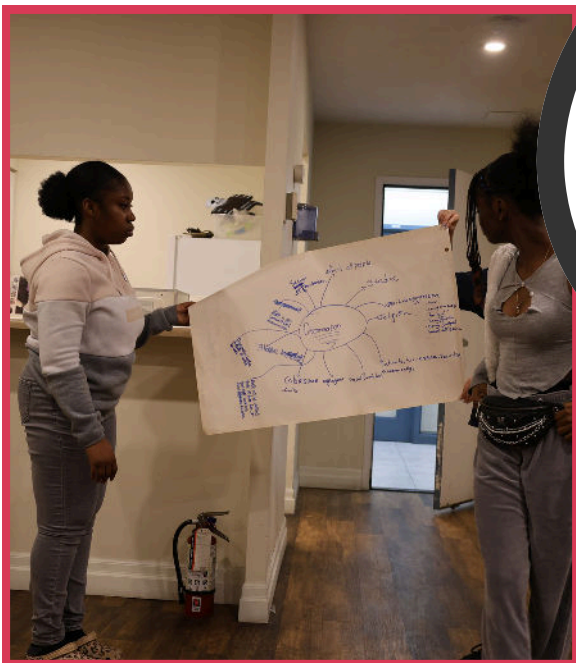
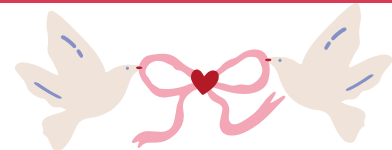
FUNDERS



IMPACT STORIES

This year was heavy for many young people in our community. After the loss of peers to gun violence, BCYI became a space where youth could talk, grieve, and process without judgment.

One parent shared that BCYI was the only place their child felt comfortable opening up. Through intentional conversations, art sessions, and grounding activities, youth rebuilt a sense of connection and safety. Their resilience continues to guide our trauma-informed approach.



"BCYI is the one place I look forward to every week. It helps me reset. I can talk about what's going on in my life and actually feel heard. Coming here makes everything feel a little lighter"

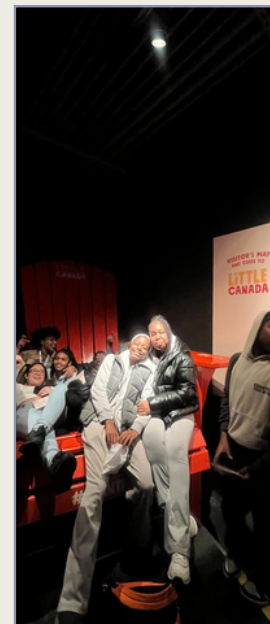




Impact Stories

This year, our partnership with Kids Up Front created experiences that opened doors for our youth in ways that are hard to measure but deeply felt.

Brianna finally had the chance to visit Little Canada, something she had wanted to do for a long time. She was filled with excitement and wonder. It was more than a simple outing. It was a moment where she felt seen, valued, and encouraged to dream.



Youth Leadership in Action

This year, BCYI youth embraced leadership roles, facilitating sessions, co-planning events, speaking at community gatherings, and representing BCYI in academic spaces. Their confidence, storytelling, and advocacy demonstrate the power of youth-led models.

Education Access Wins

Through BATE, several youth made meaningful strides toward accessing higher education, navigating financial barriers, and exploring new academic pathways.

MK had her own unforgettable experience when we received a suite for a Toronto Marlies game. She enjoyed every moment. The night became even more special when Argos players, fresh off their championship win, surprised the suite and connected with our youth, taking photos and sharing in their excitement.

For us, these experiences are forms of exposure that matter. They spark important conversations. On the car rides to and from these events, the youth reflected on what they saw and who they saw. They asked questions like **“What did that Black umpire do to get there?”** and **“What did he study in school?”** These conversations allow the young people to imagine themselves in spaces they never thought possible.

Moments like these remind us why community partnerships are so important. They help our youth dream bigger and walk with a renewed sense of possibility.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

YOUTH SERVED

 **120+**

WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

 **25-30**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

 **12**
(includes 4 community dinners, BBQ, Halloween, Holiday Dinner, info sessions, etc.)

PLACEMENT STUDENTS

 **8**

YOUTH HIRED

 **2**
(Canada Summer Jobs – both moved into full-time roles)

PARTNERSHIPS

 **15**

EXPOSURE OUTINGS & SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES

 **11+**

(Raptors suite, Argos-meet-and-greet, Little Canada, plus additional outings)

PROGRAM SESSIONS DELIVERED

 **65**



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025



TOTAL REVENUE

\$135,642

Where our revenue came from _____

- Grants: \$124,871
- Government Assistance (Canada Summer Jobs): \$10,005
- Donations: \$757
- Interest: \$9



TOTAL EXPENSES

\$145,778

What we invested in the community _____

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Salaries & Benefits: \$119,392 | • Salaries & Benefits: \$119,392 |
| • Program Expenses: \$17,015 | • Program Expenses: \$17,015 |
| • Administration: \$1,614 | • Professional Fees: \$6,500 |
| • Insurance: \$1,257 | • Administration: \$1,614 |



OPERATING RESULT

\$110,136

This reflects planned use of reserve funds to maintain and expand _____ programming.



Net Assets (Unrestricted)

\$2,332



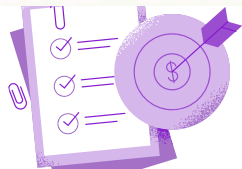
Deferred Contributions

\$17,943

These funds are restricted for 2025–2026 programming, including YVP and the Peter Gilgan Foundation grant.



Annual Report 2024–2025



Governance & Board



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Chair

Dalubuhle Ndlovu

Board Members

- Leanne Rabinowitz
- Valentine Choh
- Xavon Charles
- Yeganeh Soltani
- Francisca Nini Tshambu



STAFF TEAM

Executive Director

Destin Bujang

Director of Programs / YVP Coordinator

Natalie Iuzzolino

Project Coordinator, BATE

Adrianna Gardinner



PLACEMENT STUDENTS

Chahna Nagpal

Elizabeth Ogun

Yasin Sidow

Bola Adesiyan

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chante Elliot

Leanna Henry

Dami

LOOKING AHEAD: 2025-2026 PRIORITIES



- Strengthen our trauma-informed and mental health supports for youth and families.
- Expand the Youth Violence Prevention (YVP) Program across both sites and increase weekly capacity.
- Deepen our work in education access through BATE and school partnerships.
- Build more leadership, mentorship, and employment pathways for youth.
- Invest in creative, sports, and culturally relevant programming.
- Develop long-term fundraising strategies to sustain and grow initiatives.
- Strengthen partnerships to better respond to community needs.
- Continue centering youth voice in decision-making and program design.



Thank you to everyone who made this year possible: our youth, families, staff, volunteers, partners, donors, and community leaders.

Your support fuels our mission and strengthens the Black Creek community every single day.

Join us. Partner with us. Stand with youth.

To support or learn more:

 www.blackcreekyouthinitiative.com

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