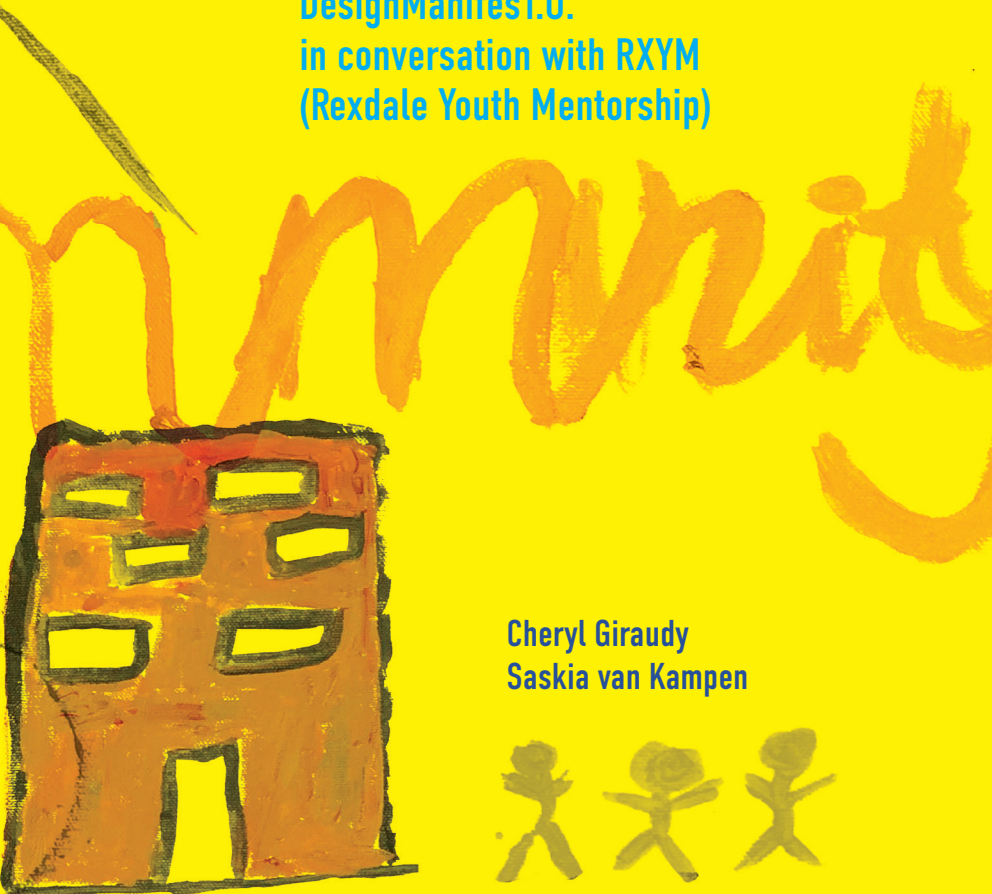


What Does Community Placemaking Look Like?

DesignManifest.O.
in conversation with RXYM
(Rexdale Youth Mentorship)

Cheryl Giraudy
Saskia van Kampen



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Research team:
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Design by:
Saskia van Kampen

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Design ManifesT.O. 2020
creating new ideas for Toronto



Special thanks to
RXYM Founder & Executive
Director, Kwaku Agyeman;
the Leadership Team; and
the RXYM Participants

and

Lena Phillips, MSc.
Outreach Advisor, DM2020.

Photos courtesy of RXYM.

Sharing Stories of Making Community Spaces, Youth Initiatives, and Leadership in the Queen's Plate Neighbourhood, North West Toronto

**A conversation with members of Rexdale
Youth Mentorship and the Design Manifest.O.
2020 research team from OCAD University.**

February 2021

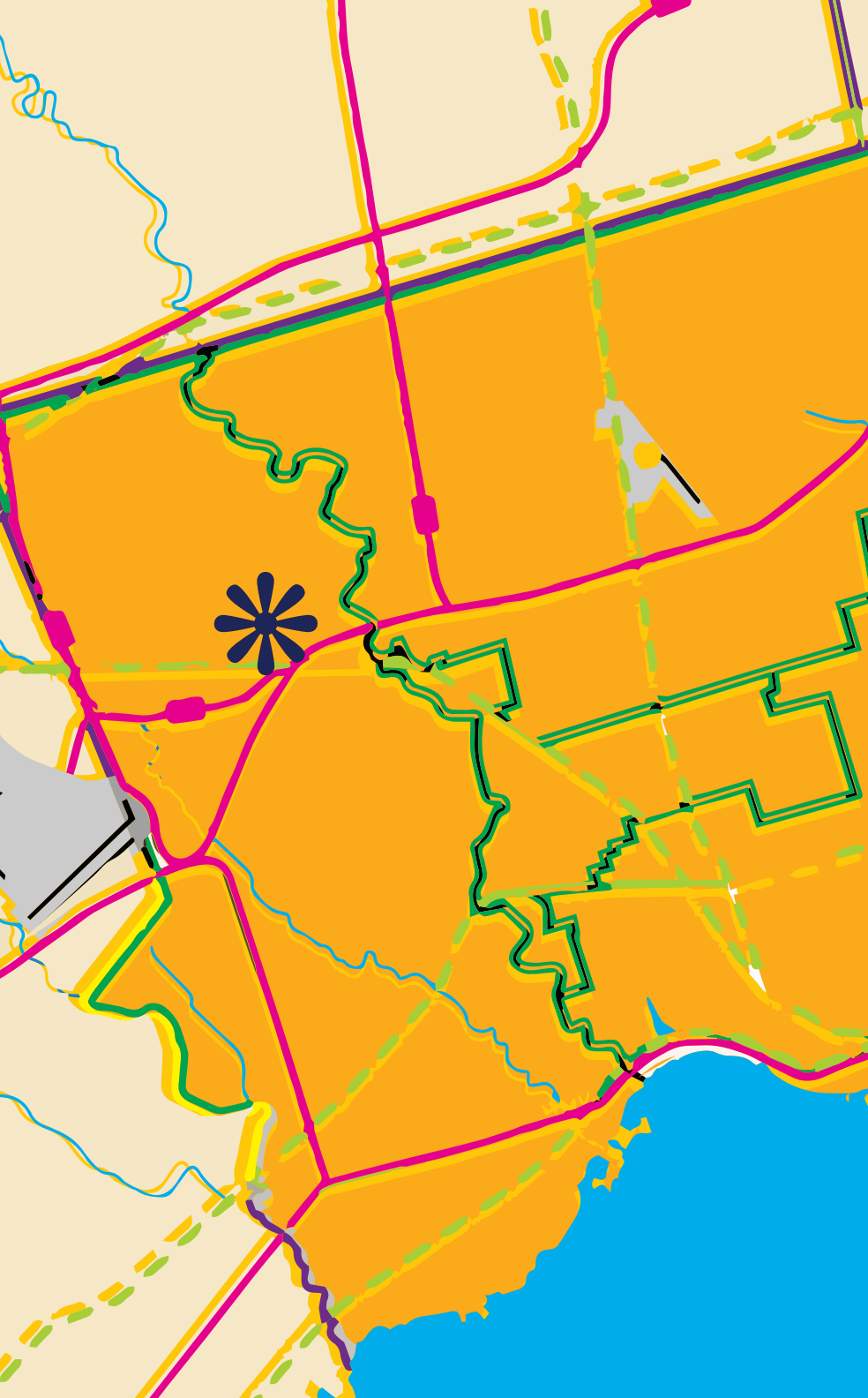
Forward — Connecting the systemic to the hyper-local.

Legacies of colonialism and racism create systemic barriers and disproportionate outcomes that are then spatially manifested — such as Queen’s Plate in Toronto Ontario, Canada. The stories that the RXYM youth participants shared with us expose some of these lived realities in terms of how municipal and other institutional “rules” facilitate the policing of lower-income communities of colour — demonstrating why certain neighbourhoods remain racially and economically segregated among other disproportionalities.

There is a great need for community leadership within these institutionalized public spaces but also the need for separate, independent organizations that are led by and for communities. RXYM is a grassroots organization — effective in developing partnerships, receiving funding etc.— but, by design, they are accountable first and foremost to the community they serve (precisely because of shared identities/experiences and their grassroots status). RXYM is a community development model that facilitates the design of asset-based, responsive, justice- oriented outcomes for communities facing systemic oppression.

Lena Phillips

Lena Phillips, MSc.
Outreach Advisor, DM2020



Design Manifesto.T.O. 2020 (DM2020)

The DM2020 research project out of OCAD University (OCAD U) set out to explore community placemaking* practices undertaken across Toronto's six geographical areas namely, Etobicoke, York, North York, East York, Scarborough, and City Centre. The places and spaces created and animated by residents support community-building, strengthen neighbourhood identity, and coalesce civic and personal relationships for those living, working, learning and playing in the areas where inclusive placemaking can occur. These efforts hold valuable lessons too, for professional designers, educators, and researchers in terms of how to make sustainable change for communities through engaged placemaking where open conversation, shared stories of lived experiences—"telling it like it is"—are welcomed and documented for potential and meaningful action, including shifting practices for greater design ethics and inclusion.

*** Placemaking is the practice of creating spaces within neighbourhoods that reflect the residents' identities and needs.**

—Stewart, S. 2018. Canadian relationships and reconciliation for Indigenous identity and space. Presentation for Urban Territories Stream 1 Future Cities. From futurecitiescanada.ca

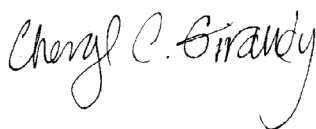
On Saturday February the 27th, DM2020 partnered with Rexdale Youth Mentorship (RXYM), an important social and educational group operating in the Queens Plate neighbourhood of Etobicoke, to discuss a series of topics on community building and the creative practices (dialogue, socializing, creative expression, learning) considered when making places more meaningful. Fourteen young adults joined the discussion including the Leadership team, Mentors, and Mentees — ranging in ages 16 to 30. The meet-up occurred virtually due to pandemic social-distancing regulations, and the booklet herein is considered an outcome of the project. The following pages capture the main ideas that arose in the discussions undertaken and shared in the chat panel along with social data collected from an online survey aligned with the discussion topics and open to the broader Rexdale neighbourhood.

What have we learned through the brief but intense collaboration with RXYM?

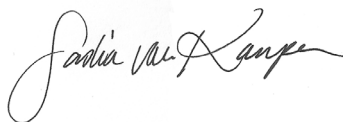
Powerful statements and observations were made by members and it was important to learn about what the community has experienced, shared and fostered over the last few years. For the researchers, this requires not only documentation of voices, but support for getting those voices out into the broader context of the city. Access to a fair share of resources, facilities, activities, services, opportunities, and importantly, to a respectful framework of political support for neighbourhoods, and residents' needs, desires, and experiences surfaced as key findings from both discussions with RXYM and the neighbourhood survey on placemaking.

Another perspective to consider is how important it is for the researchers' to act as well as write about their new knowledge gleaned from communities taking it back into research, pedagogy and practice. One way to do this, by examples, is to extend the engagement with RXYM into the educational context, and work towards bringing the youth group on campus, when facilities and operations fully re-open up at OCAD U. At that time, a rich dialogue about post-secondary education in the arts can be had, highlighting existing and emerging creative programs that may resonate with the community.

The content in this book is collaborative—RXYM reviewed the preliminary outcomes, made recommendations for aspects of the reporting, adding to the definition and meaning of ‘placemaking’ that is specific to the community. We aim for the outcomes to support and resonate with the membership and the neighbourhood of Queens Plate where the group operate in hope this effort is of added-value to the important work they do with Black and racialized Youth. They are seeking to achieve their fullest potential within an equitable, just and empathic city context, and they deserve this as both a right and a goal. DM2020 looks forward to more news about RXYM, and the efforts of Kwaku, Abba, David and Bobby and youth members as they continue to grow spaces and places, push for change, and succeed with their deep community-based efforts.



Cheryl Giraudy
Associate Professor, OCAD U
Primary Investigator



Saskia van Kampen
Assistant Professor, SFSU
Primary Investigator

Rexdale Youth Mentorship

The Queens Plate community has been a hub for recreational programming for many years and its community centre has been able to foster many great individuals throughout the years as well. However, there is a need within the community to have youth flourish, not only through recreational programming but through a program that will assist in the development of youth professional skills and social awareness. Through this observation, RXYM was born. RXYM is a grass-roots organization led by five qualified mentors from the Queens Plate community who work to provide social and professional resources for youth within the Rexdale area.



The objective of our services is to highlight and address systemic barriers affecting racialized youth with the goal of empowering them to reach their full potential. We aim to increase the leadership and teamwork abilities of youth; we aim to increase youth professional skills and provide access to employment opportunities, and finally, we aim to increase self-awareness and confidence in our youth.

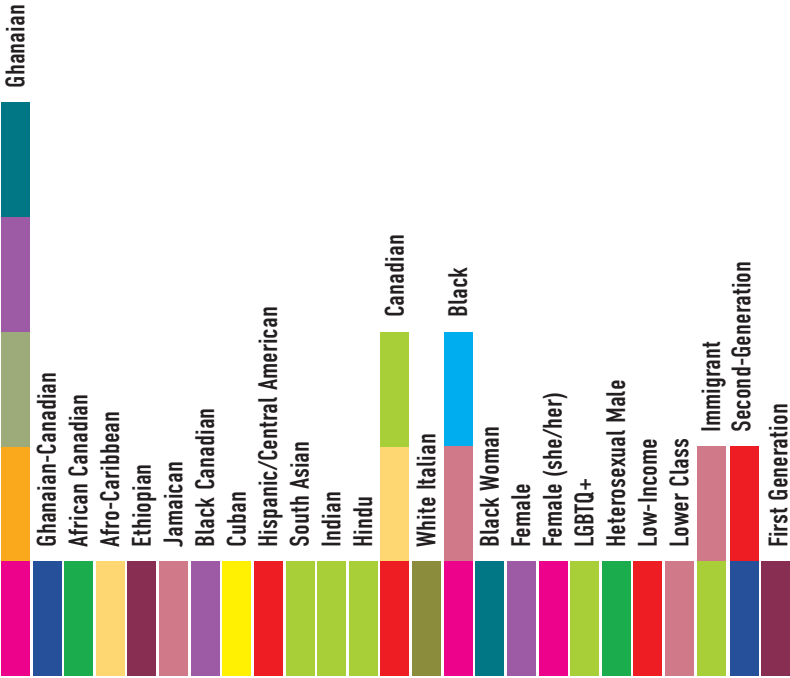
Kwaku Agyeman

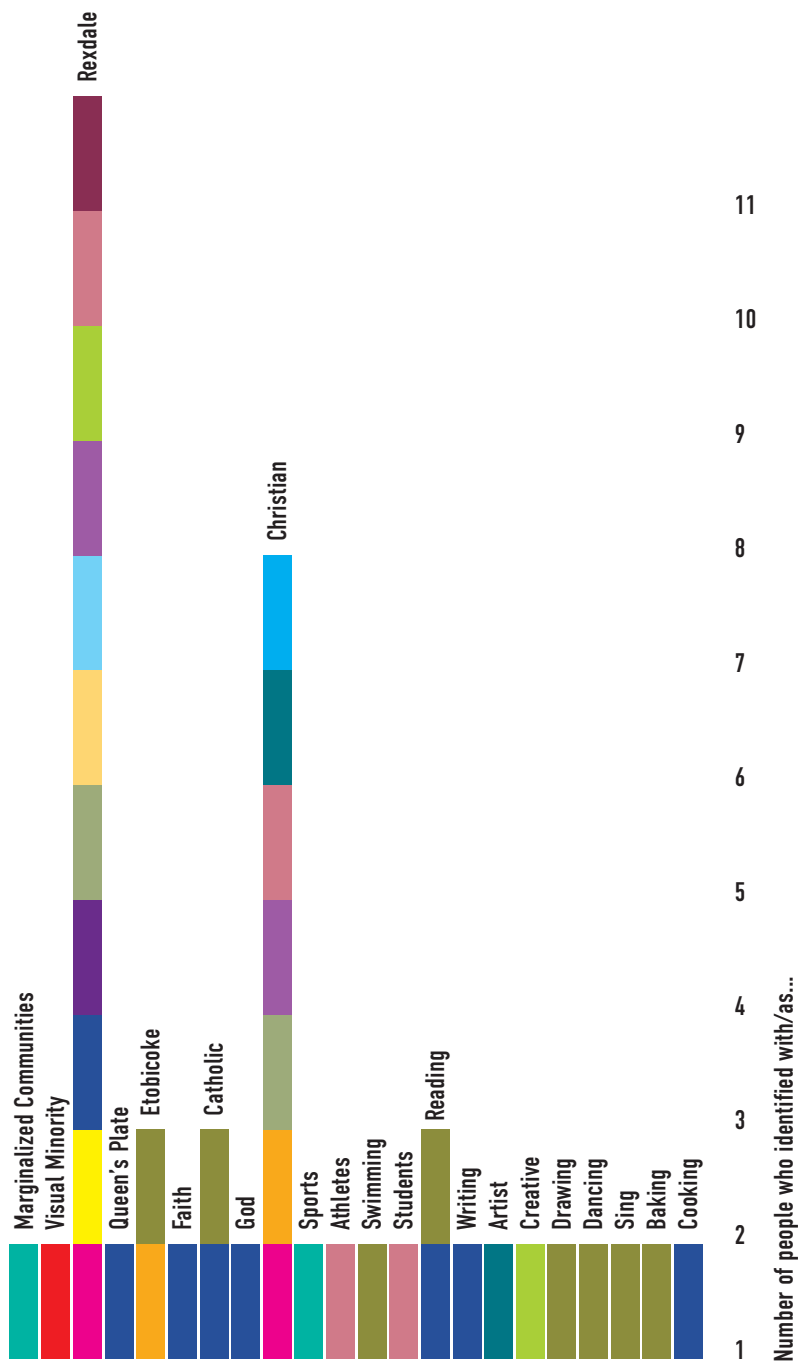
Kwaku Agyeman
Founder & Executive Director, RXYM



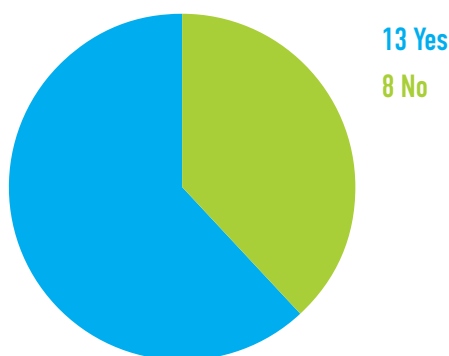
Survey Question:
What community(s)
do you identify with?
Consider: identities,
neighborhoods, cultures,
interests, spiritual.

18 participants





Survey Question:
**Have you even been
involved in making a space
more community focused?**
*This could be in Rexdale or
in another community.*

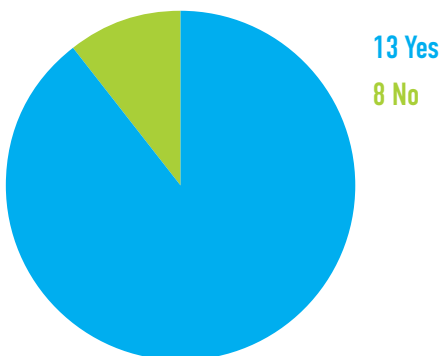


If yes, how?



Survey Question:

Are you interested in getting involved/more involved in making a space more community focused?



If yes, in what capacity?

- In a mentorship capacity; being someone I needed as a youth.
- Yes, because of the violence around here.
- Continuing to enhance the capacity of RXYM to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.
- More events in the community like RXYM's annual back to school picnic.
- Bringing art more into the community.
- Hosting Community events to build and sustain relationships.
- Continuing to volunteer with RXYM, and other parts of Toronto for mental health advocacy.
- Lead an initiative for the youth in the community specifically. They need programs and opportunities to feel like they are part of something bigger.
- Bettering Rexdale for the upcoming youth.
- Not sure but interested to know what I can do.
- Any capacity it takes to make change.



Screen shots from
RXYM Zoom workshops
held during the 2020
COVID-19 Pandemic.





Youth are innovative and always find a way to make something they believe in happen. Hard work will make anything happen.

—Anonymous Survey Response



Rexdale
Restore
Repair
RXYM
Resourceful
Replenish
Resonating
Residents
Reciprocate

Responsive

Renew

Restorative

Rejuvenate

Reimagine

Reflect

Relatable

Revitalize

Discussion 1:

**What do you appreciate about your community?
What makes it great, and what would you like people who maybe are not from your community to know about your community?**

“It’s people that make Queens Plate very special. We share a great energy—it’s very positive. Doesn’t mirror other communities in similar situations where there is a very negative aura. We have a very positive aura.”

– Anonymous Participant

“I appreciate the fact that we are first/ second generation in Canada with very similar backgrounds, stories, and grow up with these people. I’m from that, or their parents come from sort of that same area.... or have similar accounts.”

– Anonymous Participant

“I appreciate that the majority of us literally grew up together. There is an element of trust between members of Community who have been here for a while.”

– Anonymous Participant



Social distancing BBQ



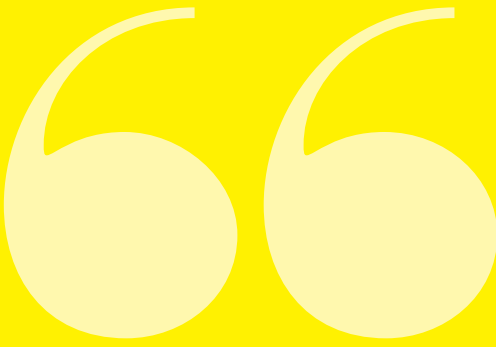
“Queens Plate, being a pocket within a neighbourhood... it’s unique. Queens Plate is TCHC [housing] also low-income... an island... enclosed. Especially when growing up...it felt enclosed. It was our own park in a sense—the whole community.” – Kwaku Agyeman (RXYM Founder)



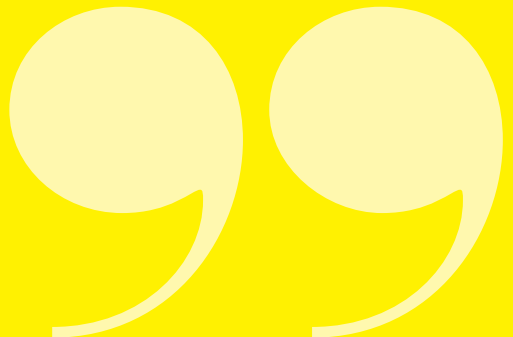
RXYM Leadership Team: Kwaku Agyeman, David Anderson, Abba Wie Addo, and Bobby Lewis

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 1:

- Nature is part of wellness.
- Community friendship matters.
- Childhood and community connection matters.
- Being welcomed into the community matters.
- Neighbourhood as pocket, island, or park within the community.
- Neighbourhoods defined by diverse incomes.
- Income can define community boundaries.
- Mixing peers from diverse incomes can influence and motivate growth.
- Confidence: community built on growing up together.
- Long-time connection to community builds care (looking out for) and engagement in community projects and programs.



I appreciate when mentors lived in the community; have seen youth grow and know most of their parents. This helps lookout for youth like a village, also involve them in activities and programs.



– Anonymous Survey Response

Discussion 2:

What difference does it make to have a Black, youth-led organization that caters to the needs of the community?

“Big difference when most mentors...[had] lived in our environment—they’re more engaged in what we need, especially helping us with scholarships [academics?]”

– Esteban Gonzalez (RXYM Mentee)

“If we’re doing a program... like a workshop or giving additional help with Homework Club we’re literally trying to fill...the gaps based on what we lacked as youth when we were going to after-school programs in the Community. ...We know what this Community lacked in the past so we’re able to fill in the gap now because we grew up here.”

– Anonymous Participant

“I... look at systemic barriers through workshops like cultural acceptance, weekly programming, food support, financial workshops, capacity building in general, many other organizations do not focus, or do this. I love having workshops facilitated by Black professionals since we live in the community. We are all, we are able to see what is really needed in our community.”

– Anonymous Participant

“I can feel that the mentors want the best for us and want us to reach success—It def-ups the trust.”

– Anonymous Participant

Virtual Mental Health
and Wellness Workshop
held during the 2020
Covid-19 Pandemic.

Rexdale Youth Mentorship Presents:



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS WORKSHOP

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- The importance of mental health and wellness
- Exploring self used-care and coping strategies
- How to access youth mental health and community services
- Unpacking the intersections of culture, race and mental health

YOUTH WILL RECIEVE

- Opportunity to e-network with professionals and like-minded peers
- Workshop certificate
- Volunteer hours
- Uber Eats Gift Card

When: Friday, November 27, 2020
Where: via Zoom
Time: 5:00pm-8:00pm

30 SPOTS AVAILABLE

Tickets available at rxy.m.eventbrite.ca

Funded by:



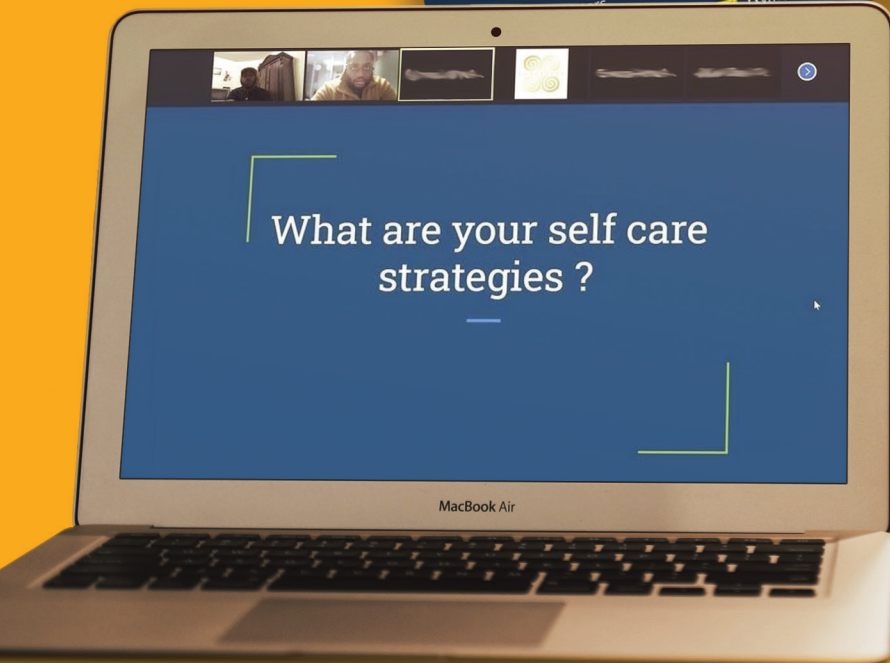
Supported by:



Facebook: [@rxy.m.mentors](https://www.facebook.com/rxy.m.mentors)
Email: rxy.m@rexdalementorship.com

Francesca Serwaa
Registered Social Worker

Tracy Amponsah Ampofoh
Registered Social Worker



**“RXYM ...is like a ‘tool’ like the culture of Queens Plate...
We’re tight knit...We like to see our people... succeed and...
in order for them to succeed they need tools and resources.”**


– Anonymous Participant



Activities during the RXYM Social Distancing BBQ.

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 2:

- Academic tutorship, mentorship for emotional and social needs, are not as easily attainable (vs. recreation) for Rexdale in general.
- Mentors who live/come from the community are better positioned to help youth succeed.
- Community mentorship and facilitating programs with representation of community counters systemic barriers, offers relationality through lived experience, and fosters empathy.
- Parents (first, second generation) who work long, hard, precarious jobs do not have the privilege of time to invest in the emotional/ social needs of their children as they would like.
- Organizations led by longtime Residents know Community best.
- Community trust is built when there is no ulterior intent by outside organizations.
- Volunteering is easier when organizations are home grown.



**There's no one within...
community to better
cater to [needs] than [those
that] live in the communi-
ty. Our contributions are
more 'intentional'.... We're
able to see parallels be-
tween how we grew up in
[the] neighbourhood and
what...[is] lacking, and the
services that we're able to
give now.**

– Anonymous Participant



Discussion 3:

How has the experiences of engaging with RXYM empowered your understanding and creation of community spaces?

“...Our year end celebration ...had 4 different tables of art... centered around community support, empowerment...there [were] wonderful art pieces. ...as community came... rotated from table to table... [and] contributed to these wonderful art pieces.... That was a powerful moment within the community and... touches on the creative and artistic piece of engagement.” – Anonymous Participant

“It’s amazing to be part of something that I never had access to growing up and.. to be part of changing lives.”
– Lauren Osorio (RXYM Mentor)

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 3:

- Contributing to art and art-making are powerful moments in community.



Discussion 4:

What types of creative and artistic activities have you engaged in?

“Hearing stories of how they started [out] compared to where they are now.... kind of dramatic, but it makes me in awe...”

– Anonymous Participant

“[Book club] was a great experience. Honestly, I was skeptical... how everything would turn out, but it was great to see how youth utilized... resources within their own homes to express themselves through art: Digital art, Posters, Paintings and [the] like... Beautiful to see that they actually engaged. Something we thought would be more difficult... ended up being a great experience, being easy to get through.... What helped was [the] book was really relatable.”

– Anonymous Participant

“Book club this year...absolutely amazing... [relates] to intentionality around selecting a book written by a Black author; has Black characters represented...allows youth to see themselves...and see something different [as] opposed to what they are used to within mainstream society... Being able to have Black characters... allow youth mentees [who] are Black and racialized... to really connect at [a] deeper level.”

– Kwaku Agyeman (RXYM Founder)

A large, stylized opening quotation mark in a light blue color, positioned at the top left of the page.

**Great there's people
who want to better the
community... want next
generation to be good,
so that the next, next
generation could be great.**

– Anonymous Participant

A large, stylized closing quotation mark in a light blue color, positioned at the bottom right of the page.



Book Club

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 4:

- Outside community perspectives can be changed by single/multiple engagements with community.
- Learning of community successes, and growth (programs, mentorships) helps to change perspectives about neighbourhoods and more.
- Showcasing successes, outcomes, stories help put communities in a different light (dramatic force for change).
- Knowing the stories and the successful endeavours of community programs/efforts can be inspirational to some outside of community (in awe).
- Cumulative projects (at Book Club) give youth a chance to creatively reflect on what they learned.
- Creative expressions that show resonance, interest, and other reactions to books/reading/literature can emerge in many forms.



- Creative responses and/or cumulative projects are easier and more accessible if the original inspiration came from content that is “relatable”.
- Youth are resourceful: digital art, posters, paintings and more were created with home-based resources and are beautiful.
- Intentionality is necessary when engaging youth (selecting projects that represent and resonate with the community e.g., Black and Racialized authors, characters, stories, lives).
- Skepticism can be countered by engagement with projects where youth see themselves in the materials provided and/or used for topics of discussion.
- Bringing guests with lived-experiences similar to community into programs can be powerful inspiration for participants.

Discussion 5:

What types of community spaces do you think are needed or missing or in need of improving?

“Growing up in Rexdale... [there] wasn’t a lot of community spaces other than [the] two community centres within the area...[with] specified times and mostly... Sports. There needs to be more spaces but also different things to do. What RXYM is doing is very different, never been done before.... where it’s tailored to education... growing into being a better person, getting opportunity.”

– D’Shawn Johnson (RXYM Mentor).

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 5:

- Engagement (programs) illuminates both gaps (services, needs) and possibilities for the community.
- RXYM focuses on education, scholarship, creative practices, as well as recreational pursuits which fosters personal growth and life opportunities for youth.
- If you know (in the know), you know. If you don’t know (not privy, not aware) resources and access to resources is restricted.
- Community centres need to open time slots, spaces, and diversify programs beyond sports in order to engage Youth.

Rexdale Youth Mentorship Presents:

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP

Workshop Objectives:

- Exploring Feminism
- Unpacking intersectionality in the lives of racialized women
- Understanding importance of Self-Esteem as a Black and racialized female
- Tools for empowerment and coping strategies

Youth Will Receive:

- Opportunity to e-network with professionals and support other women
- Workshop certificate
- Volunteer hours
- Uber Eats gift card

Ages: 13 - 21
Date: Saturday, February 20, 2021
Time: 11am - 2pm
Location: Zoom

30 SPOTS AVAILABLE

Tickets available at rxym.eventbrite.ca

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@Rxym_mentors
@Rxym_mentors
rxym@rexdalementorship.com



Rexdale Youth
Mentorship
Presents:

Cultural Acceptance Workshop

Workshop Objectives:

- Discussing structural barriers impacting the black community
- The importance of community development
- The importance of services catered for the Black community
- How black people are uplifted by services catered for them
- What is Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC)?

Tickets available at rxym.eventbrite.ca

Ages: 13-21

40 SPOTS AVAILABLE

Date: Friday, February 20, 2021
Time: 5pm - 8pm
Location: Zoom

Funded by:
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rxym@rexdalementorship.com



Khaldah Salih
Community Legal Worker



Sade Makinde
Community Legal Worker



PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL WORKSHOP

Workshop Objectives:

- Exploring pathways to Post Secondary Education
- Exploring youths' hopes and goals for life after high school
- Discussing options for after high school: workforce, trades, college, university, and/or entrepreneurship
- Discussing SMART Goals

Youth Will Receive:

- Opportunity to e-network with professionals and like-minded peers
- Workshop certificate
- Volunteer hours
- Uber Eats gift card

Ages: 13-21
Date: Thursday, March 11th, 2021
Time: 5pm - 8pm
Location: Zoom

30 SPOTS AVAILABLE

Tickets available at rxym.eventbrite.ca

Funded by:



@Rxym_mentors
@Rxym_mentors



THE RESILIENCY OF BLACK YOUTH: ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM & MENTAL HEALTH

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- Defining and Unpacking Anti-Black Racism
- Defining and Unpacking Mental Health
- Exploring Intersectionality and Black Mental Health
- Practical Tools to Navigate Anti-Black Racism
- Discussing Accessible Mental Health and Community Resources

YOUTH WILL RECEIVE:

- Opportunity to e-network with professionals and like-minded peers
- Workshop certificate
- Volunteer hours
- UberEats Gift Card

40 SPOTS AVAILABLE

Tickets Available at:
RXYM.EVENTBRITE.CA

THURSDAY MARCH 18TH, 2021
Time: 5:00pm - 8:00pm | Location: Zoom



Kwaku Agyeman, M.Sc., RP, RMT
Registered Psychologist



Tracy Amponsah, MSW, RSW
Registered Social Worker

@RXYM_MENTORS
@RXYM_MENTORS
@RXYM_MENTORS
RXYMREXDALEMENTORSHIP.COM

Discussion 6:

What types of different activities, creative, artistic and otherwise, are you interested in and building on or creating in your community?

“Trying to wrap my brain for this...hadn't really thought of it before to be honest.”

– Anonymous Participant

“...Sometimes Community Centres... [are] all about Sports... a lot of... spaces are... male-dominated and they can be intimidating for female youth, even if they want to play sports... or could just be an intimidating space. [A need] for just being intentional with, being able to, create programming that they [females] like.

– Kwaku Agyeman (RXYM Founder)

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 6:

- Social and educational activities need space equally as sports.
- Space for creativity and artistic practices to build community may be a novel, privileged idea.
- Community centres can be male- dominated (focused on certain sports) and intimidating for female youth (do not feel welcome).




Discussion 7:

What are some of the reasons for lack of access to community spaces? (How have you accomplished getting access to communal, or community spaces?)

“...Within Queens Plate, (owned by) Toronto Community Housing, Ascot (Co-ops)-the Gatekeepers themselves are pretty much property managers. They live within the community, but are also older people who are usually Newcomers or First Generation and don't have 'emotional connection' to the people....[and] ways in which we are. A lot of gatekeepers are not recognizing that you're not 'opening up a space', sorry, [but] you [are] opening up a space that is in itself... a 'Violence Prevention Tool'.
– Kwaku Agyeman (RXYM Founder)

“The Queens Plate Community Centre is in need of serious renovations. It can limit the ability to run programs. It needs Wi-Fi... a better cleaning, better cleaning services [and] people to regularly maintain. I remember when I was doing summer camp there... as a child, going outside was the best part.”
– Anonymous Participant


“‘Postering’ helps, but it is taken down again ... [it’s] like as you describe, kind of like that policing around Space. Need a space for postering that is safe.”
– Anonymous Participant



A lot of these spaces that are in Rexdale for Youth to access are inaccessible — it's all through either an institution without a school or dependent on the community... you live in. It's... [run] by corporations.

– Kwaku Agyeman (RXYM Founder)






If you pay attention to the things that are posted around the [community centre], they try to criminalize the residents in a sense, where they tell them they can't loiter. They don't open up the community spaces. ...There's like multiple layers of policy that state residents are loitering, and it could literally be you just being in your community, just enjoying the space. But if you're standing on the sidewalk, you're in violation of something. If you're in the hallway you're subject to get questioned by the police. So, there are parks. There is a park in the middle of Queens Plate, but the park is like "age appropriate to whom?" And then at what point is your presence unwanted in a park? And there has been an experience for myself and it's not pleasant. But it's just reality.

It always seems like they're just trying to vacuum us into a sort of 'prison pipeline'...



– Bobby Lewis,
Director of Youth Engagement



**NO LOITERING
VIOLATORS
WILL BE
PROSECUTED**

“We have this large community centre that takes up most of the land in Queens Plate. And it just hurts to know that we can’t access it when we want to, and we see more outsiders using it on a on a more regular basis then we can.”

– Anonymous Participant

Activities of interest:

Learn how to Sew • Acting lessons • Dance lessons •
Learning how to play instrument • Career Exploring •
Learning how to Braid • Learning hand skills we can
use as a job.

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 7:

- Community spaces offer youth an escape from negative influences.
- Corporations running housing and community centres raise barriers to access for community
- Awareness of funding, programs available, where to look, and how to find out is key, in addition to resources to sustain community programs and projects.
- Gatekeepers not seen to advocate for and support community—particularly for youth—because they lack the understanding, history, knowledge, and insights of the community.
- Community spaces, programs, and organizations require advertising to welcome users.
- Corporate structures are the systemic barriers to access and inclusion in community use of spaces.
- Lack of awareness of community spaces, programs, and organizations may diminish use and affect sustainability of supports and services.
- Poor conditions in community spaces are barriers to running quality programs.
- Gatekeepers (property managers, police and monitoring of public spaces) raise barriers of mistrust in denying or limiting access to community spaces, all of which are contributed to through rent.
- Community programs need places, spaces and support for communication, expression, sharing, news and more.



DISCUSSION 8: WHAT ARE YOUR OWN INTERESTS AND HOPES FOR BEING PART OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY SPACES?

“My hope for the community is....for youth to be the future — the Changemakers in a sense....inherent in the work that we....already did and continue... to make Queens Plate a better community and also Rexdale as a whole. ... I used to be a camp counselor in Queens Plate,I had the pleasure of working with a lot of mentees prior to them... enrolling into RXYM... I have....a deep connection with... those youth and ...would... love to see them step up.... take on other initiatives that...help them grow as individuals and take it on [upon] themselves to help the community continue to grow and get better....”

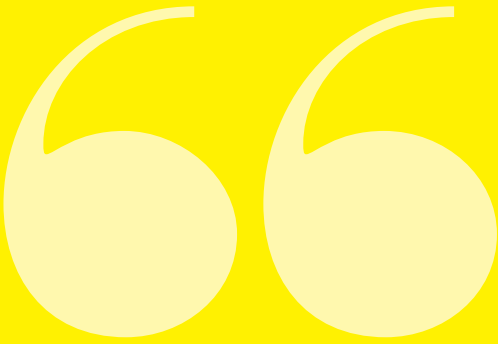
– Anonymous Participant

“I’d say I’d want the activities and.... Community programs to be a place, an area where the community really does feel safe coming together...where they can make good connections, feel comfortable, talk to people who care about them, people who matter, who want the best for them....”

– Anonymous Participant

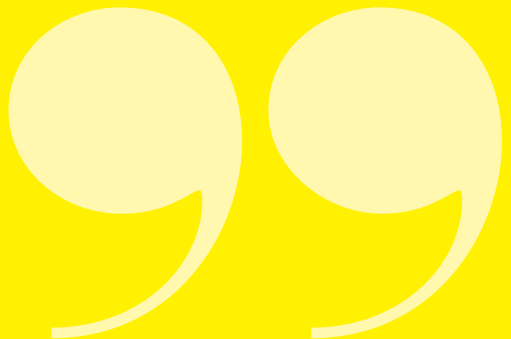
“My own interests and hopes for being a part of building community would be to continue to volunteer and hopefully be able to bring more mental health awareness and advocacy in Rexdale.”

– Lauren Osorio (RXYM Mentor)



Would love for youth to experience life outside Rexdale before they graduate high school. I think it would help with recognizing their resiliency and motivate them to want more...than what they may be used to seeing.

– Anonymous Participant



“I want parents to feel comfortable letting their children go out and engage with the community.”

– Anonymous Participant

“I just wanna say that we’re going to be taking a trip to OCAD U. We want the Mentees to know as well, that an additional mandate [of the partnership with DM2020]... of being part of this, is also getting access to meet a Black Dean that is... at OCAD U University, ...also taking a trip to OCAD U, which is downtown...Feeling really fortunate that we’re going to be able to have that experience because I know for me, my own experiences—I went to school out of the city but never knew about OCAD U until I worked at the CN tower in my first year while I was at York. And yeah, we’re taking a trip out there.”

– Kwaku Agyeman (RXYM Founder)

KEY IDEAS THAT CAME OUT OF DISCUSSION 8:

- Volunteering is a great way to be a part of a community.
- There is a need to bring more mental health and awareness and advocacy within the Rexdale community.
- Hoping for the youth to grow into changemakers.
- To continue to build queens plate and Rexdale into a safe space for the community.
- Hoping the youth will grow the work that has been done.



- To make a space where parents are able to feel comfortable when their child goes outside the home.
- To continue to be someone who cares about the youth, who wants them to succeed.
- To provide more opportunities for Rexdale youth to go beyond their own neighbourhood to explore other areas.

Meeting Chat (verbatim)

AN

Anonymous

11:32 AM

What I appreciate about this community is that the majority of us literally grew up together, so there is an element of trust between members of the community who have been here for a while. Despite the bad and negative experience you can be confident that you have a helpful neighbour close by

AN

Anonymous
Experiences*

11:33 AM

GU

Guest

11:34 AM

Could someone add the questions to the chat if possible?

KA

Kwaku Agyeman
Yeah i can

11:34 AM

KA

Kwaku Agyeman

11:35 AM

What difference does it make to have a Black, youth-led organization that caters to the needs of the community?



EG

Esteban Gonzalez

11:36 AM

There's a big difference because most of our mentors lived in our environment so there more engaged in what we need especially helping us with scholarships



GU

Guest

11:37 AM

It def ups the trust and feels so sincere. I can feel that the mentors want the best for us and want us to reach success



AG

Anonymous Guest

11:38 AM

I get to look at systematic barriers through workshops (cultural acceptance), weekly programming, food support, financial workshops, capacity building in general. Many other organizations do not focus or do this. I love having workshops facilitated by Black professionals. Since we live in the community we are able to see what is really needed in our community.



LO

Lauren Osorio

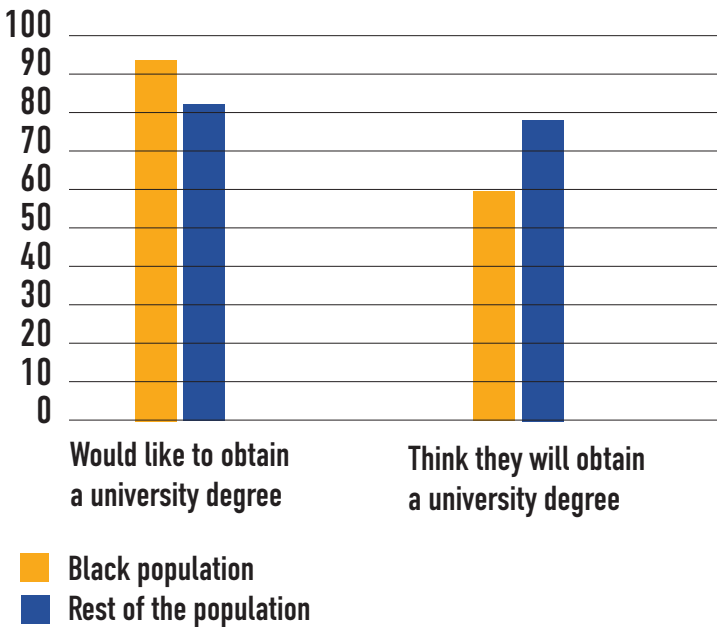
11:38 AM

Growing up in a Hispanic home my only other community I had was my church which was far away and didn't meet certain needs so it was different and helpful to be able to volunteer with a organization where although I'm not Black It's a culture I can almost relate to. It's amazing to be a part of something that I never had access to growing up and to be able to be a part of changing lives

Most Black youth would like to obtain a university degree, but proportionally, they are less likely to think that they will obtain one.

In 2016, although 94% of Black youth aged 15 to 25 said that they would like to get a bachelor's degree or higher, 60% thought that they could.

Level of educational attainment expectations and aspirations among population aged 15 to 25 years
— Canada, 2016.



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (Canadians at work and home), 2016.



**Being at post-secondary,
I realized how privileged
other people were.**

**I did not realize the
discrepancy in the support.**

-Anonymous Chat Comment



What did DM2020 learn?

Research:

When embarking on community discussion respectful boundaries must be established by the participants themselves for safe story-sharing must come from community and participants directly. Communities will engage with research and see it as shared voices and stories that are valued—that resonate and aim to inform policies and practices that impact their lives and neighbourhoods. Exterior perceptions matter for community building and positioning. Some questions require time to formulate responses, some questions may not spark as much engagement, while some questions are poorly worded or framed and/or do not resonate with the participants.

Community protection:

Safe community spaces offer refuge from negative elements (experiences, etc.). Communities are a reliant force in times of need (bad/negative experiences).

Community organizations built from within:

When those who live in the community are present within community youth organizations they have a shared-lived experience that can lead to building connections through common understanding and empathy. These individuals are also able to address gaps in youth support (programming, etc.) as they have “been there” and can see and address areas of need. This also helps create quality experiences that resonate with youth through intentionality (goals, objectives, and purpose).

Communities bordering communities:

Lower-income communities that are surrounded by diverse neighbourhoods (income, status) have opportunities to interact with them and to build good social skills through interaction,

**Close Community,
Sharing,
Engaged People
+ Great Energy**

= Very Positive Aura

engagement, and learning together. This can potentially counter systemic barriers through cultural acceptance, food support, finances, and capacity building. Exposure to diverse neighbourhoods can motivate individuals to make change and to better lives.

Gatekeepers:

Policing community spaces and programs intended for community, particularly youth, demonstrates a lack of trust, support, respect, belief in the community, and an authoritarian approach to futuring community cohesion. There are gatekeepers to the physical spaces but there are also financial gatekeepers. Under funding and under supporting youth programs is counterproductive. Access to resources (funding, supports) are vital for full participation and advancement in what communities often already have to offer. Funding also support the advertising of existing programs. When programs are unable to advertise they cannot attract volunteers to run the programs which leads to a lack of participation and poor chances of success.

Culture-making:

In celebrating community with themes of support, empowerment, art making has an important role. Even during the COVID-19 Pandemic youth were able to source whatever resources they had in their homes to use for creative expression particularly for their book club reading response. Creative Arts including literature, can flourish, support communities when embedded in programming and services as both subject matter and communication of ideas.

Impact:

Those that “better the community” in this time can impact the generations to follow. Seeing yourself, your community being represented in media, literature, art and more, allows for deeper engagement and connection;

Resources

Rexdale Youth Mentorship - RXYM

Instagram: @Rxym_mentors

Facebook: Rexdale Youth Mentorship

Email: Rxym@rexdalementorship.com

Twitter: @Rxym_mentors

v4-R's Youth Movement • 4rsyouth.ca

8-80 Cities • 880cities.org

Acorn Canada (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) • acorncanada.org/about

And Also Too • andalsotoo.net

Art Ignite (Flemington Park) • artignite.ca

ArtReach Toronto • artreach.org

Artscape Creative Placemaking Lab • artscape.ca/about-us/
creative-placemaking

Behind the Line • behindtheline.ca

BikePOC - instagram.com/bikepoc/

BIPOC City Builders • facebook.com/groups/BIPOCCB

Black Artists Union • baucollective.ca

Black Creek Food Justice Network • facebook.com/BlackCreek
FoodJustice

The Black Experience Project • environicsinstitute.org/projects/
project-details/black-experience-project-in-the-gta

Black Futures Now • linktr.ee/bfnto

Blank Canvas Toronto Arts Foundation • torontoartsfoundation.org

Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) • blacklegalactioncentre.ca

C3—Centre for Connected Communities • connectedcommunities.ca

Canvas Arts • canvasprograms.ca/youth-services

Centre for Social Innovation • socialinnovation.org

Laying the groundwork for change, and implementing a corrective course (removing systemic barriers), comes through engagement in the here and now for generations to come.

Children's Peace Theatre • childrenspeacetheatre.org

Colloqate Design • colloqate.org

The Colour of Poverty Project • colourofpoverty.ca

The Community Arts Guild • communityartsguild.ca

Creative Reaction Lab • creativereactionlab.com

Digital Justice Lab • digitaljusticelab.ca

East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club • esbgc.net

East Scarborough Storefront • thestorefront.org

Evergreen • evergreen.ca

For Youth • foryouth.ca

The Film Stars Project • thefilmstarsproject.org

Girl Power'D • youthrap.ca/index.php/news/girl-powerd-auditions

Idle No More • idlenomore.ca

ILL NANA Diverse City Dance Company - illnanadcdc.com

Inclusive Design Research Centre - idrc.ocadu.ca

Indigenous Sustenance Reclamation Network (ISRN) • isrn.ca

Institute for Change Leaders • changeleaders.ca

IntersectTO • intersectto.gitbook.io/community/

JustOverMusic • justovermusic.com/artist-development-program

Just Work It • justworkit.ca

Lifted by Purpose • liftedbypurpose.com

Made in Exile • madeinexile.org/

Manifesto • mnfsto.com

Maximum City • maximumcity.ca

Marvellous Grounds • marvellousgrounds.com

MIIPOC (Mentoring Initiative for Indigenous Planners of Colour) • miipoc.com

Myseum • myseumoftoronto.com/about/

EVERYONE IS

WELCOME

Photo: Katie Moum, Unsplash

Nuance • nuhere.org

OASIS Food Hub • stjamestowncoop.org/portfolio-item/oasis/

Our Stories Our Truths - moniqueaura.com

Park People • parkpeople.ca

Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust • pnlt.ca

Project for Public Spaces • pps.org

Rainbow's Pride in Scarborough • cltoronto.ca/rainbows-pride-in-scarborough

Regent Park • regentparkfocus.com

RISE Edutainment • riseedutainment.com

Rivers of Hope • riversofhopetoolkit.ca

Shoot for Peace • yescene.com/shootforpeace

SisterCode • twitter.com/sistercodeto?lang=en

SKETCH Working Arts • sketch.ca

Social Justice Sewing Academy • sjsacademy.org

SoundCheck • facebook.com/SoundCheckyouth

Steps • stepsinitiative.com

StopGap • stopgap.ca

Story Corps • storycorps.org

Sunset Service Toronto • sunsetservice.wordpress.com/422-2/

The Public • thepublicstudio.ca

Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee • tpwomenscomm.org

Toronto Designers Market • torontodesignersmarket.com

Toronto Urban Growers • torontourbangrowers.org

Toronto Youth Council, City of Toronto • thetyc.ca

Workman's Arts (Art + Health) • workmanarts.com

Young Urbanist League • youngurbanistsleague.com

Youth Rap • youthrap.ca

