

My Hub, My Community

**Connected and Caring:
A Year of Transformative
Collaborative Action**

**Rexdale Community Hub
2020-2021**

Remarks from the Hub Director

When we see our planet from a space station, we find it has no borders, and our lives on Earth are inseparably connected. The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us how humanity is connected and underscores our responsibility to take collective actions to solve today's complex challenges, such as global warming, food insecurity, and pandemics. These challenges have no geographical boundaries; therefore, solutions require collective humans' efforts, commitment, and resources. Here, at Rexdale Community Hub (RCH), we recognize the privilege and responsibility of being a tenant of the planet Earth. During the pandemic, we as a community rise together to the challenges such as food insecurity, digital divide, and health inequities. Let me walk you through some of our remarkable collaborative actions during the pandemic from this annual report:

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the food insecurity issue has deepened in our community and pushed thousands of vulnerable people into alarming levels of food insecurity. In addition, the pandemic caused massive job losses, especially among women, and exacerbated the systemic inequities in our community, such as precarious employment, poverty, and unaffordable housing. As a result, we have witnessed the highest positivity rate and the tragic loss of lives in our community; let's share a moment of silence for those who lost their precious lives to the virus.

Despite these unprecedented times, I am overwhelmed by the resilience of North Etobicoke communities; the way our staff, partners, community ambassadors, residents, funders, and donors came together to ensure our elderly, people with disabilities, single parents, COVID impacted families, and other vulnerable populations are protected and given compassionate care during this pandemic.

Moreover, we created a centrally coordinated food access system to address the food insecurity issue more equitably. Through this dedicated and committed network of over 100 individuals, we delivered 58,469 culturally sensitive grocery hampers and prepared meals to vulnerable populations between April 2020 and March 2021. This centrally coordinated food access system benefitted the community in many ways: people facing food insecurity received locally prepared food hampers and meals; small businesses helped stay afloat and contributed to the local economy. In addition, residents who lost their jobs due to the pandemic delivered grocery hampers and earned income to support themselves and their families.



The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the digital divide in our community; hundreds of people had no access to the internet or a device. As a result, remote learning was challenging for several households. Research suggests that people without full internet access are left behind academically and economically. Due to RCH's tireless efforts, we secured 255 computers and cell phones for households without connectivity. In addition, TELUS and other telecommunication companies offered free cell phone data plans to 125 households for over 18 months period.

Nothing is more important than ensuring the health and safety of our staff, partners, and the community we serve. During the pandemic, RCH focused on mitigating the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in the Hub facility and communities. We engaged Hub partners in developing and implementing COVID-19 administrative and environmental controls. As a result, the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan enabled us to safely re-open the Hub facility in September 2020 to continue offering essential services to the community.

RCH's ten collaborative virtual events connected with over 800 staff and residents to cherish community diversity, share knowledge and experiences to face the unique challenges that this pandemic has presented.

STEM Club activities continued inspiring youth to solve complex community challenges locally and globally—our virtual Summer of Innovation Camp with PepsiCo inspired 40 high-school youth through STEM experiments and workshops.

This year, our Place-Based Neighbourhood Infrastructure Committee brought residents and other stakeholders together to enhance local input into space assets adjacent to the Finch LRT. We also launched the virtual Community Conversations and Neighbourhood Pods Project to expand our reach and connect residents to essential supports during the pandemic. We connected with over 1000 residents in North Etobicoke through our outreach and voiced their issues at the North Etobicoke Cluster Table.

In April 2020, we launched our new website to ensure residents stay connected with the Hub and its partner organizations. Our virtual and in-person welcoming Hub space, services, and programs brought over 190,000 community visits during the pandemic.

Now, I want to thank and acknowledge residents, Hub and community partners, funders, donors, and local small businesses for their compassion, kindness, and resilience during this pandemic. Also, our Hub staff, community animators/ambassadors, and volunteers' exemplary dedication, perseverance, and working tirelessly on the front and behind the scenes against the pandemic- I want you to know that you inspire me and give me unending hope for the future of our communities. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to Board, led by Safia Ahmed (Board Chair), for their value-based leadership and commitment to RCH's community mission and vision. Finally, in reflecting on the year and the fact that we are still in the COVID-19 pandemic, together, we as a Hub community will remain hopeful, resilient, and committed to our residents' needs in North Etobicoke!

In the end, I would like to extend my most profound gratitude by dedicating Carl Sagan's beautiful quote to all of you: "In the vastness of space and the immensity of time, it is my joy to share a planet and an epoch with you." Thank you, North Etobicoke Communities, for your resilience!

Amra Munawar
Hub Director



Resilience at Work at the Hub

By Russ Mitchell

1. Resilience at Home...

On November 15, 2020, SpaceX in collaboration with NASA launched their Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Centre, and with it carried SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft, "Resilience". Resilience was given its name mainly because of the world-wide problems of 2020 associated with the coronavirus pandemic.

Commenting on the launch, NASA's Marie Lewis declared, "Resilience rises; not even gravity contains humanity when we explore as one for all."¹ In other words, like a helium balloon, resilience has gone up and can't be held down, and likewise neither gravity nor other obstacles can stop humans pursuing space exploration, as it's for the good of all.

But let's come back here to planet Earth, where we find 'resilience' in a different form, having taken shape and 'risen' during this past year in the form of 'community resilience', collaboratively driven within our sphere of influence right here at home at the Rexdale Community Hub.

Photo source: NASA

¹NASA SpaceX Crew-1 Mission. Article by MaryLiz Bender on Cosmic Perspective, November 24, 2020. <https://cosmicperspective.com/crew1/>

So, what is 'community resilience'? Well, while there's no single common definition, it is still possible to understand what it looks and feels like. To do so, let me introduce you to one of my favourite movie characters - Waste Allocation Load Litter Earth-Class, or WALL-E for short!

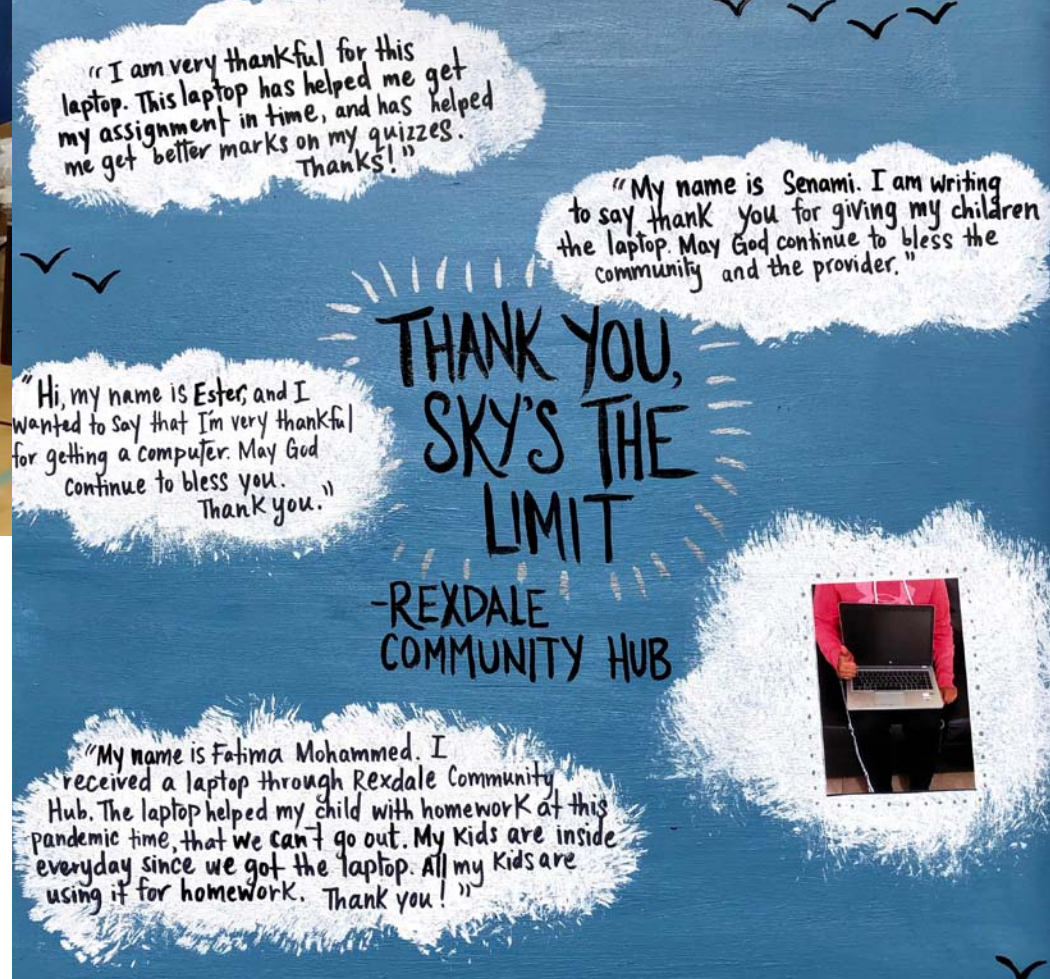
WALL-E (also the title of the movie) is the fictional story of a future world 700 years from now when people have abandoned our blue marble planet leaving behind not much more than a global landfill, this is, apart from WALL-E -- a garbage-compactor robot who spends his lonely days working in isolation producing cubes of garbage. Throughout the movie WALL-E shows a lot of resilience, yet longs for love, friendship, and connection as his only companions are a good-natured cockroach, and an old VHS copy of Hello Dolly (which he watches pretty much every day while dreaming for better things to come). This is not unlike our experience during COVID lockdowns, when our schools and offices and businesses and streets and parks were emptied of people and children and noises, and most of us were hidden in the places we call home. Even the Rexdale Hub was temporarily closed to the public. It seemed like the world had been abandoned.

Producers of the WALL-E film WALL-E purposely made humanity appear as having lost connection between each other, even though they were right next to each other. And it was the situation WALL-E and his now newfound companion robot, EVE (Extraterrestrial Vegetative Evaluator) encountered upon arrival at the humans' spaceship -Axiom. WALL-E and EVE, who had together made the journey to Axiom were able to demonstrate their resilience in tackling the negative impacts affecting the humans.

Similarly, the Rexdale Hub in collaboration with North Etobicoke Cluster Partners (with Cluster Coordinators United Way and the City of Toronto) have worked to identifying and address those issues negatively impacting local residents, by collectively tapping into common elements of community resilience, namely local knowledge, communication, community networks and relationships, healthcare, and access to resources.



"Thank you for your continued support for the community in Rexdale. These are hard times and your tireless effort to help the people of this community is very much appreciated. ...Therefore, we want you to know that your contribution to helping the people of Rexdale is truly a blessing." - Pastor Errol Heron (Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown)



2. Resilience at Work...

Our community resilience in practise has meant:

- **Working together to find solutions and then take action:** on connectivity issues (due to families not having enough devices/high cost of internet), social isolation for seniors, rising mental health issues, food insecurity (not being able to afford food due to increased expenses, loss of work, and/or not inability to purchase food due to mobility or health reasons), and other resource needs (from personal care products to computers)
- **The Hub Partnership successfully applied for funding for United Way's Local Love Fund grant.** Partners did wellness check-ins with their client contacts and identified who would benefit from receiving a grocery hamper/meal and what kind of food was best for them. Together the partnership identified approximately 712 households -- seniors, single-parents, and low-income families in need. The Hub took a coordinating role including centralizing the data received from all partners so track and ensure equitable distributions
- **The distribution of food,** with RCH coordinating pick-up times with agencies and drivers, communicating with vendors, purchasing food items, paying Ambassadors/drivers, and weekly reporting on progress/numbers to the NE Cluster table
- **Grappling with the need in the community for access to technology** (with devices or low-cost internet) that often-exceeded agencies capacity to deliver. Solution? We worked closely with our Hub and Cluster partners to engage corporations/businesses who could source donation items. By engaging these corporations for donations (eg. computers through Sky's the Limit, and cell phones through TELUS), we were able to serve vulnerable residents --seniors who were socially isolated were able to stay connected with friends/family/ neighbours, and students were able to submit assignments on time, and participate fully in class

"Rexdale Community Hub celebrates connectivity during the COVID-19 crisis with the generous donation of TELUS Canada and other technology companies 125 smartphones to North Etobicoke's most vulnerable families and individuals. Bringing peace of mind and lessening the trauma of social distancing, folks receiving phones now have a way to stay in contact with friends and family, ensuring better mental health and wellbeing. So, hats-off to TELUS Canada! #AllConnectedForGood #StayStrongStayConnected."



- **Finding other resources to meet the needs of low-income/vulnerable residents** with culturally appropriate foods—like the partnership we created with Seva Food Bank in Malton which allowed us to enhance our grocery hampers distribution thanks again to funding from United Way's Local Love Fund grant
- **Supporting the sustainability of local food vendors** by having them provide meals that we purchased and redistributed to community members; and distributing meals through Cluster Partners/smaller groups in the community as a result of donated meals from Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, the Marinara Boys, Sysco Canada, and Feed the Frontlines TO
- **A year-end Christmas Eve meal distribution event**, through the generous donation from Feed it Forward (both meals and additional in-kind gift boxes) and funded through the COVID Equity grant providing more than 3,350 meals from locally sourced vendors. This collaborative distribution event came with the kind support and help from our other partners (including the delivery of meals to families) and was all coordinated out of the repurposed gym space at the Hub.

3. Resilience at the Hub...

Speaking of use of space, many people have been housebound during this past year of the pandemic, and some have turned to a bit of interior redecorating, or spending more time nurturing a balcony garden space, or even making the backyard a bit more inviting. This is the complete opposite to the decrepit looking industrial vehicle that WALL-E called home, where every nook and cranny was 're-fitted' for either the storage of 'treasured' items found in the garbage, for sleeping space, or for personal entertainment.

WALL-E's home, however compact and cute it may be, won't ever match up to the Hub's beautiful spaces – inside and out! Nevertheless, we too have temporarily re-purposed areas in the Hub to become: warehouse space (eg. our loading dock stored numerous items, everything from chocolates to hand sanitizer to dog food); packing/distribution space (eg. meeting rooms and the gym were used for the packing/distribution of food and other donated items); and clinic space (eg. the gym has been used for both COVID testing and vaccination roll out).



"Delivering meals has been interesting for me, and it is the first time I've done a job like this. This job is perfect for my personality and has helped my mental health as I enjoy seeing volunteers and community members. It has also helped with my finances during the covid-19 pandemic. I look forward to helping out in the future." - N.K. (Delivery driver, Resident of Humber Summit)

Leaving Earth for the moment, WALL-E and Eve, who have been spending a period of time sharing space with humans on the spaceship Axiom, end up having an impact on two humans in particular --John and Mary. Both are fixated on their computer screens until they are bumped out of their comfort zone ... where they discover the beauty of the stars ... and each other. Here at the Hub we were also 'bumped (due to the pandemic) out of our comfort zone', and had to make the necessary adjustments to now mainly work online. For example, the resilience of staff and residents to plan, deliver, and participate in our virtual all-community events is testimony to this shift in our work. And it has meant we could learn and reflect on the beauty around us, like in the global achievement of women, and in each other's culture and heritage as we celebrated Black History Month, International Women's Day, Asian Heritage Month, and Canada Day. We also hosted two virtual TOGETHER events providing support, encouragement, and networking opportunities for Hub agency staff. This year our events featured guest speakers who provided staff members with practical tips and resources on the areas of mental health, and ergonomics.

While compacting garbage, WALL-E occasionally finds interesting items which he collects out of personal interest ... like a Rubik's Cube ... and yes, even a small plant. The small plant just happens to be what EVE is looking for. Once back home on the human spaceship, EVE's possession of a live plant triggers the space ship's pre-programmed directive to return to planet Earth. But of course, there had to be a villain robot (named Auto), who tried to scuttle the spaceship's return to Earth. But the ship's captain, WALL-E, EVE, along with John and Mary, collaborate to save the day!

Like Axiom's directive to return to planet Earth, the Rexdale Hub after a brief period of closure began making necessary preparations to return to 'normal' operations. Through the careful work of Hub staff, health and safety considerations, partnership input, and expert advice, all together helped maintain our resilience to overcome an unpredictable environment that could have easily scuttled our progress. With the support of United Way's Emergency Preparedness Funding, we were able to establish a reopening plan that would happen in stages, and that included administrative and engineering controls. We also created training videos and hosted sessions for all Hub agency staff to introduce the new Hub protocols. Along the way, the need for a permanent COVID testing site at the Hub was identified. So, we worked together to come up with a safety plan (with IPAC inspections) ensuring separate entrances/exits, ventilation, and the putting up of a physical barrier outside our main entrance.

The Hub's journey this year began with us being unexpectedly launched into a mission of adapting, sustaining, and helping our community towards the goal of recovery. And like WALL-E and EVE, we've traveled through the year seeking to take care of one another, protecting and safeguarding the vulnerable from the perils of COVID, but even more so, collectively learned how to stay human even during a pandemic. And this, I think we can all say, is true community resilience!



"I am so grateful for the grocery hampers that I have received through the Rexdale Community Hub. Since the pandemic started, all four of my children are spending all their time at home which has resulted in an increased budget for grocery items. Adjusting to the pandemic has been difficult as I had lost my main source of income. I received bountiful grocery hampers and delicious hot meals through the RCH, and I extend my sincere gratitude." - S.M. (Resident of Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown)

// Food security an urgent need for GTA's most vulnerable

'Food security was already an issue in North Etobicoke. But the pandemic made it worse,' says Amra Munawar, executive director of the Rexdale Community Hub (RCH), the backbone agency behind the co-ordinated effort. 'It impacted small businesses. So many people lost their jobs, which made the food security issue more serious.'

Of particular concern were the community's already vulnerable populations, such as seniors, single mothers and newcomers to Canada. As a response, the agencies — including the RCH working closely with the North Etobicoke Cluster Coordination table, an initiative led by United Way Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto — put their heads together to find ways to get nutritious food to the residents of the community.

But where to start? It began by developing a list of who needed help. 'We collected information from our partner organizations about community needs and created a central database system to ensure we're not overlapping households,' says Munawar. //

- excerpt and image above from: <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/unitedway/2020/11/21/food-security-an-urgent-need-for-gtas-most-vulnerable.html>



RCH Summer of Innovation Camp - Virtually

By Daniyal Bokhari



Rexdale Community Hub's "Summer of Innovation Camp," in collaboration with PepsiCo was a fascinating and enjoyable weeklong learning experience. Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the need to maintain safety protocols, the summer camp was held online through the virtual meeting platform ZOOM. While the virtual medium possesses its own restraints, this did not hinder my ability to interact and be involved in the summer camp activities.

The camp itself was held over 5 days, with each day focusing around a new topic in the world of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). The hosts of these sessions were scientists and engineers from a variety of fields, who spoke to us about their experiences working within their respective areas. We were each provided with a kit containing all of the items we would need to satisfactorily participate in the daily activities.



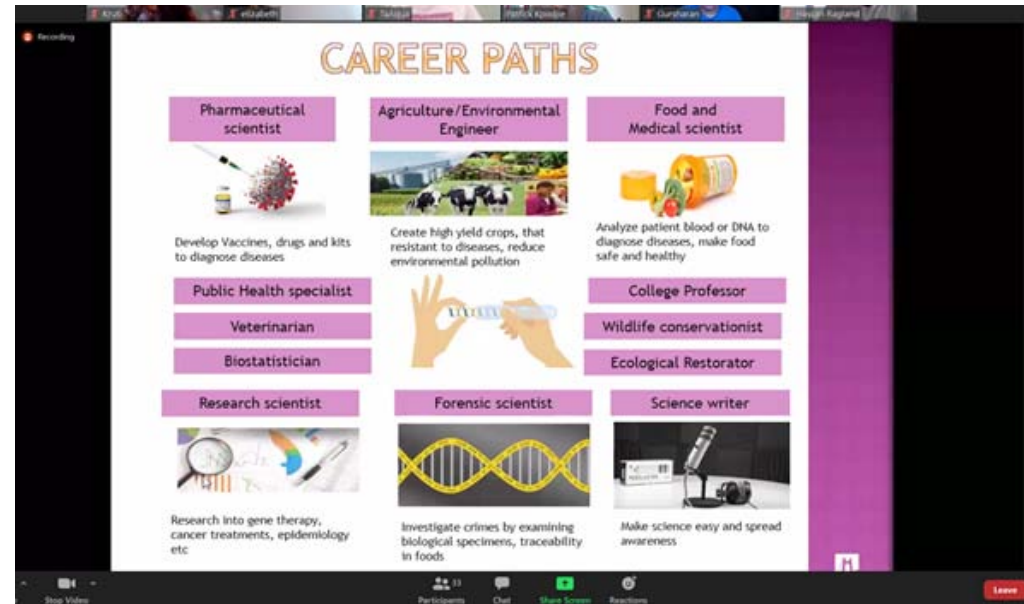
"Our favourite project was extracting the DNA sample from a fruit such as a banana or strawberry ... After the project we discussed and shared our knowledge about DNA. For example, about 50% of our genetic code is in common with bananas ... It definitely increased our curiosity and interest in science and other fields."

By Burrak Urrehman &
Haady Urrehman

To give a brief summary of the content we covered, we initially learned why apples and other fruits turn brown under prolonged exposure, through an effect called oxidation. Subsequently, we were instructed on how to build a radio with the help of an electrical engineer. I learned about how the components of a radio are connected together to work properly to create a functioning unit. We also learned about DNA, in particular, how to extract it from a strawberry. Following along with the scientist hosting the session, I was able to successfully perform the extraction.

We also learned about packaging design, how the packaging for various grocery products is meticulously designed to protect the food while also allowing them to be stacked and transported in the most efficient way. We saw how effective this packaging design is by testing our cereal boxes and observing how adequately they could protect the cereal inside of them. Finally, we learned how to create our own skincare products using various ingredients, some of which were entirely unexpected. I found that a few household items (i.e. olive oil) can also be incorporated in making these cosmetic products. In the end, everyone had created different ointments which work for different skin care purposes.

In all, I found the RCH Summer of Innovation Camp to be a truly memorable experience, made insightful through the interactivity of each task and the supervision of the session leaders. While conventional school activities lend themselves to visual and auditory forms of education, this camp offered an opportunity to indulge in more kinesthetic, hands-on learning. Much of what I learned uniquely pertains to everyday life, such as the information given above, which further helped to engage my involvement. I feel privileged to have been able to learn and communicate alongside the other students, and am actively inspired to continue searching for more opportunities in the future.





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learned that we're
never alone in our
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and for ourselves.

Our Neighbourhood's Resilience

By Warda Sharmeen

We began this year by adapting to our new normal: protecting the health and safety of our family, friends, and community by staying physically distanced. The COVID-19 health crisis has brought on a whole set of new challenges, but our strength lies in our unity, and this is exactly how we faced these challenges together.

Nothing About Us, Without Us

While we began adapting to life in a lockdown in March 2020, we certainly missed all the things about our neighbourhood and community that we cherish. Our natural and built surroundings have an important role in our wellbeing, and now the malls and plazas, libraries, and community centres we loved to spend moments in were all closed due to the pandemic.

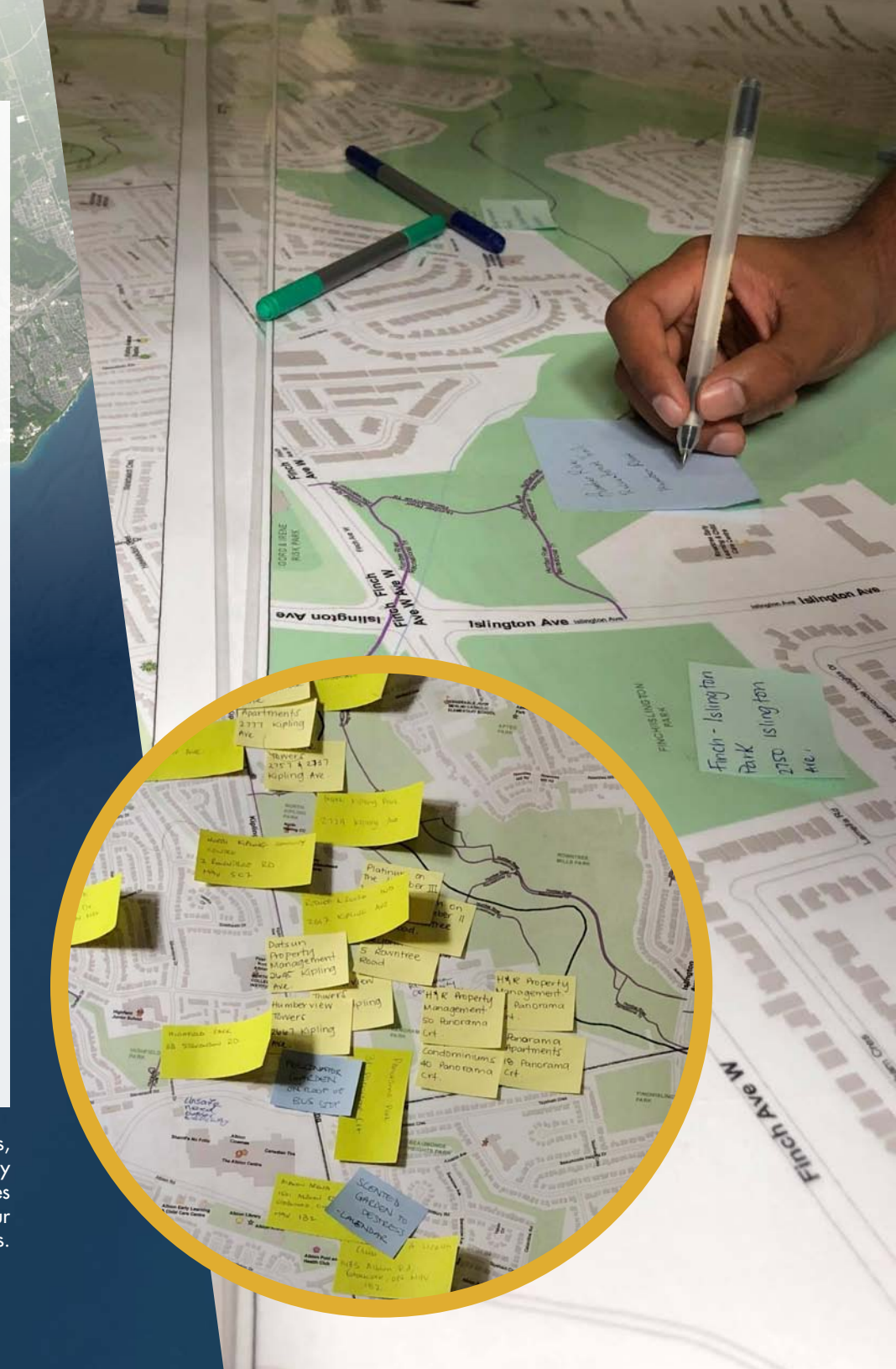
This year, the [Neighbourhood Engagement Initiative](#) worked with the [Place-Based Neighbourhood Infrastructure Committee \(PBNIC\)](#) to begin co-designing space assets adjacent to the Finch LRT. Through virtual focus groups with community members, we also learned about their experiences in accessing these spaces during the pandemic. The PBNIC redefined space assets as those that are also able to adapt to the community's needs during the pandemic. We worked on an updated Space Asset Inventory of neighbourhood spaces we love, and we highlighted the changes in the use of these spaces during the pandemic.

In the Fall we collaborated with [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program for Rexdale](#), to host a community planning workshop where we worked with the community to identify the aspects of space assets that are most important to them during COVID. We learned which design categories are most valued by community members in North Etobicoke; safety, environmentally friendliness, accessibility.

Together we learned how much we take things for granted: like the public spaces in our community that we use on a daily basis. This year has been about reimagining these spaces, and seeing the value in the community spaces that can adapt to our needs/desires.

Together we learned what an important role these spaces play in our health and wellness, and how often we take our daily interactions in them for granted, but that they have so much potential to be vibrant, enjoyable spaces for all age groups.

Through this year's virtual community engagements, we were able to update the Space Asset Inventory by collecting information on our current uses of physical spaces in North Etobicoke and our community's desires/vision for those spaces.

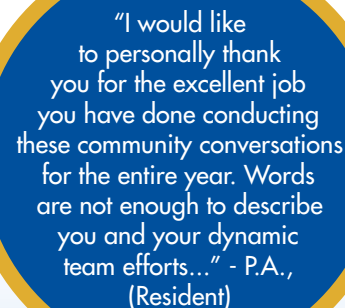


Physically Distanced, But Socially Connected

Coping with our new routines and trying to stay updated on current global events, all while worrying for the health and safety of others and ourselves has been difficult for many. Resident leaders did their best to stay connected with their friends and neighbours, but many of these folks wished for a forum to share regular community updates, current information on COVID-19, and to see the familiar faces of their friends and neighbours (even if through a computer screen).

“Community Conversations During COVID-19,” are bi-weekly virtual meetings that we launched for all community members of North Etobicoke. It started off as a space to share the concerns felt by our communities during this time and to point folks in the right direction to get the support they need for their wellbeing. We’ve also:

- **Hosted 24 information sessions** requested by residents that mitigate the viral transmission of COVID-19, share knowledge on community updates and programs, and share knowledge on navigating the pandemic/where to find resources and support in North Etobicoke. Donation opportunities for residents through the North Etobicoke Cluster are regularly communicated through this forum.
- **Developed a community resource guide** by compiling information from the North Etobicoke Cluster Table. The easiest way to pass along important information to their networks is by word of mouth, and this resource guide was a quick way to find relevant information during check-ins with neighbours.
- **Learned about the community’s needs** during the pandemic. Linking into the North Etobicoke Cluster Table meant that we were able to address these needs and concerns by pooling resources and information. It also meant that community members had a chance to shape how things were being done, for instance: COVID-19 testing.



“I would like to personally thank you for the excellent job you have done conducting these community conversations for the entire year. Words are not enough to describe you and your dynamic team efforts...” - P.A., (Resident)

“The Greatness of a Community is Most Accurately Described by the Compassionate Actions of its Members.” – Coretta Scott King

This year we learned that we’re never alone in our communities, and our compassionate actions go a long way for others and for ourselves. When we look back, we will remember these compassionate actions, and the positive impact they’ve had not only in North Etobicoke, but around the world. Resident leaders in North Etobicoke have also had a positive impact on their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and were able to tackle adversities with two things: **compassion and togetherness.**

In Winter 2021, we launched the **Neighbourhood Pods Project (NPP)** in North Etobicoke to enhance the togetherness of resident-led groups, or “Pods.”

We began by mapping resident networks in North Etobicoke and worked with **nine (9) Pods** this year, each of which is led by a Pod Organizer who regularly checks in with resident Pod members. Each Pod Organizer helps isolated community

members stay connected, they disseminate current information aimed at mitigating viral transmission, and they reduce social isolation--through over **500 regular check-ins** with Pod Members. Pod Members continued to provide neighbourly support for one another during this pandemic, and each act of compassion had a noticeable impact. Instead of North Etobicoke residents, groups, and organizations having to fend for themselves, they had taken on the responsibility of caring for each other. In this way, we worked towards a system of mutual aid.

Through “Solidarity Check-ins,” Pod Organizers are able to share the impact of their activities, but also their best practices and lessons learned. Solidarity Check-ins also give Pod Organizers the opportunity to share resources, by asking each other: “Is there anything your Pod needs at this time?” and “Is there anything your Pod can offer at this time?”

My life as a Pod Organizer

By: Mandy Walia, Pod Organizer in Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown

As a Pod Organizer, a big responsibility and trust was put on my shoulders for a great social cause during this pandemic which we had never experienced before. 'Compassion and Solidarity' became an integral part of everyone's life, and we focused on providing support to ensure the wellbeing of ourselves, our families, our neighbours, and broader communities. We were all going through uncertainty and experiencing total social disconnect from our loved ones. The social isolation led to mental stress, financial insecurity, and health crisis for many. I was already connected with seniors in my surrounding neighbourhood, but my connectivity has increased tenfold during the pandemic.

On any given day I begin by reaching out through wellness checks. I help my Pod Members connect with their family doctor or pharmacy for home delivery of medicines. I've been concerned about the loss of social connectivity, so based on interests, I connect Pod Members with vital programs such as exercise, cooking, gardening, nutrition information sessions, storytelling and upgrading of skills. The Rexdale Hub and my fellow Pod Organizers have been a major help as they've introduced me to other agencies/programs offering support. I've also shared updates on COVID-19 testing and vaccine initiatives via WhatsApp, mass emails, calling over the phone, and doing flyer outreach in my surrounding area/buildings.

When the lockdowns eased a little, my Pod Members and I met in person at North Humber Park. In all my interactions I emphasize COVID-19 protocols as we are still not out of the woods. It is nice to see my Pod Members smiling and expressing gratitude to each other.

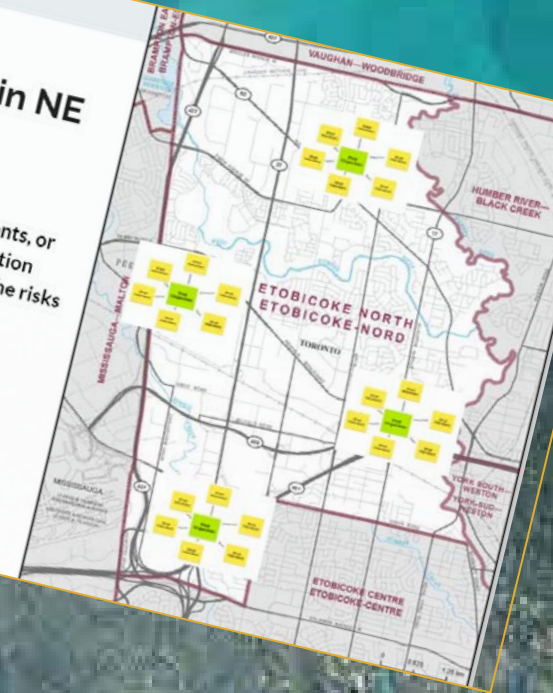
Today's Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Land Acknowledgement
3. Brief overview of Neighbourhood Pods
4. Activities within the NE Pods Project
 - a. Starting/Building your Pods
 - b. Outreach/Staying safe
 - c. Bi-weekly Solidarity Check-ins
 - d. Training/skill building opportunities
 - e. Linking the NPP to the NE Cluster
5. Logistics - devices (cellphones), bi-weekly honorariums
6. Open discussion / Q&A
7. Next Solidarity check-in meeting time

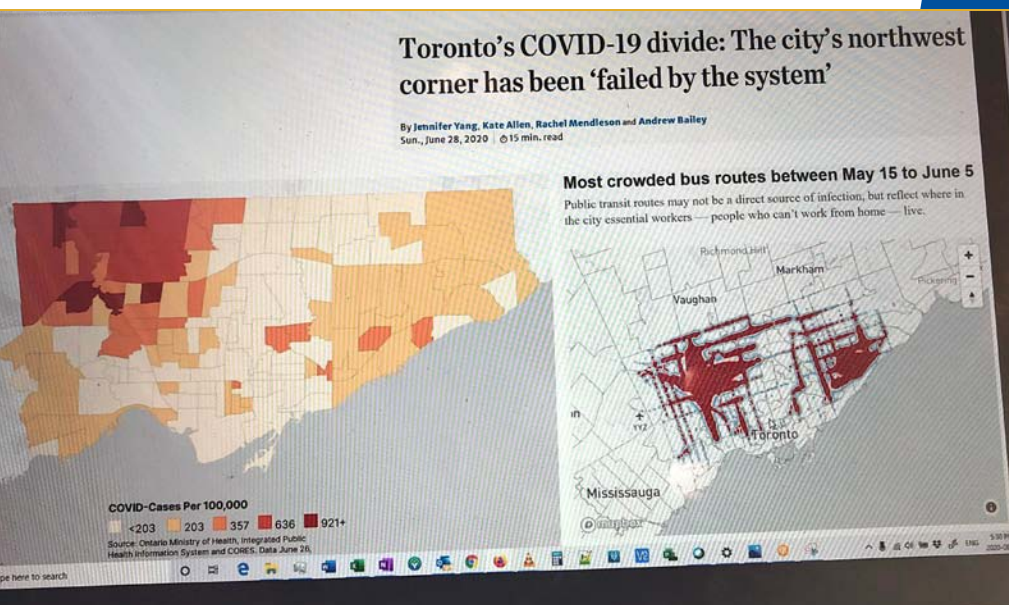


"Neighbourhood Pods" in NE

Goal: Strengthen and maintain networks of residents, or "Pods" so that each neighbour has at least one relation providing consistent support, in order to mitigate the risks of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.



One of the greatest challenges of this pandemic was trying to stay involved while at the same time protecting our health and adjusting to a new normal. This year we found that COVID-19 brought on a whole new set of challenges for the community, while also surfacing many of our existing challenges. North Etobicoke's resilience is its strength, and while we may have a long way to go, **we have the right people and tools to get through this health crisis!**



<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/06/28/torontos-covid-19-divide-the-citys-northwest-corner-has-been-failed-by-the-system.html>

Media Coverage

"Toronto partners with United Way to address urgent COVID-19 issues" <https://www.toronto.com/news-story/10041958-toronto-partners-with-united-way-to-address-urgent-covid-19-issues/>

"High COVID-19 rates in Toronto's northwest due to 'structural inequities'" <https://www.toronto.com/news-story/10219460-high-covid-19-rates-in-toronto-s-northwest-due-to-structural-inequities-/>

"A Local Perspective of a Global Pandemic: Exploring North Etobicoke" https://rise.articulate.com/share/0QKRgaoDL_8GqQJiHdB8qJe5gYMhFwuV#/lessons/qH5TtM_PDFBTaBMZx4DKWDNldgNdbJdn

<https://www.facebook.com/amra.munawar/posts/1015745036039659>

<https://twitter.com/cityoftoronto/status/1271066003150188545?s=20>



Our 2020-2021 Resilience Journey:

The signs of adaptability, hope, and impact

**TOTAL
HUB VISITS IN
2020-2021:
190,161**

9 Pod Organizers engaged in regular check-ins and information sharing with **500+** local residents, representing 6 neighbourhoods of North Etobicoke

480 Residents engaged in information sharing at bi-weekly Community Conversations

120 Residents engaged in virtual community engagements to understand the use of neighbourhood infrastructure before and during the pandemic

255 Smartphones and laptops to community members in North Etobicoke

855 Residents and staff participated in 10 Collaborative capacity building events



58,469 Grocery hampers and prepared meals doorstep delivered to over 1000 households in the community

100+ Volunteers, ambassadors, and staff involved in the supply chain distribution of emergency food, personal protective equipment, hygiene kits, and other household supplies

40 Youth learned about careers in science through virtual experiments and workshops, in the 2020 STEM Summer of Innovation Camp



Remarks from the Chair of the Board

Last year was exceedingly challenging for the North Etobicoke residents. COVID-19 hit our community hard. The pandemic exacerbated long-standing structural inequities existing within our community.

The COVID-19 virus has had a severe impact on our community. Many members of our community have lost loved ones or have had life-altering effects due to the virus. Some community members have also lost their jobs and had difficulty paying for rent, food, and medication. In addition, the high infection rate meant that our response for essential services and supports was needed more than ever.

Despite this hardship, our community came together and supported each other, showing strength and resiliency in the wake of the pandemic.

The Rexdale Community Hub played a major role in coordinating resources to respond to the pandemic effectively. We worked with the North Etobicoke Cluster partners, donors, funders, and volunteers, providing equipment and access to the internet for many clients with digital access issues. This was essential for seniors' programming to address isolation, mental health, and physical health during lockdowns. It was also valuable for our youth clients to continue receiving services.

Food insecurity has been a prevalent issue within our community. Demand for food has skyrocketed during the pandemic. In collaboration with community partners and volunteers, the Rexdale community Hub delivered over 58,000 meals and hampers.

Our staff supported the COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts in North Etobicoke. Our multilingual community ambassadors continued to offer health information, interpretation, personal protective equipment, and encouragement to get COVID-19 tests and vaccinations at community pop-up clinics.

The community ambassadors have been trained to engage residents and provide an accessible and supportive community experience to answer questions and overcome vaccine hesitancy, fears, and misunderstandings.

Our COVID response has been client-centered and culturally appropriate. We worked in tandem with our community partners and volunteers to create safe and accessible services and support to clients.

The Board extends our most profound appreciation to Hub Director Amra Munawar and her team for their unwavering commitment to our clients and community during the pandemic.

To our funders and donors, thank you for your continued support of us and North Etobicoke. We would also like to shine a light on our volunteers who lent their time and talent in response to COVID-19. You are our true heroes!

Safia Ahmed
Board Chair

Our Hub Partners, Board and Staff Members, Funders and Community Supporters



Our Present Hub Partners

Albion Neighbourhood Services
Delta Family Resource Centre
Rexdale Community Health Centre
Rexdale Community Legal Centre
Rexdale Women's Centre
Toronto Employment and Social Services

Our Present Board Members

Abraham Abbey	2014-Present
Desree Prince	2014-Present
Fatima Filippi	2013-Present
Safia Ahmed	2013-Present
Shermeen Farooqi	2019 -Present
Yodit Edemariam	2019 - Present

Our Funders

City of Toronto
United Way Greater Toronto

Our Supporters

Afghan Kebob Cuisine
Al-Meezan Grocery and Halal Meat
Al-Meezan Spicy Grill
Ali Baba's Middle Eastern Cuisine
Bell Canada
BMO Financial Group
Bird Studies
Caribbean Cuisine Authentic Jamaican Jerk
Department of Geography and Planning, University of Toronto
Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto
Feed the Frontlines TO
Feed it Forward Inc.
FoodShare Toronto
Fortinos, 330 Queens Plate Drive
Google Kitchener, Waterloo
IBM Canada Ltd.
Home Depot Branch #7114
Lola's Catering
Maximum City
Mushkaki Restaurants Inc.
North Etobicoke Cluster Table

ONE Toronto GAMING
Parks Canada
Park People
Physics and Astronomy, York University
PepsiCo Canada
Repair Café Toronto
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Royal Bank of Canada
Ryerson University (Department of Geography and Environmental Studies)
Seva Food Bank
Sheriff's No Frills
Sky's the Limit Youth Organization
Sprout Community
Subway #11321
Telus
The Salvation Army (Etobicoke Temple)
The STEPS Initiative
Toronto Community Benefits Network
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)
Xawaash

Our Present Team Members

Aiman Malhi
Amanda Griselda Nandugwa
Amra Munawar
Bright Bilson
Harry Persaud
Hassan Bokhari
Kavielle Blake
Kizzy Price
Rameen Popalzai
Russell Mitchell
Samson Ayeleso
Thelma Adelekun
Vicki Crystal
Warda Sharmeen

Mural Credits

The Art of Wong Inc.



Our Vision

A healthy and sustainable community where residents are empowered and engaged.

Our Mission

Rexdale Community Hub's mission is to provide accessible, welcoming space with collaborative, integrated services and programs to enrich every aspect of the community's life.

Our Values

Accessibility – We are committed to ensuring that access to appropriate and acceptable services and resources within the Hub is promoted and ensure that inequities in health and well-being are addressed.

Accountability – We are accountable to the community for the actions and services of the Hub. We will ensure program and services reflect identified community needs, integrate community resources and as partners, we will effectively dedicate our collective resources to this end.

Community Engagement – We are committed to provide stakeholders in the community opportunities to participate in decision-making through processes designed to identify, understand, and address community needs on an ongoing basis.

Diversity – We are committed to inclusion and value and respect the differences found in our community. We demonstrate this understanding through sensitivity, culturally competent and inclusive practices and policies that include individuals from diverse groups in our decision making, information sharing, access to services, governance and employment.

Equity – We are committed to ensuring that all people reach their full potential and are not disadvantaged from attaining it because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, social class, socio-economic status, or other socially determined circumstance.

Excellence – We strive to provide the best and most appropriate programs and services to the community. We listen carefully to the needs of the community, seek the resources to respond to these needs, and implement programs and services with the highest standards.

Sustainability – We will measure, improve, and be accountable for our environmental, financial, social, health and well-being results.



Serving the Community is Our Business

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Toronto, ON M9V 4E3**

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Fax: (416) 741-3011**