

My Hub, My Community

Beacon of Hope: Collaboratively lighting
the way towards an equitable future

Rexdale Community Hub
2021-2022

Remarks from the Hub Director

Many of us love watching the beams of light emitting from a lighthouse slowly rotating round and round at night and providing navigational aid to maritime pilots. Like a lighthouse, Rexdale Community Hub (RCH) has continued emitting beams of light in 2021-2022, providing navigational aid to its partners and residents in North Etobicoke and piercing the darkness of the pandemic. So let's navigate some of our collective actions and achievements this past year.

We witnessed that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed pre-existing structural inequities in our communities, resulting in vulnerable populations facing alarming levels of food insecurity with several other social, financial and health challenges. According to Statistics Canada, 15% of individuals reported living in a household that faced food insecurity during the early stages of the pandemic, and our emergency food program data also confirmed that the risk of food insecurity was substantially higher among households with children, seniors, single-parent, and people living with disability; which includes no money to get food for everyone in the family, choosing between a meal or having roof over your head, and eating unhealthy food due to affordability reasons. According to Daily Bread report as poverty continues to soar due to the pandemic, new clients outnumbered existing clients at Toronto's food banks. During the pandemic, our Hub continuously engaging local planning tables, educational/research institutions, residents, government representatives, politicians, and local media to put the food security issue in our community at the forefront. The impact of food insecurity on people's physical and mental health is frightening, and long-term public policy solutions are required "Now."

The food insecurity issue is well documented and understood during/pre-pandemic research; therefore, it's time for all levels of governments to take concrete actions based on the available data and tackle the issue gravely impacting millions in Canada.

Despite these gloomy times, our community ambassadors, Hub and community partners and local businesses have come together to address the emergency food needs of our families in North Etobicoke. This year our centrally coordinated collaborative emergency food access program delivered over 15,000 hampers and hot meals through our 150 dedicated volunteers, food partners, and community ambassadors. In addition, since the pandemic started, we have delivered over 75,000 culturally sensitive hampers and hot meals to the elderly, people with disabilities, single parents, COVID-impacted families, and other vulnerable populations in North Etobicoke. Our centrally coordinated emergency food access program efficiently used the available funding to maximize the benefit to the community: first, people facing food insecurity received culturally sensitive food hampers and meals; second, small businesses received support to stay afloat and contributed to the local economy; finally, residents who lost their jobs due to the pandemic delivered grocery hampers and earned small income to support themselves and their families. In addition, we re-purposed our community spaces to distribute over 79,000 PPE and hygiene items. We secured and distributed 120 cell phone and laptops this year to ensure that our community members are digitally connected during the pandemic.

In an ever-changing world, it's more important than ever that our youth are well equipped with STEM education in schools and the community; here at the Hub, we firmly believe that a child's postal code shouldn't determine their access to STEM education. So, this year, our science, technology, engineering, and math program, collectively known as Rexdale Hub STEM Club, collaboratively organized our annual Summer of Innovation Camp with PepsiCo. About 50 youth from our Hub and cluster partner organizations participated in a week-long camp, which sparked youth innovative and problem-solving skills through exciting experimentation and



2021-2022

**Total Hub Visits:
197,537**

meeting with PepsiCo professionals. We are pleased to report that many of our STEM members have gone on to distinguished graduate schools and successful careers in STEM fields.

During the pandemic, we continued ensuring that Hub provides a safe and accessible space for our staff, partners, and service/space users. In the same vein, we focused on mitigating the potential for virus transmission in the Hub facility and communities. With our Hub partners, we developed and implemented a sound COVID-19 Prevention Plan for the facility. Due to these safety measures, we have had zero outbreaks in our facility and keep offering essential services to the community without disruptions in these critical times.

This year our 23 collaborative virtual events, including Black History Month, International Women's Day, Asian Heritage Month, Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Canada Day events brought over 1,000 residents to cherish, respect and recognize our diversity in the community. In addition, our virtual and in-person services and programs in 2021-2022 got over 197,000 residents' visits to the Hub.

Our Northwest Toronto Neighbourhood Infrastructure Engagement Initiative concluded its activities this year in collaboration with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Rexdale SNAP program. The project focused on designing solutions for transforming the community spaces identified by residents and frequently used by the community.

For example, our project partners and resident leaders identified the Rowntree Mills Park site to create a more welcoming environment and greater access to the park through various arts and cultural activities and a community-engaged pathway mural.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we launched the virtual Community Conversations and Neighbourhood Pods Project to expand our reach in six neighbourhoods. Our 9 Pod organizers representing Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown, Thistletown-Beaumont Heights, West Humber-Claireville, Elms-Old Rexdale, Kingsview Village-The Westway, and Rexdale-Kipling, outreached to over 2000 residents and working tirelessly to support residents with vaccination, testing, emergency food access programs, and other essential services.

It is truly remarkable how much we accomplished together in this past year. I wish to acknowledge with immense gratitude our Hub staff, community animators/ambassadors, pod organizers and volunteers for their unwavering sense of responsibility, hard work and commitment to Hub's community vision and mission. You are the Beacon of Hope in our community.

I am also profoundly grateful to our residents, Hub and community partners, funders, donors, and local small businesses for their kindness, compassion, and continued commitment to supporting the community. Moreover, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Hub Board and Chair Safa Ahmed, for their outstanding value-based leadership, dedication and services to the Hub and wider community.

In looking forward to the years ahead, I am convinced that due to our strong collaborative culture at the Hub, we will work through every challenge that comes our community's way. We may have a long journey ahead to create an equitable future for everyone in our community, but one day we will get there. So let's collaboratively keep paving the way towards hope and resilience!

*Amra Munwar
Rexdale Community Hub Director*

Hope in a Pandemic ‘Rainy Season’

By Russ Mitchell

While back I helped a group of residents think about how to beautify the lobby of their high rise. It was suggested by one younger resident that mirrors be installed. Why? Evidently consistently slow elevators means always having to wait around and what better way to kill the time, than to fix your hair, or do your makeup, or adjust a piece of clothing, or any number of other things ... hence the mirrors!

For centuries mirrors have been a fascination for people eager to see their own reflection. In Greek mythology, Narcissus is said to have given up on loving others, and instead was in love with his own reflection which he saw in a pool of water. As the tale goes, his fixation with self carried on through life until his death. Can you imagine a world so small that it consists of only a single view – you!? Or, how lonely it must be to never experience the connection and affection of others? Or, how empty the heart would be if you never received the benefits from freely giving to someone else?

When confronted with the prospects of another year of pandemic, the Rexdale Hub could have also chosen to focus inwardly. How easy it would have been to simply safeguard what we had had, based on our perceived limitations. But that would have been a bit like a ‘salt flat’ – a salt-encrusted area resulting from evaporation of the former body of water - dry, bleak, and with not much to look forward to. Instead, we chose to turn from what could have been a pandemic ‘salt-flat’ year, into a mirror-like beacon of hope for our wider Hub communities.

So yes, a mirror can look beyond itself and be a beautiful reflection in the world of what humanity is meant to be. Allow me to introduce to you the incredible Salar de Uyuni – the world’s largest salt flat, which when covered with water becomes a massive reflective surface-like-mirror. In a Ripley’s Believe it or Not article, author Thao Thai explains that the Salar de Uyuni stretches 4,086 miles across the country of Bolivia; is eight times the size of New York City; and she describes it as “out-of-this-world beautiful.” When the water joins the salt, something amazing takes place ... but only in the rainy season. Similarly, during this year the Rexdale Hub has joined with our numerous partners to collaborate on a wide range of initiatives and lots of great outcomes. And it’s all happened during another year of pandemic – our ‘rainy season’!

Below are just a small sampling of the local groups/organizations we’ve been privileged to partner with during the year:

- **Kosarainc:** As a local resident-led organic food start-up, Kosarainc seeks to advance food security in Rexdale. The Hub was able to advocate on behalf of this local entrepreneur resulting in this family run farm getting approval for vegetable growing space at Riverlea Green Houses. It will enable Kosarainc to continue providing fresh food items to the Hub and other local organizations. (See also <https://www.kosarafarm.ca>)

- **PlazaPOPS:** PlazaPOPS, the Rexdale Hub, Albion-Islington BIA, Catch the Fire Church and other local allies have joined forces to roll out this federally funded/resident-driven initiative, as a high impact, and low cost, process to transform parking lots into free and accessible gathering places. This exciting 3-year project will begin in Rexdale, establishing 4 sites - 1 central hub at 950 Albion and 3 satellites spots. (Check it out at https://www.instagram.com/plaza_POPS)
- **Change Through Sports Canada:** As part of our ongoing collaborative work the Hub agreed to act as trustee for local partner Change Through Sports Canada, for their Toronto Vital Signs - Toronto Foundation Grant. As one of this year's Toronto's Vital Signs grantees, Change Through Sports will be able to conduct in-house coaching development of youth and alumni coaches; support coaching certification fees; develop partnerships to place coaches for future employment; and provide resume building and financial literacy workshops. (See also <https://www.changethroughsportcanada.com>)

"...this year the Rexdale Hub has joined with our numerous partners to collaborate on a wide range of initiatives and lots of great outcomes. And it's all happened during another year of pandemic - our 'rainy season'!"





**Total prepared hot meals distributed:
5,494**

**Total grocery hampers distributed:
10,490**

**In collaboration with North Etobicoke
Cluster of Service Partners, we
distributed the following to residents
in need:**

**Hygiene and cleaning items:
38,800+**

**Personal protective equipment:
13,500+**

Hand sanitizers: 27,200+

Technological devices: 120+

Across the globe mariners have relied on lighthouses for safe passage to their destinations...and it's a valued partnership. Mariners know what to look for and where to look, because: first, lighthouses are painted certain colours based on their surroundings; and second, they are built at different heights, taking into account the curvature of the earth. Lighthouse colour and height are both imperative to stand out and be easily seen. But if applying that to the Salar de Uyuni, well...its humongous size says it all! Whether it is bright and white (during the dry season) or a glistening jewel (in the rainy season), the fact that it is situated 11,995 feet above sea level and so big, makes the Salar de Uyuni very visible from space. NASA and other space agencies take advantage of this for GPS calibration re satellite sensors and orbits, using Salar's water-smoothed surface.

Both the Salar de Uyuni and lighthouses are marked by their fixed positions and helpful visibility. Similarly, the Rexdale Hub has remained place-based during the pandemic, safely reaching out together with our partners where possible across much of North Etobicoke. We've continued to be highly visible by responding collaboratively in several important ways to our community, who have looked to us in addressing current and emerging needs, and in seeking a safe place they can turn to. So first, we worked to address the need for food in the community.



Collaborating with our partners who did wellness check-ins with their client contacts, we were able to identify who would benefit from receiving a grocery hamper/meal and what kind of cultural food they required, identifying approximately 1000 households – seniors, single-parents, and low-income families in need. The Hub took a coordinating role for the distribution of food, including centralizing the data received from all partners, enabling us to track and ensure equitable distributions. In addition, RCH coordinated pick-up times with agencies and drivers, communicating with vendors, purchased food items, employed local Ambassadors/drivers, and reporting weekly our progress/numbers to partners. Although limited in resources, our coordination of hub operations allowed us to maintain a service level at least temporarily, in addressing food insecurity in the community that would not have happened otherwise.

Secondly, we've sought to be a light of hope for others, through ongoing responsiveness to pandemic resource needs. Over the past months certain Hub spaces have been temporarily re-purposed to become warehouse packing/distribution space, and clinic space. Community needs of recent months have required that we continue to be a conduit for various kinds of donations of items such as: cell phones; facemasks and shields; hand sanitizers, soap dispenser, and other related items.



Thirdly, through our ongoing responsiveness to civic engagement needs, we've sought to empower the local community. For the past few years there has been a call locally for more critical thinking around civic engagement, democracy, and understanding the real needs of the communities we work with; much due historically to low voter turn-out locally. So when a snap federal election was called at the end of last summer, we joined with the Democratic Engagement Exchange (Toronto Metropolitan University), providing our Hub agency colleagues with links to resources that they could use with their community members.

As a Hub, working at the grassroots level is an integral part of community development. But it is also important to step back at times and get a bigger picture of the impact one is making.

The pandemic has truly been a battle, especially for the Hub in its work of staying connected and engaged with our community members. But we pressed on and joined with our partners to overcome any obstacles...like through the virtual delivery of our signature collaborative community events. Hundreds of residents this year participated online as we collaboratively celebrated: Black History, International Women's Day, South Asian Heritage, National Indigenous People's Day, and Canada Day.

No matter what the contemporary environment might look like in various realms, lighthouses have always been considered a 'public good' as they provide a service for all people in society (even if in many places it is only tourism!) Likewise, the beauty of the Salar de Uyuni isn't just what it reflects, but moreover it's the public good it brings and what it is building towards economically for the nation. Besides providing salt to the country and exporting it around the world, it also holds 50 - 70% of the world's lithium reserves. So as demands for it increases this will continue to help lift the Bolivia's economy!

Here at the Rexdale Hub, we too have been demonstrating our 'public good' by looking at better ways of addressing the growing number of practical needs identified by our community members. This year we were able to take our 'public good' to another level, with the announcement of a new project that will roll out over the next few years - The Community Grocery Store project. This initiative involves undertaking a locally informed feasibility study to assess the potential impacts and viability of a community grocery store model, that would strengthen the access to affordable, culturally appropriate food over the long term, and serve the needs of local residents facing cumulative challenges in life.

Finally, in considering again the public good of lighthouses - it must be said that it has evolved and changed over time ... as have their lights, progressing from open fires, through to candles, then lanterns, and finally taking it up to another level with the introduction of electric lights. But the one constant that's always been there - is their light! For the Rexdale Hub, regardless of our changing environment over the course of the year, we too have sought to be light for local residents and our wider community members. Truly, this pandemic 'rainy season' has been a catalyst for the Hub's deepening work of collaboration, timely responsiveness, being place-based, staying connected, and exercising our public good. And we think that's something beautiful worth mirroring!!

From Rexdale STEM member to Neuroscience and Health Policy at the University of Toronto

By Abigail Ralph



For you to holistically understand my story, we must go back to the roots of growing up in Rexdale. My name is Abigail Ralph, and I am a fourth-year university student at the University of Toronto studying a double major in Neuroscience and Health Policy, with aspirations of obtaining a Medical

Doctorate (M.D) after professional studies. The ultimate goal in my professional life is to seamlessly integrate the interdisciplinary fields of my professional interests – which include scientific research, community health, and leadership – from a race-informed perspective.

Like many children in the Etobicoke-North and Rexdale-Kipling ward, I attended primary school at Highfield Junior School and later attended Smithfield Middle School (SMS). My academic performance was very average until my interest in science was elevated after receiving the science award in my grade. Given to me by a Black science teacher who understood my experiences as a Black student, this was the first time I saw myself represented and the first time I gained confidence in science as a subject in school. Consequently, I found a newfound passion for challenging myself academically by aiming for a ‘performance better than the previous year.’ Carrying this newfound confidence in high school, I had an attitude of excellence.

I attended the ANS Albion Boys and Girls Club religiously, starting in eighth grade and was first introduced to the Rexdale STEM Club by walking past the meeting room every Friday on my way to programming at ANS. Curious about why there was a weekly gathering (with lots of food), I inquired about the program. For clarity, the STEM Club committee room was at the front of the Rexdale Hub, while the Albion Boys and Girls Club was at the back of the building.



Me (location on the far Left) at the Space exploration exhibition in 2018 at the Rexdale Community Hub

I learned that the STEM Club was held here, with weekly planning committee meetings every Friday. I quickly drew interest and also brought two friends with me. Since then, the Rexdale Community STEM Club has been a foundational staple moment in my interest in pursuing STEM.

Driven by the pursuit of knowledge, planning and attending workshops and trips to the Google Headquarters, national space observatory, and bird observations provided me with opportunities to expose myself to different areas in STEM. Furthermore, the skills associated with the Planning Committee role included organization, networking, marketing, and project execution. These are all skills that have allowed me to be successful in my current path in Neuroscience and Health Policy throughout my undergraduate.

Finish off high school: I was voted student body president by my peers and made it a mission to stay committed to my goals of curiosity and exploration as I tackled many stereotypes being from Rexdale.

Fast forward to today, my most recent involvements include projects such as the Vaccine Equity project funded by the 2021 UofT Covid-19 Student Engagement Award supervised by Dr. Notisha Massaquoi that focuses on health inequities in low-income communities in Toronto (community research) and a supervised research project carried out in Stockholm Sweden in neural Engineering supervised by Dr. Sunit Das and Dr. My Hedhammar (neuroscientific research).

Moreover, my current professional positions include project coordinator and student collaborator for a research project called “Don’t Count Us Out,” which focuses on health inequities and Covid-19 in Black Nova Scotian communities, supervised by Dr. OmiSoore Dryden and Dr. Ingrid Waldron at Dalhousie University. This program is pivotal to exposing under-represented and low-income students in Rexdale to STEM disciplines. All this to say, the Rexdale STEM Club stood as a foundation that allowed me to be creative in a supportive environment during high school.

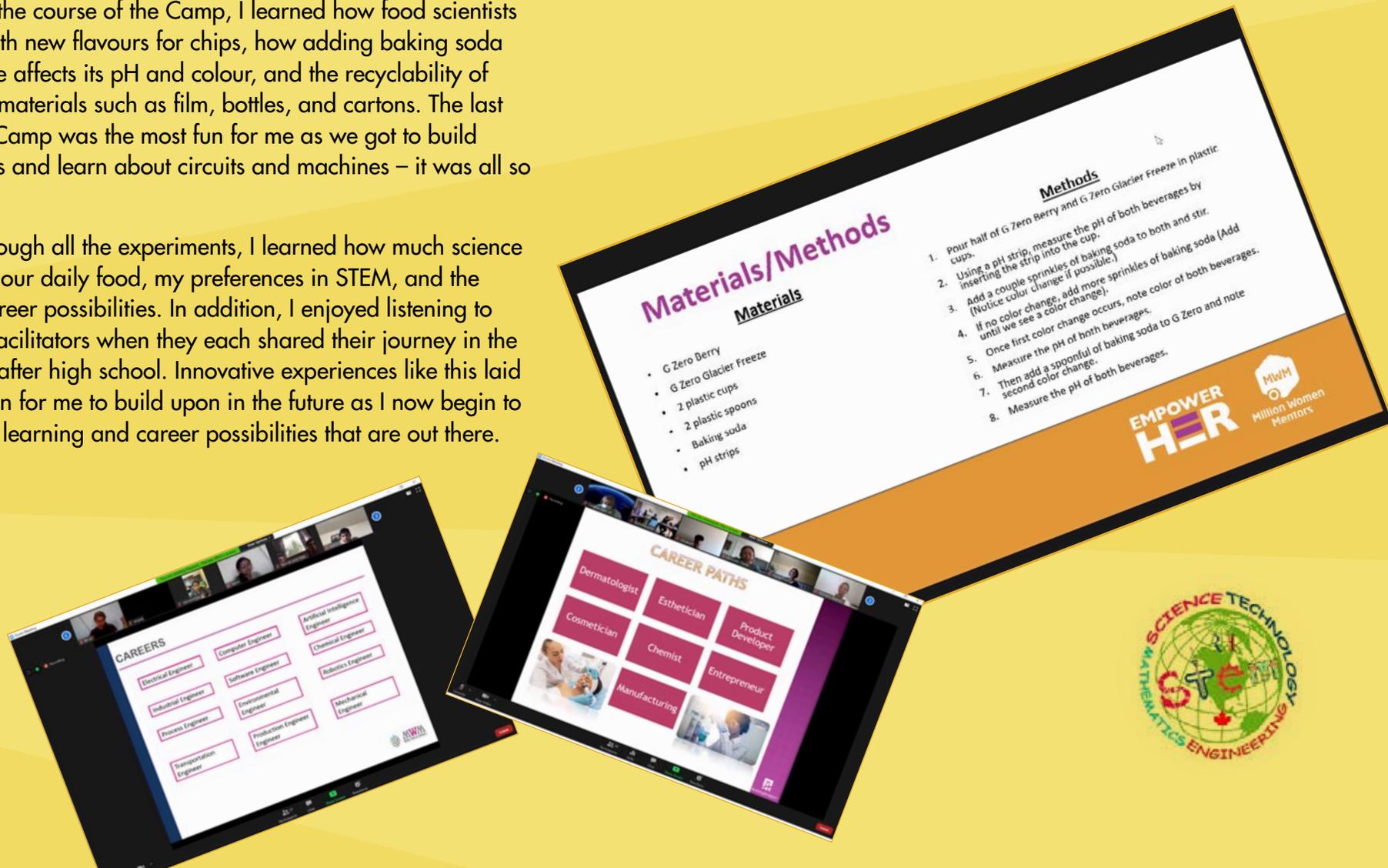
Shining Light on the Summer of Innovation Camp 2021

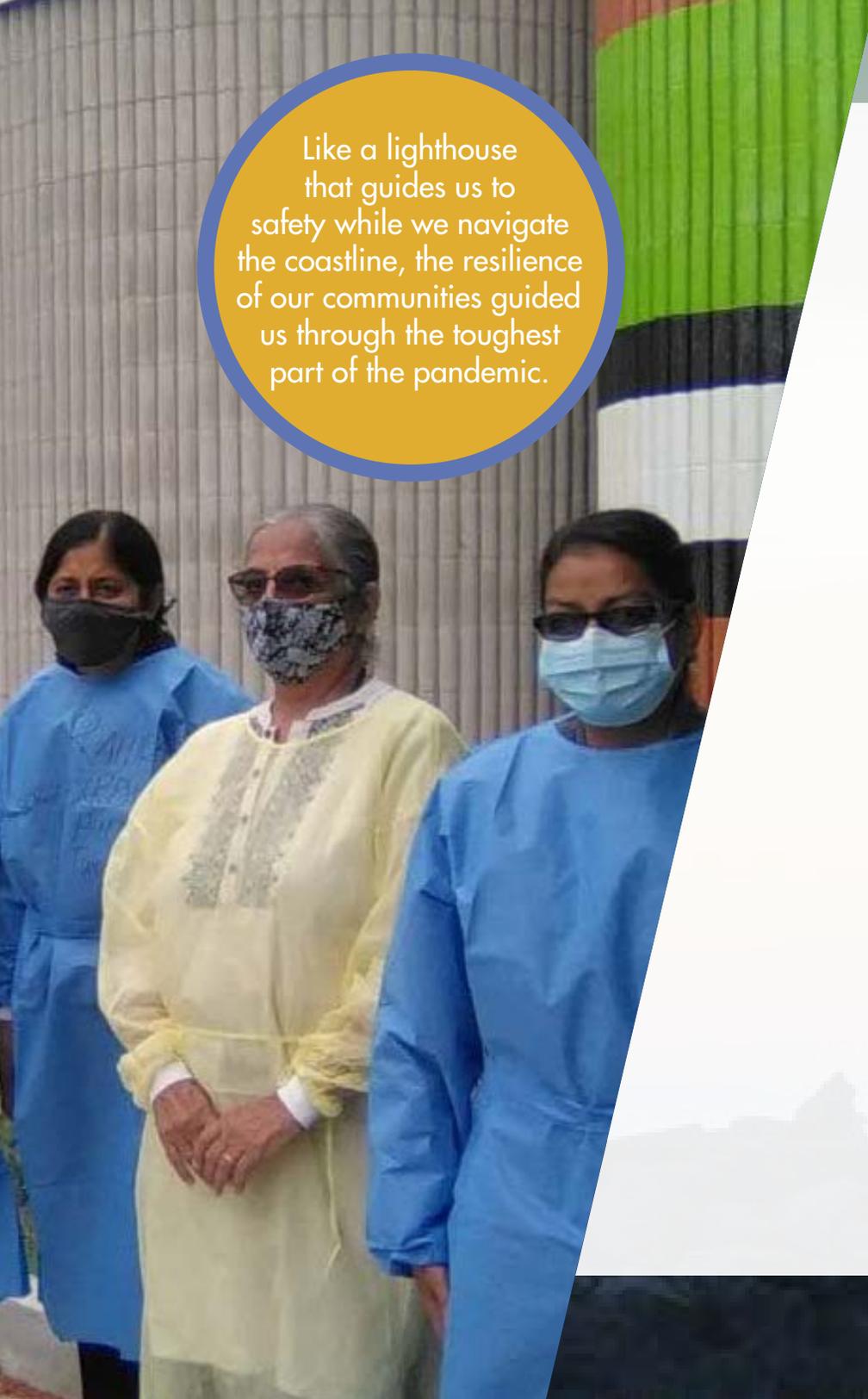
By Zohair Majid, STEM Member (Grade 10)

The Summer of Innovation Camp 2021 with PepsiCo was an exciting experience for me. Due to the pandemic, our Camp was virtual, and we learned a lot of unique things. I was given a backpack with PepsiCo gear and supplies to do experiments with. Over the course of the Camp, I learned how food scientists come up with new flavours for chips, how adding baking soda to Gatorade affects its pH and colour, and the recyclability of packaging materials such as film, bottles, and cartons. The last day of the Camp was the most fun for me as we got to build robot rovers and learn about circuits and machines – it was all so futuristic!

As I got through all the experiments, I learned how much science is a part of our daily food, my preferences in STEM, and the different career possibilities. In addition, I enjoyed listening to the Camp facilitators when they each shared their journey in the STEM field after high school. Innovative experiences like this laid a foundation for me to build upon in the future as I now begin to explore the learning and career possibilities that are out there.

I would highly recommend this Camp to anyone who wants to try and learn something new. Experiencing this fantastic opportunity during a pandemic may have been a little restricting. Still, we were allowed to let loose, explore our options, ask questions, and feel a sense of belonging with other like-minded students. I finished the Camp feeling hopeful for the future – because it was an opportunity for me to explore the different areas of STEM, think big even in the middle of a global pandemic, and build a better future for myself and those around me.





Like a lighthouse that guides us to safety while we navigate the coastline, the resilience of our communities guided us through the toughest part of the pandemic.

Working and Walking in the Light

By Warda Sharmeen

Over the past year, the effects of an on-going global health crisis were uniquely experienced by the different communities of North Etobicoke. Yet for the Hub's communities, resilience and willingness to help others has been and is a shining light in the darkness! This year we focused on being a beacon of hope, and increasing the 'light' of our neighbourhoods.

When the lighthouse is seen the rest of the sea is ignored

This year we wrapped up our series of community planning workshops (a Northwest Toronto Neighbourhood Infrastructure Engagement Initiative) in collaboration with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) Rexdale SNAP program. Residents, local stakeholders, and representatives from the City of Toronto, identified shared spaces in our neighbourhood that we use most frequently, what we love most about them, and what could be improved.

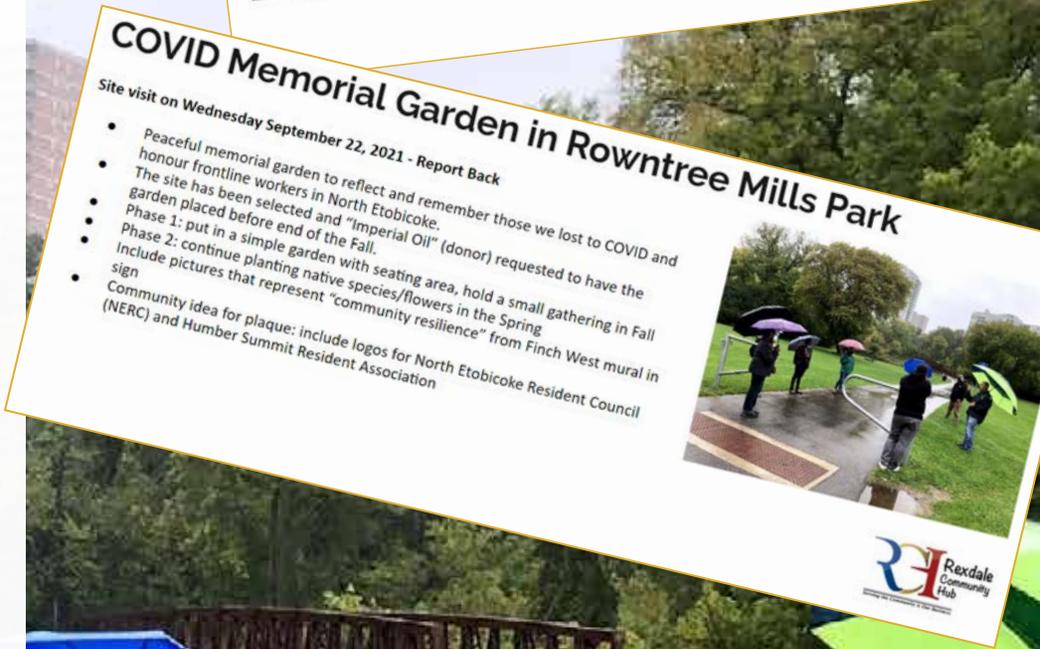
Like the rhythmic waves breaking upon a shore, the conversations to enhance our community spaces have just kept flowing. By hosting our bi-weekly virtual Community Conversations during COVID-19, we identified a need for a quiet space in the community, for people to sit and reflect on the hard work of frontline workers, and remember those that were lost to the pandemic. Together with the TRCA, City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, generous funding from Imperial Oil, and of course the expertise of our resident leaders, a site for a small memorial garden in Rowntree Mills Park was identified. Partners thoughtfully planned the site together with residents from both the North Etobicoke Resident Council and Humber Summit Resident Association.

North Etobicoke Resident Council (NERC)

Like a lighthouse that guides us to safety while we navigate the coastline, the resilience of our communities guided us through the toughest part of the pandemic. After months of pandemic darkness, community residents are now better informed about COVID-19 and the pandemic, and feel more confident with their protective equipment and safe protocols.

The burden of the pandemic fell on many families in North Etobicoke who continued to deal with food insecurity, social isolation, rising costs of living, and access to technological devices. Pod Organizers worked tirelessly to connect their neighbours with donated groceries, personal protective equipment, and hygiene items.

Pod Organizers also took turns collecting key updates, as well as sharing concerns from other Pod Organizers at bi-weekly virtual Solidarity Check-ins, and representing the NPP at North Etobicoke Cluster meetings. This allowed service partners to hear the updates firsthand from residents and work together to find solutions.





“My daughter escaped an abusive relationship and the local women’s shelter is currently full. She desperately needs this helping hand of diapers, children’s craft supplies, woman’s products and food hampers. Thank you so much!” - Anonymous

“Thank you for posting the community resources in our group. Having a connection to this information has been so helpful for my family as we slowly get back out into the world and socialize with others...” - Leslie

The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines brought a new hope that the gloomy darkness of the pandemic could soon come to an end. The vaccination clinic inside the Hub served a sea of community members in need of protection from illness. Here also the Pod Organizers played a key role in outreach, stepping up to the frontlines at clinics to guide residents and provide translations. What better way to find comfort in the darkness than to see a familiar and friendly face? Moreover, Organizers played a role in advocating for community members to ensure that no one faced barriers in accessing information, vaccines, and/or healthcare.

Clearly the Hub’s light has shone in our communities, revealing ...

- 2,000+ residents connected to resources
- 24 solidarity check-ins held virtually to share information and resources
- An active WhatsApp group sharing updates across our community Pod network

Moreover, we’ve supported the enhancement of community spaces, the equipping and engagement of community members, helping residents to embrace leadership roles, and the timely advocacy for and by residents. And as always, we welcome you to the Hub, and to walk with us in the light!!

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!

Stronger Together

By: Marlene Chu, Pod Organizer in Elms-Old Rexdale

I have had the privilege of becoming a Pod Organizer for the Pine Point Community for the past few years. My Pod includes a local school and the surrounding residential community. Coming out of the pandemic has been difficult for many families as they continue to struggle with financial and food insecurity, community safety issues, and mental health and well-being challenges. At the school level we coined the phrase “stronger together” and had t-shirts made through a sponsor to hand out for free to all the school’s students. We hoped that this would give everyone a sense of unity while also encouraging everyone to work together and feel supported by each other as we move forward through this unpredictable time. At this specific school the student population had a high level of food insecurity at home before the pandemic and when Covid hit the affordability and accessibility to food became a big issue.

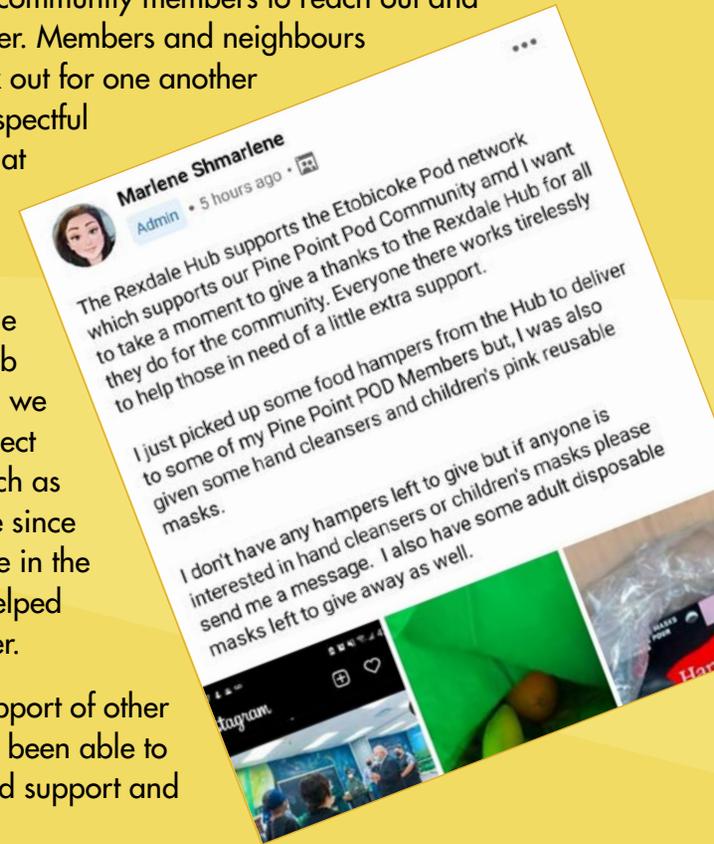
Thanks to generous community partner donations, sponsors, and volunteers, I was able to organize grocery card hand outs and food hamper bags to students and their families that needed it the most. This helped families put a few extra dollars towards other important needs such as rent, utilities, and medications. It helped to lower the stress of having to choose between healthy meals and a roof over one’s head, or boots for their children’s feet. I was also able to hold clothing and winter gear drives for families in need to help with those challenges as well.

Just as in our school community, the phrase “Stronger Together” carried over to the surrounding community who were also struggling with the same issues. When the school began receiving

community partner support, so much that they couldn’t use or store everything, I organized sharing the excess with community members who needed the additional support. Along with the community food hampers, diapers, health and safety supplies, and hygiene products supplied by generous donors through the Rexdale Community Hub and NE Cluster Partners, I was able to maintain and support a list of families who relied on the food donations and supplies until the programs ended.

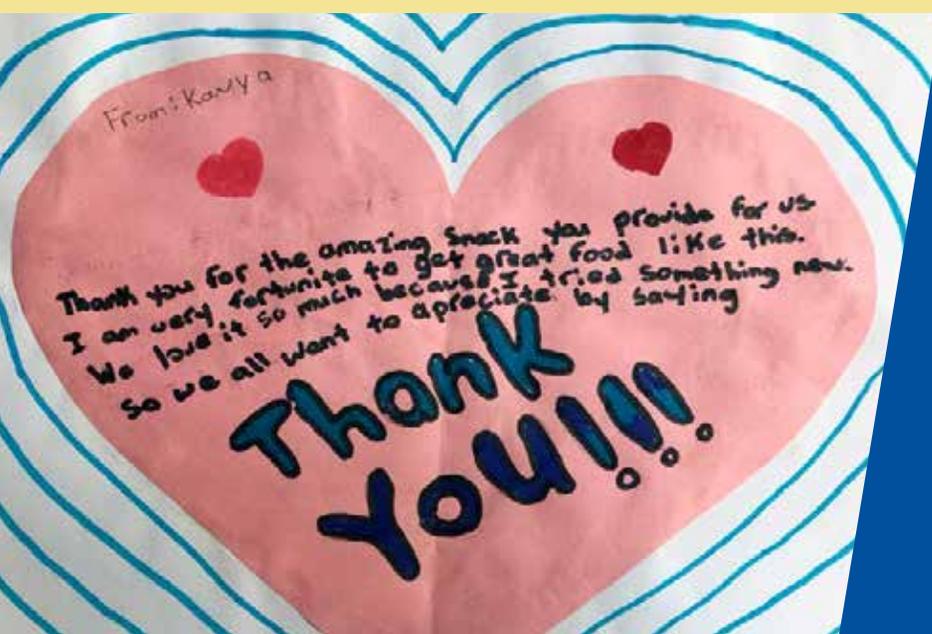
Our community has also been dealing with a rise in violence and theft and many of my Pod Members have been direct victims of the growing crimes. Through my online forum, I have been able to create a safe place for community members to reach out and connect with one another. Members and neighbours feel encouraged to look out for one another by having open and respectful conversations about what needs the community has. Through this forum and the support and connections with the Rexdale Community Hub and the City of Toronto, we have been able to connect to support resources such as police officers that have since increased their presence in the community and have helped make residents feel safer.

I am thankful for the support of other Pod Members as I have been able to reach out for advice and support and



have always been able to connect with someone who has been in a similar situation or has guidance to share. I have also been able to share connections and advice to others that I hope has been able to help them in the same ways. The open network we have where we can share community events, job postings, workshops, social programs, and vaccine supports with each other and in turn share them with our own Pods has been a remarkable resource that has brought my community closer together as I am sure it has done for others.

Although we are all on a long path back to "normal", I can see the light shine through the dark clouds that have hovered over us for the past two years. I am hopeful that the supportive relationships made in my Pod will continue to flourish, become a normal part of our community efforts, and be a beacon of hope that allows us to reach where we want to be. I believe that the strength and compassion we have learned through this experience will make us a more resilient community moving forward. We truly are "Stronger together".



Media Coverage

<https://twitter.com/fordnation/status/1435708065156931587>

https://www.toronto.com/news/north-etobicoke-is-one-big-covid-19-hot-spot-so-where-are-the-pop-up/article_e87fb038-92f1-50e5-a23f-081a7fb94183.html?amp%3Bsource=torontodotcom&%3Butm_medium=socialmedia&%3Butm_campaign=&%3Butm_campaign_id=&%3Butm_content=

<https://twitter.com/MichaelFordTO/status/1435708659552632833>

<https://www.thestar.com/local-toronto-etobicoke/news/2021/05/05/community-ambassadors-in-north-etobicoke-are-helping-people-get-vaccinated.html>

Lighting the Way in 2021-2022:

Collaboratively navigating the way to hope and resilience



TOTAL HUB VISITS IN 2021-2022:

197,537

9 Pod Organizers engaged in regular check-ins and information sharing with **2,000** residents, representing **6** neighbourhoods of North Etobicoke

1000+ Residents reached through virtual **23** collaborative events

340+ residents participated in bi-weekly Community Conversations During COVID-19 to share key COVID-related information and community updates

150+ Volunteers, ambassadors, and staff involved in the distribution of emergency food, personal protective equipment, and hygiene items

6 NERC leaders engaged in work group meetings to guide NERC's activities and enhance outreach in North Etobicoke

50 Youth learned about food science and careers in STEM in the virtual STEM Summer of Innovation Camp

10,000+ grocery hampers and **5,000+** hot meals delivered to **1000+** households in need

Remarks from the Chair of the Board



Last year was, in many ways, the continuation of the unprecedented pandemic crisis of the year before. We witnessed the pandemic's ongoing challenges and adverse impacts on vulnerable and racialized communities. The Rexdale Community Hub (Hub) continued to mobilize additional resources, intensified efforts and expanded the scope of work to support our community. The Hub continued to coordinate the distribution of PPE, hygiene kits, food hampers, and rapid antigen tests and connected community members to much-needed services and support. Our response has been client-centred and culturally appropriate. In addition, we supported vaccine and testing efforts by working with partners, facilitating opportunities for dialogue in person, online and in multiple languages to answer community members' questions about testing and the vaccine.

The Hub eased access to the building by putting health and safety measures to protect clients, staff and community members. In addition, clients now have the choice to receive in-person or virtual services.

The Hub has been supporting initiatives including the North Etobicoke Cluster Table, Food Security Committee, Neighbourhood Pods, North Etobicoke Resident Council and other local planning tables. This year we will be focusing on developing our second strategic plan and looking forward to supporting our community post-pandemic recovery.

We sincerely appreciate our excellent Hub staff for continued working on the ground, the Executive Director, Amra Munawar, and Board, who changed course to ensure our community received the required services and support. We are grateful to our community volunteers for their generosity and the help of our funders. We are also very proud of the robust, resilient and resourceful community we serve, a community that inspires us to strive for the best, even under the most challenging times.

Safia Ahmed
Board Chair

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



Our Hub Partners

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

Our Board Members

Abraham Abbey	2014-Present
Costanza Allevato	2021-Present
Desree Prince	2014-Present
Fatima Filippi	2013-Present
Hamzah Siddiqui	2021-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
Albion Islington Square Business Improvement Area
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
Catch the Fire Church Toronto
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.

ONE Toronto GAMING

Parks Canada
Park People
PepsiCo Canada
Physics and Astronomy, York University
PlazaPOPS
Repair Café Toronto
Roti Roti Family Restaurant
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 Staff Members

Aiman Malhi
Amanda Griselda Nandugwa
Amra Munawar
Bilson Bright
Hadeed Pall
Harry Persaud
Hassan Bokhari
Kavielle Blake
Kizzy Price
Layth Jato
Mohammad Javed
Rameen Popalzai
Russel Mitchell
Saima Jawid
Talal Malhi
Thelma Adelekun
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

**21 Panorama Court
Toronto, ON M9V 4E3**

**Phone: (416) 741-3000
Fax: (416) 741-3011**