

York University Faculty Association, Community Projects (YUFA-CP) Annual Report, 2023-2024

YUFA-CP is a standing committee of the YUFA Executive. The YUFA-CP mandate is:

To facilitate YUFA's work with community groups to promote engaged citizenship through access and equity programs, and to undertake community-based research.

The focus of YUFA-CP work is organized into two broad categories:

1. Increases educational access and outcomes, connected to York University (e.g., greater inclusion, supporting traditionally marginalized York students)
2. Supports the conditions of community self-advocacy and empowerment

YUFA-CP is guided by a commitment to social unionism and the shared development of knowledge. The committee meets monthly through the fall and winter terms, and continues in an ad hoc manner through the summer term. Membership is drawn from across YUFA, and two Co-Chairs are elected annually for two-year terms. Over the past few years, YUFA-CP has adopted the practice of rotating Co-Chair positions each year, so a fresh Co-Chair works alongside an experienced Co-Chair. The 2023-2024 Co-Chairs were Molade Osibodu and Luin Goldring. Molade Osibodu ended her term at the end of this academic year, and Joel Ong is the new incoming co-chair, with Luin Goldring entering her second year. This year, YUFA-CP was supported by a \$100,000 annual allocation with a \$30,000 increase approved in Fall 2023 from YUFA Trust.

YUFA-CP fulfills its mandate in many ways. Activities undertaken by the committee evolve with the needs and interests of the Jane-Finch community, in response to issues and priorities that are identified by community members.

YUFA-CP has both integrative and facilitator functions, which include: (i) to support and help coordinate existing faculty-community projects, and (ii) to contribute to the design and implementation of new and evolving projects. An important committee function is the review and allocation of YUFA funds to support applications for funding. However, much of the work is also unassociated with budget lines drawn from the YUFA Trust allocation. YUFA-CP members contribute time, experience, and expertise in support of community groups across Jane Finch.

In making decisions on how to best help the community, YUFA-CP has adopted a set of guiding principles (found on [our website](#)). In addition, we have continued our recent policy changes to increase openness, transparency, and accountability. A key aspect of these changes is our conflict-of-interest policy. Anyone on the committee who has a

conflict is expected to declare this conflict and recuse themselves from any voting. This policy was successfully enacted several times during the 2023-2024 years.

Non-budget activities by YUFA-CP, 2023–2024

Community Conversation

On April 3rd, 2024, we hosted a community conversation inviting all of our partners from the past 5 years, along with others, to join us in a discussion of YUFA-CP and its work. A total of 18 people attended, and some new contacts were added to our mailing list based on our registration form for this event. During this conversation, we received positive feedback on the work of YUFA-CP and our new funding process. We also received guidance on ensuring our processes are fair to new and returning applicants. Furthermore, community members requested CP support in events where members can meet each other to enable better collaboration.

Website

In order to increase transparency, access, engagement, and visibility with community partners, we have been continuing to refine our new website (bit.ly/yufacp). This site is decidedly community-facing, in contrast to the page which is a part of the YUFA site and which is oriented toward communicating with other YUFA members (e.g., a place for these detailed annual reports). Our new site provides information regarding YUFA-CP in a friendly, easy-to-access manner and includes our mission, the process to apply for funding, news and events, community partners, and means of contacting us directly. It also includes several different ways that partners can now apply: via PDF, form-fillable PDF, or a web form. New this year was the development of a directory of York faculty who are willing to collaborate with Jane-Finch organizers, initiated in response to a suggestion from the previous Community Conversation. Invitations to be listed on the directory were distributed widely among the York community. We plan to continue this process. Another addition to the website that directly resulted from recommendations made during last year's Community Conversation is explicit wording that encourages creative and ambitious proposals and a tolerance for projects that have the potential not to succeed. Lastly, also in response to a Community Conversation recommendation, we now supply an example of a completed application form to assist those crafting a new proposal.

Mailing List

In addition to the website, we continued to grow our mailing list of past and potential community partners this year. We have used this mailing list to communicate directly with members of the community regarding policy changes, initiatives, and to provide reminders of our deadlines and updates on events. We currently have 71 individuals/groups on our list.

Advocacy

YUFA-CP spent much of the fall semester advocating for funding from YUFA trust to be able to support more organizations. In addition, members of YUFA-CP participated in the annual Walk with Excellence, and also discussed ways in which additional support from the university could be directed toward this necessary and impactful initiative.

Volunteer service in the Jane Finch Community

Members of YUFA-CP commit to advancing the mandate, programs and projects of a variety of community organizations across Jane Finch. This includes elected Board positions at organizations such as Black Creek Community Health Centre, Success Beyond Limits, and Promoting Education and Community Health. It also includes responsibilities with organizations such as the Education Action Group and other community collaboratives.

Funding Updates

This year we received 34 separate requests for funding (an increase from 17 last year), for a total amount of \$375,270. This far exceeds our available budget for ongoing programs and seed projects, which this year was about \$123,419 (a shortfall of \$251,851.00).

Membership

A priority for this year was to increase our membership, both in terms of absolute numbers and breadth of representation. This was achieved via various methods, including individual recruiting by current members, and several calls for new members placed in the YUFA-M listserv, which reaches all members. These initiatives resulted in several new members joining the committee, and we currently have representation from across the university, including Education, Sociology, Environmental and Urban Change, AMPD, Psychology, Mathematics & Statistics, Health Policy & Management, Student Learning & Academic Success, LA&PS, and Design.

Projects funded by YUFA-CP, 2023-24

Fall funding period

Youth Justice Empowerment

\$1,800

This new initiative seeks to enhance the legal literacy of black youth in the Jane-Finch community. They aim to equip them with a comprehensive understanding of legal concepts relevant to their lives, such as cyberbullying, consent, online privacy, and other legal rights and responsibilities. The project aspires to promote the well-being and safety of youth in the digital age. By

educating them about legal issues and risks they may encounter, we aim to reduce vulnerability and enhance their ability to protect themselves and others online.

Radically Kindness

\$2,500

This new initiative seeks to host community meals as a way to address loneliness amongst young people in the community. Funds will go towards supporting these community meals and publicity. Loneliness and social isolation is an epidemic. By hosting these meals, followed by activities that facilitate conversations, we are hoping participants will make new friends. Meals will be diverse, as to attract new immigrants and international students, who are most likely to be suffering from loneliness.

CariCan Community Services

\$2,500

This initiative addresses gender-based violence amongst youth/young adults in the Caribbean Canadian diaspora community, primarily in the immediate area (Jane-Finch, Black Creek, Albion). We have partnered with Prof. Ruth Rodney (School of Nursing).

Konnecting-wit-humanity

\$600

This new initiative aims at providing a comprehensive range of services to empower individuals in the Jane-Finch community in need. The project offers referrals to essential resources such as food, housing, and financial support. Additionally, it offers advocacy, by referrals to legal services or organizations that can assist with legal issues, including immigration, housing disputes, and family matters. The project also connects participants with additional resources like the Income Tax Clinic and access to a Toronto Public Library Card. The ultimate goal of the "Drop in Support Hub" is to create a safe and supportive environment in which participants can gain the confidence and resources needed to make positive changes in their lives.

Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre (FLICC)

\$4,500

This initiative, 'Sparkle & Thrive: Celebrating Senior Self-Care,' has a clear mission: to unite the seniors living in the Firgrove community through activities that promote self-care, connection, and creativity. Our primary goal is to establish a safe and inclusive space for seniors who may be facing isolation and loneliness due to various challenges, such as health issues, disabilities, financial constraints, or language barriers. The project

harnesses the power of "caring and sharing" with the primary focus on nurturing a sense of belonging and inclusion within this community. By doing so, we aim to enhance the mental, emotional, physical, and social well-being of our seniors, contributing positively to this vital community.

Indigenous Students at York

\$5,500

The Indigenous Students' Association at York (ISAY; previously known as ASAY), is a student community service group which functions under the York Federation of Students. Its mandate is to advocate for Indigenous students and to provide accessible community and cultural programming. These funds supported the annual Drum Round Dance, as part of Indigenous History month. YUFA-CP funds went towards honoraria for the MC/Host, catering, performers, and food.

Toronto Black Farmers Collective

\$2,180.00

For the past 9 years, this collective has grown healthy, organic fruits and vegetables in Downsview Park to address food insecurity in local communities. This year, YUFA-CP provided funds to help support low-income, food insecure individuals, students with a meal from the farm that includes veggies from our urban farm piloting the idea of making good onsite for recipients. The menu will include salads, beverages, sandwiches, grilled veggies, and soup twice a week to start.

Wadoka Community Enhancement Network

\$3,700.00

This initiative is part of ongoing work to continue and expand enrollment of students in our program. The goal is to provide youth in the Jane and Finch community martial-arts oriented training that will optimize their mental wellness, enhance character development, and foster the necessary life skills needed to be successful both inside and outside of the classroom.

Unity BBQ

\$5,000

The goal of the annual Jane-Finch Unity BBQ is to bring gang members from the North and South of Jane St together in unity and to help youth rejuvenate their minds towards society. The funding request was to support this year's barbeque. This project will bring healing and police engagement to the Jane and Finch community that experienced poverty, fear, and hopelessness due to gun violence. YUFA-CP funds went towards food, promotion, honoraria, and entertainment for children (e.g., performers, face-painting).

Winter funding period

North York I-C Youth Group

\$6,700.00

North York Inter-Community Youth Group/Pan Fantasy Steel Drum Band has been in existence for 35 years. It was formed by a collective to foster musical skills and leadership among youth. Our goal is to give young people in the Jane/Finch community a sense of purpose and achievement through participation in steel drum classes through a series of workshops. Over six-week sessions, students will achieve basic sight-reading skills as well as a musical ability on the steel drum. One of the things we emphasize is giving back to others. By participating in these sessions, students will have a chance to work together cooperatively and give back to the musical community as a whole.

S4 Collective

\$12,000

The Sanctuary Students Solidarity & Support (S4) Collective was formed in the fall of 2018 as a migrant youth-led, non-profit organization which supports precarious migrant and newcomer students, sanctuary students, at various levels of education in Ontario. The Collective is made up of many York students who have been able to access university because of the Sanctuary Scholars program. The funding will provide small scholarships to students with precarious immigration status (sanctuary students) studying at post-secondary institutions. Funding will be used for approximately 24 scholarships to sanctuary students, based on financial need. The scholarships will support students to pay down tuition debt or help to pay tuition in the coming year. Eligible students who are not active members of the S4 collective will also be considered for scholarships.

Woke Mummy Chatter

\$2,000

The Caregiver Chronicles program, organized by Woke Mommy Chatter, is an integral part of our ongoing efforts to support and empower Black caregivers. This initiative is not new but continues our commitment to providing a platform for shared experiences, advice, and connection for those caring for others, especially those impacted by violence within their communities. Historically, the program has facilitated a variety of workshops, webinars, and events designed to build capacity, share knowledge, and foster creativity among caregivers. The focus has been on healing from trauma, effective communication, financial literacy, and navigating the educational system, among other topics. Through these activities, we've created a

supportive network that acknowledges the challenges and celebrates the triumphs of caregiving within the Black community.

Our records show a consistent engagement from a dedicated group of caregivers, many of whom have been directly affected by violence. Their feedback and the tangible impacts observed in their lives underscore the program's significance and the urgent need for its continuation. As we plan to restart the program, there is a growing list of caregivers eagerly awaiting the opportunity to join and benefit from the resources, support, and community that the Caregiver Chronicles offers. Thus, the aim is to extend the reach and impact of the Caregiver Chronicles program, addressing the ongoing needs and challenges faced by caregivers in the Jane and Finch community and beyond, ensuring they have the support, resources, and community connection essential for their resilience and well-being. The funding will be used for another Caregivers Chronicles program.

Advanced Credit Experience (ACE)

\$10,800.00

YUFA-CP provided financial support for the Advanced Credit Experience program, a partnership between YUFA, TDSB, TCDSB, and the Faculty of Education at York. The program provides greater access to university for high-school students in the Jane-Finch area, by allowing them to take a university half credit course. Various opportunities to build academic and life skills are also offered, in addition to mentorship by current Education students.

Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre (FLICC)

\$2,000

Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre is a non-profit organization whose goal is to eliminate economic issues and barriers that exist in the Jane and Finch community. YUFA-CP funds will provide partial support for a program that is part of ongoing work that runs year-round. The reading and writing after school program runs during the academic school year (September to June). This includes homework help and promoting literacy. During the summer months (July and August) the program continues to run but focuses more on engaging in learning opportunities within the community.

Success Beyond Limits

\$10,000

Success Beyond Limits offers youth programming out of Westview Centennial Collegiate Institute that addresses external challenges Jane Finch students encounter in achieving their academic potential. In addition to programming offered throughout the regular academic calendar, each year SBL delivers a 6- week summer program with opportunities for academic credit, mentorship, employment, enrichment, nutrition, engagement, graduation and relationship building. Funding for 2020 focused on supporting youth through COVID-19. SBL provided regular check-ins, electronic tools for accessing curriculum and networks, food, mental health supports. Youth received assistance completing school work, and youth mentors received additional training.

Jane Finch Community Ministry (JFCM)

\$2,000

Our project, “From Roots to Leaves” aims to leverage the unique capacities, assets, and community bonds within the Firgrove community to foster an intergenerational ecosystem of care and support within the neighborhood. JFCM is part of the Shining Waters Region’s social justice and outreach effort and operates as a vital community ministry of the United Church. This project represents an emerging initiative to provide weekly sessions and mini-events for seniors. The workshops include workouts, arts and crafts, self-care and wellness, and safety and security awareness.

Konnecting-wit-humanity

\$2,250

YUFA-CP funds will contribute to this organization’s goal of helping youths in the Jane and Finch area achieve digital literacy and empowerment, thereby overcoming barriers to accessing technology and seizing opportunities in the digital age.

Specifically, they aim to:

- 1) Increase Digital Literacy training to youths in the Jane and Finch area, equipping them with essential skills such as basic computer proficiency, internet usage, online safety, and job search strategies.
- 2) Foster Community Engagement through our workshops and training sessions. By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, they seek to create a supportive learning environment where youths can learn from each other, build social connections, and expand their networks beyond the program.
- 3) Promote Economic Empowerment by equipping youths with digital literacy skills and job search strategies, to promote economic empowerment and enhance opportunities for employment and career advancement.

Overall, the project seeks to empower youths in the Jane and Finch area with the skills and resources they need to succeed in the digital age, thereby fostering greater social equity, economic mobility, and community well-being."

Wheel it Studios, Vol. 6

\$5,000

This project by a collective of multidisciplinary artists opens access to professional studio programming across neighborhood boundaries. As the only active recording studio in Jane Finch, Wheel It Studios developed an innovative approach to meeting artists where they are: a mobile studio that travels across boundaries to create original Hip Hop, Afro Beat and Latin compositions compiled into a mixed tape released as a series of celebratory community events. This is a follow-up project, based on the success of several past YUFA-CP-funded projects. These funds were used coordinate and promote a new album (e.g., flyers website) and music videos.

Toronto Area Solidarity Summer Alliance

\$5,000

This continued initiative (in its second year), organized by a TDSB teacher, involves the creation of workshops for South Asian and Indo-Caribbean youth. During these events, participants will learn critical thinking skills, develop leadership abilities, and help them view themselves as agents of change. Funds from YUFA-CP supported these workshops by providing honorariums and food.

Youth Justice Empowerment

\$5,000

This new initiative seeks to enhance the legal literacy of black youth in the Jane-Finch community. They aim to equip them with a comprehensive understanding of legal concepts relevant to their lives, such as cyberbullying, consent, online privacy, and other legal rights and responsibilities. The project aspires to promote the well-being and safety of youth in the digital age. By educating them about legal issues and risks they may encounter, we aim to reduce vulnerability and enhance their ability to protect themselves and others online.

Indigenous Students at York

\$11,350

ISAY is an undergraduate Indigenous Student run group. YUFA-CP funds will support the 2024 Indigenous Students Gala and Graduating Ceremony. ISAY

hopes this will be part of an annual event to mark a special time for York University Indigenous students, professors, and faculty to gather with family and friends to celebrate their academic success and post-secondary journey as a community.

Naujawan Support Network

\$10,000

The Naujawan Support Network lobbies to end the exploitation of international students and immigrant workers. Worker education, via public campaigns, and leading protests of exploitative employers are key aspects of their work. These funds were provided to support the growth of their lobbying efforts, including support for organized meetings, production of educational literature (e.g., pamphlets), and other materials to support advocacy.

Promoting Education and Community Health

\$6,000

PEACH is a non-profit charitable organization that has been serving the Jane and Finch community for over 35 years. This is a new initiative and has never been done in the Jane and Finch community. While similar events have been successfully held in downtown Toronto and other major cities across Canada through the Toronto Kiki Ballroom Alliance, this will be the first time a Pride Ballroom event is hosted in Jane and Finch.

This event aims to bring the vibrant and inclusive culture of the ballroom scene directly to the local community, providing a unique and unprecedented celebration of BIPOC 2SLGBTQIA+ culture.

(The co-chairs are happy to hear that the event was a resounding success!)

Prepared by Dr. Molade Osibodu and Dr. Luin Goldring (co-chairs)

July 3, 2024