

YUFA Community Projects Subcommittee

Report to the YUFA Annual General Meeting

April 19, 2017

By Natalie Coulter and Ray Rogers, Co-Chairs of YUFA CPC

WHO WE ARE

The mandate of the YUFA Community Projects Committee (YUFA-CP), a standing committee of the executive since 2004, is to facilitate YUFA's commitment to social justice through access and equity programs, outreach and education, and advocacy and research. In carrying out our mandate, we collaborate with community networks on strengthening neighbourhoods as well as on broader efforts for systemic social change.

WHAT WE DO

Our process involves regular meetings where ongoing projects are reviewed and new initiatives considered. It is important for the work we do that committee members broadly represent the different constituencies that make up YUFA CP (see Appendix A for a list of current members). Members who have an interest in community-based equity initiatives are encouraged to join us. If you are interested in joining YUFA CP, please write to yufa@yorku.ca using subject line "Community Projects".

The work the Committee falls into three broad categories:

1. Increasing Educational Access and Outcomes

YUFA-CP's initiatives for enhancing educational outcomes among low-income and racialized students share a place-based, holistic approach to reform--one that is committed both to expanding students' active knowledge of their communities and to reducing structural barriers to their participation. By the same token, the promotion of leadership development and civic engagement is also a key element of these programs.

Campus-based projects are designed to expand learning opportunities and increase exposure and access to post-secondary educational possibilities.

These include:

- ❖ **Success Beyond Limits** a six-week, summer program to support successful transitions from middle school to high school
- ❖ **Readers to Leaders** a literacy enrichment and leadership program for grades 9 and 10 students
- ❖ **The Transition Year Program** a full-year university access initiative for young adults who, due to various barriers, lack the formal educational credentials to qualify for admission to York

Needless to say, the Committee is always ready to explore ways that access to York's facilities can be expanded for Jane/Finch residents.

Community-based programs and events include basketball tournaments, skills-based workshops (e.g., first aid, life guarding), youth leadership training, homework clubs, and after school and March Break tutoring and mentoring. YUFA-CP also contributes to bursaries and scholarships based on criteria that encompass academic achievement, financial need, and community involvement and leadership.

2. Outreach and Education

The Committee organizes, participates in, and often provides support for initiatives that bring York faculty and students together as part of a broader support network (community meetings, Community Speakers Series, resident-led strategies for strengthening neighbourhoods, educational events). We likewise ally with local residents on specific social-justice campaigns.

These include:

- Black Social Economy
- Black Daddies Club
- Feet on the Ground Worker's training
- Urban Alliance on Race relations

- Aboriginal Powwow
- Jane Finch Unity BBQ
- The Real Sun
- A Different Booklist Cultural Center (Walk With Excellence)
- Toronto Research and Community Exchange (TRACX)

Our relationships with both *community* and *campus* groups are important. Among the former, are Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAPP), Success Beyond Limits (SBL), Promoting Education and Community Health (PEACH), and the TD Community Engagement Centre (CEC).

Among the groups and initiatives on campus that we support are: the Aboriginal Student Association at York (ASAY), Regenesys York, Community & Legal Aid Services Program (CLASP), OPIRG York, the Graduate Student Association (GSA), the York Federation of Students (YFS), and the campaign to get York University to invest in local hiring practices.

3. Advocacy & Research

The Committee facilitates and supports the projects of YUFA members doing research that benefits the community and enhances the effectiveness of YUFA-community partnerships. In the 2016-17 year, this has included:

- Collaborating with PEACH to research human trafficking in the GTA
- Researching the role of mentoring for visible minority students in higher education
- Supporting research on the role of the informal economy in the Black diaspora in the GTA
- Lobbying SSHRC to create a registration category--*Community Partner*--that waives the fee for single-day or single panel participation. Such an initiative, we are arguing, would be consistent with SSHRC's commitment to a "community engagement" approach that brings together "academics and practitioners."

- The Co-Chairs are members of numerous committees to further this commitment to advocacy and research, including the President's Sustainability and Human Rights Committee, as well as the University Safety Committee.
- The Jane Finch Community Research Partnership Committee is a community-led committee that addresses challenges in assessing ethical issues with regard to doing research in the Jane-Finch community.

Outlook for 2017-18

For 2017-18, we anticipate similar funding initiatives. Rather than only providing start-up funds for particular initiatives, which is a norm in social funding, we are endeavouring to build ongoing relationships with specific organizations so as to create closer links between York and the wider community. Therefore we expect to continue to work with groups such as Success Beyond Limits (SBL), PEACH, Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAAP), Readers to Leaders (R2L), the York visible minority student Mentoring Initiative, and the Transition Year Program (TYP). In a world of increasing austerity, this kind of ongoing stability provides a solid basis for pursuing social justice issues for our partners in the GTA. What has also become clear is that the promotion of social justice is not only a requirement in the broader community, it is also becoming increasingly necessary to carry on social justice advocacy within York University as well. In the current climate of austerity, multi-sector collaboration and coalition-building provides the best basis we know for pursuing social justice issues. YUFA's ongoing participation in developing, supporting, and participating in local education and community-building initiatives is unique among faculty associations in Canada. The experience of YUFA CP over the past twelve years has showed us the incredible potential of meaningful, long-term community partnerships to positively transform what happens both off and on campus.

Community Projects Budget Specifics (2016-17)

Revenue

Allocation from YUFA Executive	47,000
Special Levy (May/16-April/17)	34,800
Total Annual Budget	\$81,800

Itemized Expenses

1) Readers to Leaders	10,000
2) Jane-Finch Community Based Research (N. Coulter)	48
3) York University Transition Year Program	3,000
4) York Centre for Education and Community	17,400
5) Success Beyond Limits	15,000
6) The Black Social Economy (Caroline Hossein)	1,500
7) Breaking Bread Initiative (Black Daddies Club)	1,500
8) Urban Alliance on Race Relations (Black Love Matters)	1,500
9) PEACH- Youth Pre-Charge Diversion	8,125
10) PEACH- Pilot Study on Human Trafficking in GTA	1,875
11) Winter Creative Lab (The Real Sun)	1,500
12) Community Bike Project (Regensis York)	1,500
13) Annual Powwow (Aboriginal Students Association)	1,500
14) Workers Action Centre- Feet on the Ground Project	1,500
15) Jane-Finch Action Against Poverty	2,500
16) Jane-Finch Community BBQ	1,500
17) Symposium on Community Building (OPIRG Toronto)	675
18) Walk of Excellence	1,500

Agenda Items for April 27 CPC Meeting

19) JFAAP Activities Grant	3,000
20) Transition Year Program Completion Bursaries	6,500

Total Expenses	\$81,623
Balance as of April 30, 2017	\$177

The two motions for funds that will be voted on at the April 27th meeting have been discussed previously, and we are expecting that they will be approved by the committee.

Funding Commitments (2016-17)

The Community Projects Committee does not provide funding to professionals or educational institutions. YUFA funds are directed to support for students, as well as social justice-oriented community organizations. Profiles of this past year's grants are provided below. The number accords with those listed in the budget lines:

Profile of Partners

1) **Readers to Leaders (R2L)**- Toronto District School Board and York University Faculty Association and York University Faculty of Education will engage students in preparation activities for the EQAO English Literacy test. The goal is to increase the pass rate of students referred by their English teachers as at-risk for passing the test. This collaborative initiative, focused on strengthening literacy skills and encouraging success will take place at York University Keele campus from fall until the EQAO test. (\$10,000)

2) **Jane-Finch Community Based Research**- The funds were used for food for an outreach meeting brainstorming the issues and tensions in doing community-based research and was held in the Jane-Finch Community. (\$48.00)

3) **Transition Year Program (TYP)**- TYP is a full-time full-year program that combines pre-university and university courses, while providing extra academic support for students who do not meet the traditional requirements for attending York. The Transition Year Program was initiated by the Community Projects Committee and YUFA funding has played a central role in both to get the program up and running, as well as to provide much-needed student financial support. (\$3,000)

4) **York University-based Student Mentorship Initiative (York Centre for Education and Community)** - During the past year, the Faculty of Education has engaged in turning the York Centre for Education and Community (YCEC) into a community hub. This goal aligns with YUFA-CP's ongoing commitment to building links between York and GTA

communities with an eye to expanding and supporting educational opportunities for youth in these communities. This has led to our support for Readers to Leaders (R2L), the Advanced Credit Experience (ACE), and the Transition Year Program (TYP). Because of our involvement in these programs, we have become aware of the need for upper-year mentoring for not only the students who have participated in these programs, but for a wider range of York undergraduates. Based on the YUFA-CP's experience with creating and supporting educational opportunities for non-traditional students, it has become clear that peer mentorship, as well as extra tutorial support, play a central role in student success.

The Community Projects Committee is working with the YCEC to create a program of activity that will provide educational support to York undergraduate students. Three forms of that support are being explored:

- 1) one-on-one peer mentoring where students from upper-level years will provide support and advice for incoming and second year undergraduates.
- 2) specific drop-in times where undergraduates can participate in a tutorial where interns from the Faculty of Education will provide advice and respond to their concerns. Food will be provided.
- 3) volunteer faculty members who will be available at specific times for students to "drop-in" and seek advice. (\$17,400)

5) Success Beyond Limits (SBL)- Success Beyond Limits is an innovative, community-based, non-profit youth program that aims to "improve educational outcomes, expand possibilities, and support youth in Jane and Finch along their individual paths to success." SBL runs a summer program on the York campus and an on-site youth space and mentoring program at Westview Centennial, the local high school, during the academic year.

YUFA CP has worked closely with SBL over the past couple of years. We have supported a number of its in-school activities, including: peer tutoring, an afterschool culinary program, and a bursary and scholarship preparation program. (\$15,000)

6) Black Social Economy (Caroline Hossein)- This symposium was held during Black History Month and focused on the role of social enterprises, money pools, and cooperatives in the Black diaspora. The funds supported the participation of community organizations in the event. (\$1,500)

7) Breaking Bread Initiative (Black Daddies Club)- The funds supported the participation of community members in an ongoing dialogue about issues that affect the Black community in Toronto, especially those related to male masculinity, fatherhood, and the family. (\$1,500)

8) Urban Alliance on Race Relations (Black Love Matters)- The funds supported the inclusion of community members in a graduate workshop course at York as guest speakers. Discussion focused on anti-oppressive, anti-racism coalition building in the GTA, along with an alternative mapping project of Toronto neighbourhoods. (\$1,500)

9) PEACH Youth Pre-Charge Diversion- Toronto Police Service engaged PEACH (Promoting Education and Community Health) in developing a program that diverted young offenders from the justice system into an alternative education program, so as to promote positive outcomes for youth in priority neighbourhoods. PEACH will provide both educational and family support for the youth, who could not otherwise attend school while charges are pending. (\$8,125)

10) PEACH Human Trafficking Pilot Study- The City of Toronto and United Way have expressed concern about the increasing presence of human trafficking in the GTA. This pilot study begins to explore the complex ethical and methodological issues associated with researching this issue. (\$1,875)

11) Winter Creative Lab (The Real Sun)- The Winter Lab is a three day arts-based event that explores social justice issues in the Jane-Finch community through the lens of Purpose Driven Education linked to experiential education. The funds supported the participation of Jane-Finch students in the event. (\$1,500)

12) Community Bike Project (Regenesis York)- Regenesis is a student group at York that specializes in community building. There are currently no bike rentals or repair services at York. These funds will support the establishment of a bike rental service as well as a bike repair service. Regenesis has been allocated space in the new Quad to set up a bike centre. (\$1,500)

13) The Aboriginal Students' Association at York (ASAY) Powwow- ASAY is an autonomous student association that provides a “voice for Indigenous student advocacy and ally building.” YUFA CP contributes to the Powwow, an annual educational and ceremonial event that is held on York campus to enhance awareness and appreciation of Indigenous people and politics. (\$1,500)

14) Worker's Action Centre: Feet on the Ground- The funds will support the participation of a Jane-Finch community member in a training program that promotes the learning of organizing skills, alliance building and advocacy work related to policy change that improve the lives of workers. (\$1,500)

15) Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAAP)- JFAAP was formed during a community demonstration in commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on October 17, 2008 with more than 150 community residents participating. It is a resident-led grassroots coalition of community residents, activists, workers and organizations working to eliminate poverty in the Jane-Finch community and beyond. JFAAP has been working continuously with community residents and partner organizations in Jane-Finch and city-wide on social and economic justice issues, including: the Raise the Rate campaign, CSUMB, minimum wage increase, workers' rights, income security, racialization of poverty, food security and access to healthy and affordable food as well as police brutality and racism. JFAAP has led actions and demonstrations addressing different levels of government and was instrumental in stopping the closure of a public school in the area. (\$2,500)

16) Jane-Finch Community BBQ- The unity BBQ is sponsored by area churches and focuses conversations on gun violence and tries to promote unity among the youth gangs in the community. There is a recognition of those youth who have died in the past through gun violence and there is encouragement by the wider community to begin to build bridges between the various groups. (\$1,500)

17) Symposium on Community Building (OPIRG Toronto)- The goal of the event is to build networks between socially-conscious student groups and grass roots community organizations to develop research proposals that support community interests. Funds support the participation of community members. (\$675)

18) Walk of Excellence- This year marks the 5th annual Walk With Excellence, and over the last three years we've gained the support of YUFA for this initiative. YUFA support offers graduating students the opportunity to explore post secondary options and encourage first generation students the motivation to achieve post secondary education. YUFA support also creates awareness of the role the labour movement plays in education. It also provides the opportunity for a cluster collaboration of community stakeholders to deliver on a community-based initiative. (\$1,500)

19) Jane Finch Action Against Poverty (JFAAP)- (See item 15 for explanation; an additional \$3,000 to be voted on at April 27 CP meeting)

20) Transition Year Program- TYP is a full-time full-year program that combines pre-university and university courses, while providing extra academic support for students who do not meet the traditional requirements for attending York. The Transition Year Program was initiated by the Community Projects Committee and YUFA funding has played a central role in both to get the program up and running, as well as to provide much-needed student financial support. (\$6,500)

APPENDIX A – MEMBERS OF YUFA-CP

Natalie Coulter, Co-Chair, LA&PS, Communications Studies

Ray Rogers, Co-Chair, Faculty of Environmental Studies

Lorna Erwin, LA&PS, Sociology

Joan Allen, LA&PS, Sociology

Chris Ardern, Health, Kinesiology

Don Dippo, Education

Danielle Elliott, LA&PS, Social Science

Jenny Foster, Faculty of Environmental Studies

Luin Goldring, LA&PS, Sociology

Jan Hadlaw, Fine Arts, Design

Eve Haque, LA&PS, DLLL/Equity Studies

Carl James, York Centre for Education and Community

Jodi Letkiewicz, LA&PS, Admin. Studies

Mary-Elizabeth Manley, Fine Arts, Dance

Maura Matesic, Libraries

Wendy McGuire, LA&PS, Social Work

Ellie Perkins, Faculty of Environmental Studies

Beryl Pilkington, Health, Nursing

Penni Stewart, LA&PS, Sociology

Erin Black, YUFA Staff, provides support to YUFA-CP