The York University-TD Community Engagement Centre supports the University’s commitment to build a more engaged university by facilitating mutually-beneficial collaborations between York University and Black Creek Community.

The CEC reports to the Vice-Provost Academic, and is a pan-university re-source centre situated in the Black Creek Community that:

➢ Fosters academic innovation in teaching and learning through community engaged pedagogy and experiential education opportunities
➢ Supports post-secondary educational attainment among community residents and the development of academic pathways
➢ Enhances capacity of York faculty/students and community partners to work collaboratively on communities

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2016 was marked by deepening our relationships, reflecting on community engagement in changing social and political climates, thinking about best research practices in community based research, and getting more involved in schools and access to PSE activities. These were just a few of the larger themes that shaped our work. This report will give you an overview of the many ways that we practiced and learned from community engagement in 2016.

Special thanks to the TD Bank and the York University President’s office for their ongoing financial support of this work. Also thanks to the staff that animate the work daily, in particular Nathan Stern and Tessa Jean. We are appreciative of leadership from Dr. Alice Pitt and Yvette Munro as they guide the CEC and its place within York University, and our Advisory Committee, Cheryl Prescod, Michael Johnny, Talisha Rasarooq, Heidi Siero, Byron Grey, Hudson, Uzo Anucha, Jacqueline and our Advisory Committee, Cheryl Prescod, Michael Johnny, Talisha Rasarooq, Heidi Siero, Byron Grey, Henry Decock, Anna Hudson, Uzo Anucha, and Jacqueline Spence, for keeping us well rooted.

-Lorna Schwartzentruber, Manager
Community Based Research
Through the Jane Finch Community Research Partnership, we have been deepening our thinking about research ethics and research sharing. A group of passionate community members, librarians, knowledge mobilization specialists organized two events this year (see Catalyst Grant section). This work has explored the following explores, 1) what research is being done in Jane and Finch and how does the community access that research, and 2) what does a community ethics process look like and how do we develop an accessible research collection in Jane and Finch.

Experiential Education
13 Courses were supported in developing community partnerships for Experiential Education in Economics, Humanities, Communications, Environmental Studies, Social Work, Health, Social Sciences, Accounting and Community Legal Education.

Enabling Community Building Connections
14 Community groups used space at the CEC on a regular basis for community meetings, programs, and training events. Through these events over 380 community members who were welcomed to the CEC.

Anchor Institution Framework – The CEC is represented on the Presidents Sustainability Council and the Human Rights and Social Justice Committee of the PSC is co-chaired by Lorna Schwartzentruber. The work of that committee this year was to write a framework document that defines York University as an “Anchor Institution” and establishes four target areas for current and future development opportunities – employment, engagement, infrastructure, and social procurement – specifically within the Black Creek Jane Finch communities.

Published
The Morning After: Stakeholder Reflections on the Sustainability of a Community-campus Engagement Center in the Changing Environment – Dr. Michaela Hynie (York University), Cheryl Prescod (Black Creek Community Health Centre), Barry Rieder (Jane Finch Community Ministries), Wanda McNevin (Jane Finch Centre) and Lorna Schwartzentruber (CEC) wrote an article published in the Journal, 2016 Metropolitan Universities Vol. 27 No. 3 (Autumn 2016), DOI: 10.18060/21385.

Access
“Count Yourself In”
We put on two access to Post-Secondary Education (PSE) events this year along with Seneca College, Humber College, Toronto Employment and Social Services, and the Council of Educators Toronto, to bring information and workshops to approximately 250 newcomers and other adults and youth living in Toronto’s northwest. The events were planned for non-traditional students or those who have faced barriers to PSE in the past. The first event was held at York and focused on Newcomers to Canada, with an emphasis on bridging programs and other pathways to education. The second event held at Humber College was of a more general nature to make sure that life learners find out about educational opportunities that include them, including bridging programs, financial aid, and areas of study and hands-on learning.

This event helped me to know the pathway of getting into my field of study and answer how to fund it. Such an awesome experience, learn and heard about so many opportunities. The session was so overwhelming; learn so many stuffs most especially concerning my educational career and succeeding in Canada as a newcomer. It was awesome.

First Year Network (FYN)
Every spring we reach out to students from the local high schools who have decided to go to York and invite them to join the FYN. FYN builds a network, helps with transition from high school to university, and connects participants to a mentor for their first year. This year we had 40 students join the FYN.

Women’s Bridging Program
Congratulations to the School of Women’s Studies in celebrating 25 years of this bridging program. We are honored to have this program located at the CEC and this year 54 woman participated. This program continues to be an innovative and socially significant educational outreach program offering mature women a way to qualify for entry into PSE.

Reading Black Canada
A book club series in partnership with the Harriet Tubman Institute, we held reading circles that discussed: Brown Girl in the Ring, The Illegal, Red Jacket, What We All Long For, and You Can Get There From Here.

155 Of community members stopped by our office to discuss admissions to York U or other Post-Secondary Education

653 People stopped by our office to find out more about partnerships, employment, information, that is the CEC, volunteer opportunities and more.

Black Creek Financial Action Network – We continue to host and facilitate the BCFAN, a network of organizations doing financial empowerment in the Black Creek community. While not directly an Access initiative, financial literacy is a key component to imagining oneself in PSE, as the financial implications can contribute to barriers in access. This year the BCFAN educated itself on OSAP changes, and shared information on the Canada Education Bonds. It also made submissions on payday loan legislation changes in Ontario, developed a free tax clinic for small businesses for 2016, and shared ideas and best practices for on-going financial empowerment work among members.