



Conference Report

Wednesday December 11, 2013

TD-York University Community Engagement Centre

Toronto, Ontario

This report was prepared by Suzanne Narain (Jane-Finch resident/ York U. alumni) and Rajanie Kumar (York University student).

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	pg. 3
Introduction.....	pg. 5
Summary of the Day.....	pg. 6
Key Themes/Concerns.....	pg. 16
Best Practices.....	pg. 18
Short and Long Term Goals.....	pg. 20
Future Objectives and Actions	pg. 20
Attachments.....	pg. 21

Executive Summary

“Connecting the Dots: Best Practices for Jane-Finch & York U Partnerships” was a one day symposium held on Wednesday, December 11, 2013 that brought together over seventy residents, organizers, community organizations of Jane-Finch along with faculty and staff of York University. The symposium sought to address both the historical and the contemporary oppressive structures, practices and relationships that have existed and continue to exist between York University and the Jane-Finch community.

The morning sessions primarily consisted of unpacking the historical relationship between York and the Jane-Finch community in terms of power, privilege, race and socio-economic status. Participants were first organized into two groups, the first representing people who identified with the Jane-Finch community, and the second representing those who identified with being part of the York University community. The groups discussed the relationship between the two entities separately, and were then brought together for a facilitated discussion.

The afternoon saw the participants split into working groups which dealt with issues of academic research in the community, activism and community change, youth arts-based development programs, and resource sharing. The participants were brought together to conclude the day with a final keynote address.

Key discussion themes that emerged throughout the day included:

- Inequitable research partnerships between residents and members of the York community
- Stereotypes and misconceptions of the Jane-Finch community and their perpetuation at York and through the media
- Neoliberalism, and how the economic climate is pushing the community and the university in conflicting directions, particularly in regard to research in the community
- Barriers to accessing an education at York for residents of the Jane-Finch community, including stigmatisation, increasing tuition, and other social and economic barriers
- The need to hold York accountable to its mission statement: “a community of faculty, students, staff, alumni and volunteers committed to academic freedom, social justice and accessible education...”
- The need to adequately orient students to the community before any placements, and to narrow the gap between courses that teach about inner-city issues and communities like the Jane-Finch community
- The need for greater resource sharing between York and the community, including recognition of the expertise and resources outside of York, and the sharing of information and knowledge generated through research in the community

Outcomes of the conference include this report, a list of best practices, several objectives, and the following goals.

Short Term Goals

1. Create regular networking opportunities between members of York University and the Jane-Finch community.
2. Increase community representation on research ethics board (HPRC) at York University.
3. Examine partnerships/initiatives between York University and the Jane-Finch community and continue to work with current partners (ie. GSA, CLASP, YUFA, CEC, OPIRG).
4. Allocate resources for a Jane-Finch Student Club at York University.

Long Term Goals

1. Create structural relationships between York University and the Jane-Finch community, including:
 - a. Creation of a Community Liaison Person/Group, and
 - b. Creation of stronger relationships with departments/programs rather than individual students and professors.
2. Continue and expand the on-going community facilitated education for York students, faculty and staff (now in its pilot year for students).
3. Leveraging more resources for the Jane-Finch community (and other priority areas) to enter and be successful at York.
4. Lobby for increased employment opportunities designated for Jane-Finch residents on York University campus.
5. Author Community Benefit Agreements to leverage economic development projects for the benefit of the Jane-Finch Community.

For more information please contact:

York U-TD Community Engagement Centre

yorkcec@yorku.ca

Or

Connect the Dots Coalition

CTDcoalition@gmail.com

The full report can be found on the York-TD CEC website www.yorku.ca/cec

Introduction

“Connecting the Dots: Best Practices for Jane-Finch & York U. Partnerships” was a one day symposium held on Wednesday, December 11, 2013 that brought together residents, organizers, community organizations, and members/ residents of Jane-Finch along with faculty and staff of York University. The symposium sought to address both the historical and the contemporary oppressive structures, practices and relationships that have existed and continue to exist between York University and the Jane-Finch community. A key objective of this inaugural conference was to develop a dialogue between York University and the Jane-Finch community surrounding issues of social justice, equitable research practices, and race and power relations in order to establish alternative practices that address the needs of the community and university.

This report is intended to document the symposium and serve as a basis for further reflection and development of a framework and “tool-kit” that will benefit the strengthening of ongoing relationships between York University and the Jane-Finch Community, and serve as a template for future training for other institutional-community relationships.

Special thanks to those who invested time, passion and creativity in planning this day - The Real Sun, Sabrina “Butterfly” Gopaul, Andrea Bouchaud, Lorraine Anderson, Chris Mallon, Sam Tecle, Laura Metcalf, Milisa Franklyn, and Lorna Schwartzentruber.

Organizations Represented

Community

- Black Creek Community Health Centre
- b_u_virtue
- Centre for Green Change
- City of Toronto
- Dance Immersion
- Doorsteps Neighbourhood Services
- Downsview Services for Seniors
- Jane Finch Action Against Poverty
- Jane Finch Community And Family Centre
- Jane Finch Community Ministry
- JVS Toronto
- MPP Mario Sergio’s Office
- Nomanzland
- Sistema Toronto
- Success Beyond Limits
- PEACH
- Seneca College
- St. Stephen's Community House
- United Way Toronto
- Ward 8 Councilor Anthony Perruzza’s Office
- West-Side Arts Hub

York U

- Academic Planning & Strategic Initiatives, VPA’s Office
- Centre for Human Rights
- CLASP
- Community Relations
- Faculty of Education
- Employment Equity-Human Resources
- Faculty of Environmental Studies
- Faculty Of Fine Arts
- Faculty of Health-Experiential Education
- Faculty of Health- Nursing
- Knowledge Mobilization Unit
- LAPS- Communication Studies
- LAPS- Experiential Education
- LAPS- Sociology
- LAPS-School of Social Work
- OPIRG
- Osgoode
- TD Community Engagement Centre
- York University Art Gallery
- YUFA

Summary of the Day

The conference started with a welcome and introduction by Lorna Schwartzentruber, Manager of the York-TD CEC and The Real Sun (a.k.a Sun), local artist and educator, and lead facilitator for the day. Both emphasized that the conference is founded upon and will be carried out using anti-oppressive and transparent framework. Over 70 people participated in the day.

Opening Keynote Address

Nomanzland, a community-based theater collective, performed two skits surrounding issues of racial profiling and exploitation. The skits used an art-based approach to provide an entry point to facilitate difficult discussions and expressed a reality that is often mis- and under represented at York University. Their performance enabled



those present to experience some of the stigmatization that occurs towards residents of the Jane-Finch community while attending York University. Nomanzland highlighted contentious issues such as the negative representations of Jane-Finch through the Excalibur newspaper, gentrification, positions of power, and inequitable research. Starting the day off with this performance allowed participants to experience various positions of vulnerability and allowed for others to share their experience with openness and honesty.

Session One – Unpacking the historical, social and political understandings/stigma of Jane-Finch, discussing the notion of partnerships & analyzing the power dynamics involved

Session One was broken into two groups A) Jane-Finch residents, long time organizers and community organizations, and B) York University members.

A) Jane-Finch residents, long time organizers and community organizations

This session was facilitated by Sabrina “Butterfly” Gopaul and Farid C. Partovi. The facilitators addressed how the community perceives York University and how York interprets the community. Participants in the group spoke to their experiences of stigmatization such as being asked to present their student ID cards by York staff and fellow students and being asked to leave class because their opinions were too controversial. Another participant expressed that during orientation tours of the campus, York student representatives have told first year students “do not to cross the Shoreham bridge” as it leads into Jane-Finch. Another key issue that emerged was regarding how resources were being deployed and the lack of resources invested into the community such as transportation barriers and limited employment opportunities on

campus for community members. A central concern that arose is the way in which programs and professors at York have taken a vested interest in teaching about inner-city issues related to education, health and poverty in the community, yet have not taken the time to get to know the community or have a practical understanding of these issues. Moreover, York University has economic leverage over the community, which serves to silence and diminish the expertise, knowledge and cultural capital of the community.

B) York University members

- This session was facilitated by Sun and Sam Teclé. The group focused their discussion around these key questions:
- Why do you want to partner with the Jane-Finch community?
- How has York held stereotypes about Jane-Finch?
- List ways York holds privilege over Jane-Finch?
- Are there any historical reasons for the privilege that York has in relation to Jane-Finch?
- What do you need from the Jane-Finch community to help you be a good ally?

The conversations focused on dismantling stereotypes of the Jane-Finch neighbourhood, racial profiling and acknowledging economic barriers of education (high tuition cost, OSAP, financial constraints). It was put forward that there is a metaphoric fence around York University where they claim all the good things about the university and community, while anything negative that happens on the campus is then associated with the Jane-Finch community. There were concerns about the sustainability between the York and Jane-Finch partnerships, suggesting a liaison or committee comprised of members of the Jane-Finch community and York University.

There were also historical routes of privilege that were addressed such as the City of Toronto and the Ontario Housing Commission moving lower-income people into the Jane-Finch area during the 1960s. The construction of York University in a post-war suburb could have served as an economic advantage for Jane-Finch residents, however, it was suggested that the relationship between the university and community has not been complimentary to this end. The current neoliberal projects on campus such as York Village and the subway expansion are economically beneficial to York University and problematic for Jane-Finch residents due to revitalization and gentrification tactics. One organization felt that York University claims to be involved in many projects that benefit the community, but that there is little evidence of this. It was brought forward that there is no cohesive relationship that is structurally in place between York University and the Jane-Finch community. Groups suggested that there are great personal allies within pockets of the university, however, when these people move on to other positions the relationship that was once fostered is not sustained. Participants felt that there needs to be a development of a structural relationship between the university and community, as well as more honest dialogue on how the relationship can be improved instead of having the same conversation every few years.



Session One Part 2: Plenary Discussion

Sun and Butterfly facilitated a reporting back of discussions from each group. Both groups underlined some of the issues and challenges associated with institutions such as York University in its inability to communicate to communities on the periphery of the university. For instance, many Professors and Staff who were present during the session reported that York University operates within a neoliberal framework. That the institution

is constrained by a budget with multiple levels of power and bureaucracy, with each faculty operating on its own policies and constraints and often subjected to departmental budget cuts.

A student and Unit 2 worker from York University pointed out the disconnect between the faculty, department and overall policy of the university. This resulted in a discussion about how university students/staff and community members can get support from the University for the work that they are doing and/or trying to carry out. Furthermore, how do staff/students and community activists propose agendas that are consistent with educational goals, community resources and avoid the institutional barriers?

A faculty member discussed his experiences of being a professor at York University. He expressed that often staff are overworked; they are regulated with department policies regarding the various levels and structures in place of applications before a course can be mounted and taught. Moreover, faculty members are often unaware of the needs of the community. The discussion illustrated that the University is not a homogenous institution. Given the fragmentation of York University, it becomes challenging for Jane-Finch to build a movement of community activism, which lacks the funds and labour power to be in dialogue with York. This discussion highlighted a few strategies that can be utilized in order to facilitate an intervention in the university.

There needs to be a liaison or committee in place that acts as a bridge in order to communicate the needs of the community to university and vice versa. For example, a faculty member indicated that on the ethics committee at York, it is required that there be a member from the community in which research is conducted (i.e. a member from Jane-Finch community needs to be on the ethics committee in order to approve what kinds of research are being conducted on and about the community). The participation of a community member on the ethics committee would ensure that the community knows what is being written in research grants and how the research will be used to improve the community needs.

A central concern from Jane-Finch is that York's engagement with the media has labeled the community as ridden with violence and drugs. Thus, what kinds of frameworks can York create in the community? What kind of healthy relations can York create in order to relate to the

community? How will York help the community heal from this damaged relationship? How can both York and Jane-Finch change these relationships?

Keynote Address #2: Sabrina “Butterfly” Gopaul



Butterfly spoke to the issues of racial, sexual and ethnic stigmatization that is placed upon the Jane-Finch community by the public. She showed a video done by Simon Black’s students (Hip Hop in the City), filmed on the York campus and highlights the perceptions of Jane-Finch. The general idea of the community was related to violence, drug dealing and gang-banging.

Sabrina discussed the pornography of poverty and the allure to represent Jane-Finch within these confines through popular media. These negative representations have also been taken up via the Excalibur newspaper at York University and campus security. She highlighted that there is a need to breakdown the myths that exist in order to start learning from and with each other. She put forward that Jane-Finch is a valuable resource for the York University in terms of cultural knowledge, international development, art, food security, inter-generational relations, and so on. Her hope for the conference was to create an institution that is informed about the community and interested in challenging systemic issues of poverty.

Session Two Part A: Developing a collective set of guidelines and visions which define “Best Practices for Jane-Finch & York Partnerships”

Working groups were based on select themes of interest according to the most common areas of interaction/partnerships between York U and Jane-Finch currently. Groups were mixed with both York U and Jane-Finch community members participating together and facilitated by a community leader(s). Following are notes provided by each of the discussion groups.

Academic Research

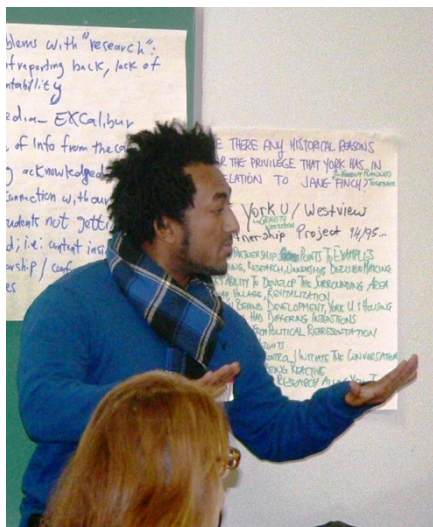
This part of the symposium was facilitated by Lola Bunz and Sam Tecele, which addressed academic research and sharing on behalf of the Jane-Finch community and York University. Spoken word artist Lola Bunz started the session with a poem entitled “All the things I never had” which attended to issues of drugs, shooting, robbery, violence, prostitution, and working multiple jobs in order to sustain one’s self. This poem highlighted many of the experiences and challenges members of the Jane and Community have faced and continue to confront. This was followed by a warm up activity called “Stepping on the Line” in which members were given the following questions and asked to step on the line if it applied to them.

- Do you work at York? If yes, step on the line.
- Do you go to school at York?
- Do you work and live in the community?
- Do you feel welcomed at York?
- Do you feel welcome in the Jane-Finch community?
- Have you ever experienced violence in your community?
- Have you ever been involved in research in the community?

This purpose of this activity was to recognize who was in the room, who lives, works, and who goes to school, and more importantly, who has never been a part of the Jane-Finch community. The facilitators critically discussed what is research, from whose perspective should research be carried out, and on what basis the research is performed. Responses varied across the group such as trying to understand a social, political or economic problem, understanding trends in a community in order to develop strategies across different levels of government, storytelling of people's histories, populations and places, creating new knowledge, and documenting the unseen and unheard. Communities such as Jane-Finch, for example, might conduct research as an act of resistance to dismantle the negative stereotypes associated with the community. Conducting research might also be undertaken in order to solve a community problem, make issues known, and to tell a counter narrative.

Another key question was what are some of the experiences of doing research between the community and university that are productive? The example was given of the *Women Moving Forward* program that helps mothers pursue post-secondary programs. It has also provided the opportunity for participants to tell their own stories in their own voices as opposed to through a researcher.

While this was one area of productive research and community based discussions between members from the Jane-Finch community and York University, others highlighted some of the difficulties in conducting research. There are tensions regarding the lack of voice and engagement that members in the community have in the research process. For instance, members of the community are unaware of funding opportunities in order to pursue a critical research question. Issues that members disclosed in the research process are often ignored after the work is completed and/or the community does not receive any benefits, strategies or report back from the research.



A key suggestion that emerged was that there needs to be a liaison group in the community that focuses on the needs of the community. Such a committee would ensure that the research passes/is screened by the community structure in place in order to do research in the community. A liaison committee would also establish and implement rules regarding how research will be re-channeled into the community, and how research will address the diversity in history, culture, and experiences of people in the community. A liaison group is necessary, since such a group

would speak for and with the Jane-Finch community, and would be responsible for communicating and translating the needs between the community and York. Moreover, researchers can contact the liaison or committee asking what research needs to be done and what are the needs of the community, instead of researchers determining the needs of the community.

More importantly, members in this discussion revealed that research could be understood as a celebration of what works or what does not work for the community and institution, and provide a new way of thinking and moving forward collectively.

Activism and Community Change

This group identified some "quick wins" -- ways that research and collaboration could fairly easily generate some positive social-change outcomes in the short term -- and also identified some "longer-term goals" for collaborative research.

"Quick wins" that were suggested by people in the group included:

- Doing, and developing a collaborative process for, **asset mapping** in Jane-Finch (what are the positives in the community? Allies? What can be built on and enhanced?)
- Create a **joint York U. – Jane-Finch research group** for 'bridging' so there is an "us" (not just two opposed camps), a common endeavor on ethical collaborative research, a go-to source for best practices, ideas, etc. The first project for this bridging group would be to define a joint vision for collaborative research.
- **Reframe 'orientation'** and 'dis-orientation' for York students in relation to Jane-Finch, either by holding a welcome event in Jane-Finch for new students each fall to introduce them to the community, or by having Jane-Finch speakers/ facilitators/ artists participating in the York U. orientation events, or in some other way try to counter the negative verbiage.
- York profs should continue to **invite Jane-Finch residents into classrooms** as resource people for particular courses; perhaps a panel of local experts on community history, ecology and social change could be developed and connections could be broadened with particular York faculty members.
- York and Jane-Finch representatives can make **joint presentations to the media** (press conferences, etc.) about the facts regarding Jane-Finch and York safety and collaborative initiatives, to counter the stigma and negative publicity.
- As part of the above or separately, York and Jane-Finch spokespeople can **highlight particular research and collaborative projects that are already working well** (e.g. Black Creek Farm, Green Change Centre, Critical Urban Planning course on environmental justice issues with extensive involvement of local residents, Nomanzland, etc.) to generate positive publicity and show benefits of partnerships.
- Highlight and **build on the community's cultural strengths and activist focus/history** to develop the story of what's happening in Jane-Finch and link this with York's activist history and focus.
- Use the CEC as a space for a **community-run seminar** that York students could take for credit. (This is possible through the Faculty of Environmental Studies, for example; York students can enroll as an individual directed study course and get academic credit).

- Start a "salon" or "palaver" series where academic and Jane-Finch activists, in evening or weekend events, discuss particular issues such as gender politics, environmental justice, gentrification, the Pan-Am games, transport developments, etc.

It was agreed in this group that the "longer-term goals" for collaborative partnerships and research include working for **social and economic justice, addressing land-use changes in the community and gentrification pressures** (which raises the issue of the university's role in pushing this).



Resource Sharing – Facilities, Access to Resources and Education

- Shouldn't be a one-time connection

What are the resources?

- Facilities – including space to do administrative work
- Meeting space, theatres, art galleries, parks, pool
- Money
- People – placement students, knowledge of what people can leverage
- Knowledge / Information
- Jobs
- Strategies
- Access to social and cultural capital
- Mentors
- Education
- Big and small ways
- Time to work together

- External sources of resource support
- Expertise that people bring to the table
- Networks

What are best practices?

- Respectful relationship – resources lie in JF community and York
- Practices are not project based – they are ongoing
- Establish a framework that allows us to build healthy relationships
- Look at global best practices and how they could be applied locally
- International Institute of Restorative Practices, and the Virtues Project International
- Hull, a city in England that describes itself as first restorative City, a model city

Model for resource sharing

- West-Side Arts Hub, envisioned by community residents. Started as a virtual idea, grew into a physical space. With support from partners, got funding from the City of Toronto to develop an arts administration, rehearsal and production space inside York Woods Library – where a theatre already existed. The model includes a majority of artists, residents but also has space for institutions – City of Toronto and Toronto Public Library. Creates transparency among all partners – everyone has an equal stake. User groups are part of strategic planning process – input into what would make the facility better. Creates accountability.
- Community grounded model is the most successful.
- Challenges of bringing together institutions with the community – does take time, and need to be able to leverage access and work at all levels from front line to senior
- Negotiating the bureaucracy
- Community Use of Facilities policy
- Plans to do local hiring
- Start with small wins
- How to shed light on the small ways people are making things happen, in spite of the rules
- Success Beyond Limits is a model of best practices – but still a struggle to maintain space on the campus
- Working with the unions

Models for Jane & Finch and York U

- Social Justice & Human Rights group (President's Sustainability Council) at York U has the issues of scholarships, access to facilities and employment on the agenda

Next Steps

- Local hiring – consistent need to demand it.
- Where are opportunities – housing? Pan Am?

- How to simplify navigating through the bureaucracy
- Scholarships for residents, Access to Facilities, Employment Opportunities
- Senate at York U made up of faculty members and students – elected by faculty
- Employment Equity Officer is here who has knowledge of recruitment efforts
- Compile information on what is already being done and then identify the gaps
- TUUS office Temporary Use of University Space process

Arts, Youth and Community Programs

Strengths of partnerships between institutions/orgs

- Better quality education – soft skills, better perspective
- Artistic expression – confidence in the skills and talents that they have

Problematic approaches to partnerships

- Restrictive structures for youth
- Eurocentric – cultural model that reflects institutional structure, art, ideas, and values
- Youth feel silenced
- “Guinea Pigging” – unexperienced students working with community members

Strategies

- Culturally inclusive approaches
- Relevant content
- Dismantle and challenge existing power structures
- Ask staff and faculty who are involved in YU community and create spaces for sharing and learning at the institutional level
- Admit to failures and learn from them
- Don’t assume you know what youth want to learn or need
- It’s important to go forward with strategies



Keynote Address #3, Isiah Lea

The closing keynote address of the Connect the Dots Conference was by spoken word artist Isiah Lea, who left a great impact on the participants. Through his poetry, Isiah delivered a critique of the normative conception of “gangsters”, “ghettos” and governmental institutions, forcing many in the room to rethink the meaning of education, poverty, the ghetto and what it means to be part of a community and engage in activism.



What is a gangster? A gangster is someone who goes out to look after their family, advocate for their issues and stand up for themselves. And Ghetto: a bunch of people left on the outskirts and manage to pull it together.”

It is through poetry that Isiah eloquently articulated his contemplations on the oppressive norms that serve to confine us within our own thoughts. Isiah’s mode of questioning ourselves and the institutions that we operate within provided the perfect ending to a day of self-reflection, critical interrogation of partnerships and the historical relations between York University and the Jane-Finch community.

Conclusion

The symposium addressed many of the historical, social and economic barriers that previously determined the relationship between York University and the Jane-Finch community. The overall commentary of this conference was an appreciation for the space to have open and honest dialogue between members of York University and the Jane-Finch community.

“Whenever I come away from meetings like this in the Jane Finch community I come away inspired, energized, with my heart full and my mind buzzing. I am so moved by the passion, eloquence, commitment, fire, dedication and love of the people I meet.”

“Good to have the various perspectives aired for all to hear- understanding is the beginning of change.”

“A very important conversation and foundation for us to work together from.”

“Well done, thanks for a thought provoking day. Now, we need some action items.”

There was a significant desire to continue these conversations and have more opportunities to network. This report highlights some of the key themes and ideas, best practices, short and long-term goals, and future objectives that were identified at this day.

Key Themes/ Concerns

Historical (In)Justice

1. Inequitable research

Many concerns were raised about the way in which research from the university has been done in the past whereby researchers would come into the community and solicit ideas about development, programs, etc. and would receive funding based on those ideas, however, would never come back to the community to follow up or invest the funds that were allocated. This has caused a great mistrust between the university and community. The community expressed this through the group discuss. It was also raised during the art-based performance by Nomanzland.

2. “Don’t cross that bridge”: Stereotypes and misconceptions

York University is geographically connected to the Jane-Finch area, yet it is very much isolated from the community. A key concern that was raised during the conference was the misconceptions of Jane-Finch that continue to be perpetuated on York’s campus via student led orientations and newspapers. A few students noted that during an orientation tour they were warned not to cross the Shoreham Bridge that leads into the Jane-Finch area. Furthermore, the Excalibur newspaper also published an article blaming the Jane-Finch community for the crime that takes place on the York campus. This stereotype of the Jane-Finch community on the York campus has been deeply engrained.

3. Access/ Inaccessibility

There is a literal and symbolic disconnect and inaccessibility to the York campus from the Jane-Finch area.. The way in which the transportation is structured, it takes at least two buses to get to the Keele campus from the corner of Jane-Finch. There is no direct access. Moreover, this inaccessibility prevents people from the Jane-Finch community from utilizing the resources at York and also prevents members of the York community from interacting with the Jane-Finch community.

Economic Climate

1. Neoliberalism

Both York University and the Jane-Finch community are facing the effects of neoliberalism, though, on many different levels. Some Professors who were present spoke to various ways in which they are being constrained within academia in terms of their time and limited availability to engage with community. A concern that was raised from a university participant was the disengagement from the community to participate in research. The community responded to this by suggesting that neoliberalism also affects the community, however, the effects of it looks very different (ie working multiple jobs, declining health, loss of social assistance, etc). The impact of neoliberalism has positioned the community and university on different playing fields. These differences must be acknowledged when doing research or consultation with the community ie. finding out the needs of the community before developing research projects, compensating people for their time, following-up after research or funds have been allocated.

2. Tuition

A major barrier agreed upon by all is the increasing cost of tuition. There are many services and resources such as the Transition Year Program or Women's Bridging Program that assists people from the community with entrance and admission to York University, however, there is limited financial resources that are easily accessible. A community worker who has helped youth apply for grants commented on the difficulty for those who have never been through the process to navigate the application forms and criteria to be considered for bursaries/ grants/ loans. Furthermore, the day-to-day demands of those in marginalized communities make it difficult to be successful in university (ie. having to work multiple jobs while going to school, taking care of family, precarious housing, etc). A need that was identified is to leverage York University for more financial resources to assist people coming from inner-city communities with the cost of tuition.

Social Responsibility

1. Accountability

York University prides itself as “a community of faculty, students, staff, alumni and volunteers committed to academic freedom, social justice and accessible education...” (York University Mission Statement) and members of the community want to hold York accountable to their mission statement in order to foster more sustainable and locally beneficial relations. The community engagement priorities on York's website claim “our location allows us opportunities to work collaboratively with diverse community partners across all sectors on research, learning and service initiatives that result in mutual and societal benefit”. The community would like to see more mutually beneficial research, access and programs that the community can utilize. It was also brought forward that there has been a lot of hurt that has occurred between the university and community and there is a need for restorative justice in order to re-build that relationship. More honest and open dialogue is required with specific and structural actions in order to prevent having the same conservation continuously.

2. Social Justice Courses

Many courses that are offered at York are taught through a social justice framework. A key concern raised by the community is regarding professors and faculty who teach to issues of social justice, poverty, inner-city education without having adequate knowledge on the local community or real life experience. This point was not made to devalue the research done by academics, rather it was raised to implore researchers to get to know the communities that they are working within, including understanding the racialization of poverty. There are specialized programs that operate out of York that send students into the Jane-Finch community for training such as: Social Work, Urban Diversity (teacher training), Nursing, etc., and these students should be trained on working



within the community before entering their placements in order to prevent the ‘petting zoo effect’ or to perpetuate colonized practices.

3. Resource Sharing

Often research is done on the community without the community ever being aware or involved in it. It was noted that a graduate course taught by Jennifer Foster Faculty of Environmental Studies, recently held a student-community symposium at Yorkwoods library on environmental justice and Line 9. The symposium was well received by the community and very informative. Many residents and organizations suggested that there needs to be more opportunities for this knowledge sharing and put forward that if researchers are not willing to share their findings with the community, perhaps they should not be doing research on the community. Also there is a need to make space in classrooms to acknowledge and validate the expertise of the community whether it be through guest lectures/ performances, art-based research, participatory action research, etc.

Best Practices Ideas and Suggestions

1. Open and transparent dialogue
 - More open and transparent dialogue between York University and the Jane-Finch community needs to be fostered. There should be regular dialogue and meetings between members of York University and the Jane-Finch community to discuss projects, research and sustain relationships.
2. Restorative justice initiatives
 - Healing the past injustices between the community and university is necessary. A means to do so is via restorative justice strategies that focus on repairing damaged relationships and working towards ways to prevent harm in the future. Please see Szimbah Hanley (Tree of Life Consultants: b_u_virtue@yahoo.ca) for further information.
3. Social justice with accountability
 - York faculty should consult and consider ways to collaborate with communities to have a better gauge of the racialization of poverty and social justice issues before becoming the expert in the field and teaching others primarily based on theory, not practice. Moreover, students in various programs need to be more adequately trained before starting community-based placements.
4. Building a framework for working with the community
 - Training for all staff and students should be necessary for working within the community and York U. Training could be done in collaboration with the university and community organizations. It requires listening to the needs of the community, instead of facilitating or positioning oneself in the position of power and finding ‘solutions’ to the problems facing the community.
5. Check power/ privilege

- It is necessary to check the power/ privilege that each person working within the community/ university environment has and re-evaluate assumptions about Jane-Finch and their own position. Moreover, space needs to be made to listen to the needs of the community and value the social and cultural capital of the residents and organizations within the community

6. Get to know the community

- Connect with at least one organization in the community/ try to make authentic relationships with residents and/or organizations. Get to know the community resources and attend community events.



7. Listening to the needs of community/ university

- Before conducting research find out what the needs of the community are. Before agreeing to participate in research find out what is required, the time commitment and what the research will be used for.

8. Mutual trust and respect

- When conducting research/ building relationships/ or working within the community ensure that there is mutual trust and respect being fostered between everyone involved. (Are there some suggestions of concrete ways to do this?)

9. Debunking stereotypes

- What stereotypes have you heard about Jane-Finch? What are the historical, political and social factors that have caused these? Work to understand the location of these stereotypes and de-bunk these myths

10. Sharing information

- There should be mutual systems of sharing knowledge in non-exploitative ways. When research is done on, about or with the community, it should be shared with the community through symposiums, presentations or resource lending. A copy of all research should be housed at the CEC for community reference.

11. Collaboration/ Co-operation on key issues

- Making changes requires unity and support on behalf of York University and the Jane-Finch community. Emphasis must be placed on each constituency working together to achieve a common vision, without putting the other in harm's way.

12. Agreement on goals and initiatives

- York University and the Jane-Finch community must collaborate on common goals/initiatives that serve the needs of both the community and university. Goals and initiatives must be made in conjunction with each party. Goals/initiatives must be timely, realistic, attainable and specific to the needs of the community.

Short and Long Term Goals

Short Term Goals

1. More networking opportunities between York University and the Jane Finch community;
2. Look into community person who is on research ethics board (HPRC) at York University;
3. Examine partnerships/ initiatives between York University and the Jane-Finch; community and continue to work with current partners (ie. GSA, CLASP, YUFA, CEC, OPIRG);
4. Resources for Jane-Finch Student Club at York University;



Long Term Goals

5. Structural relationships between York University and Jane-Finch Community Liaison Person/Group. Stronger relationships with departments/programs, not just individuals;
6. On-going community facilitated education for York students, faculty and staff;
7. Leveraging more resources for the Jane-Finch community (and other priority areas) to enter and be successful at York;
8. More employment opportunities designated for Jane-Finch residents on York University campus;
9. Economic Development opportunities leveraged for the benefit of Jane-Finch through Community Benefit Agreements;

Future Objectives and Actions

1. Case study of Transitional Year Program
2. Leveraging resources from York University for programs in the Jane-Finch area and other priority neighbourhoods.
3. Conducting research that is community and art-based
4. Ways to assist students from priority neighbourhoods with tuition, i.e student levies, faculty/staff tuition waiver benefit sharing
5. Space at York CEC and York campus for community groups
6. Shuttle bus from York CEC to York University (Keele Campus) and to other community resources (ie. Black Creek Community Farm)

7. Resource sharing (opportunities for use of space for community initiatives)

8. Town hall meetings twice per year that connects stakeholders (ie. community organizations, politicians, York U.) with community residents so everyone can voice concerns, work together on similar goals and network.



For more information please contact:

York U-TD Community Engagement Centre

yorkcec@yorku.ca

Or

Connect the Dots Coalition

CTDcoalition@gmail.com

Attachments: (Package contents for the day)

- i. Agenda
- ii. Presenter Bio's
- iii. Evaluation Summary
- iv. Connect the Dots Creation Story (How the day came to be)
- v. Glossary of Terms

i. Agenda

Connecting the Dots: Best Practices for Jane-Finch & York U Partnerships

Wednesday, December 11, 2013, 9:30a.m. – 4:00p.m.

- 9:30-10 a.m. Networking Breakfast
- 10-10:45 a.m. **Opening Welcome**
- Keynote Address #1: *Nomanzland, Lola Bunz***
- 11:00-11:30 a.m. **Session One Part 1** – Unpacking the historical, social and political understandings/stigma of Jane-Finch. Discussing the notion of partnerships and analyzing the power dynamics involved.
- Participants will be separated into two groups: (1/2 hour)
 - 1) Jane-Finch Residents, Long Time Organizers and Community Organizations; *Facilitation by Sabrina “Butterfly” Gopaul & Farid C. Partovi*
 - 2) York University members – *facilitation by Simon Black & The Real Sun*
- 11:30-12:30 p.m. **Session One Part 2** - Full group together (1 hour) – *facilitation by The Real Sun and Sabrina ‘Butterfly’ Gopaul*
Summary reports of the morning sessions
- *What are key reflections?*
 - *What does each group need from the other?*
- 12:30-1:30 p.m. **Lunch**
- 1:30-2 p.m. **Keynote Address #2** – *Sabrina ‘Butterfly’ Gopaul*
- 2-3:30 p.m. **Session Two** – Developing a collective set of guidelines and visions which define “Best Practices for Jane-Finch & York Partnerships”
- Working groups will be based on select themes of interest according to the most common areas of interaction/partnerships between York U and Jane-Finch currently. Groups will be mixed with both York U and Jane-Finch community members participating together and facilitated by a community leader(s).
- What does “Best Practice” look like in this theme area?*
- Academic Research – Facilitators: Lola Bunz, Sam Teclé*
 - Activism and Community Change – Facilitators: Sabrina ‘Butterfly’ Gopaul, Farid C. Partovi*
 - Youth/Arts/Community Programs – Facilitators: Drae Walsh, The Real Sun*
 - Resource Sharing – facilities, access to resources and education - Facilitators: Andrea Boucaud, Yvette Munro*
- 3:30-4 p.m. **Keynote Address #3** - *Isiah Lea*
- Wrap-Up and Closing

ii. Presenter Bio's



The Real Sun (also known simply as SUN) is an artist, educator, community builder, and healer-in-training with a creative spirit and the soul of a revolutionary. There are four core pillars to all that The Real Sun does, is, and creates: Art, Education, Healing, and Social Justice.

As a resident of Jane-Finch, The Real Sun has played a key role in the founding, building, and strengthening of many community organizations, initiatives, and movements including Lost Lyrics, Nomanzland, West-Side Arts Hub, BeLovEd, LIFE Movement, Don't Believe The Hype, Jane-Finch Action Against Poverty. She is the lead coordinator of Connect the Dots Symposium, and is a founding member of the Connecting the Dots Coalition, and is dedicated to building towards 'best-practices' in community organizing in Jane-Finch.

The Real Sun is an alumna of York University with a B.A. Honours in International Development Studies. She also works as an artist educator for various organizations and institutions across the GTA and Canada including: The Royal Conservatory of Music, University of Toronto Schools, Toronto District School Board, Limestone District School Board, Arts for Children and Youth, Canadian Stage, Soul Pepper Theatre, Baddest Beatz.

The Real Sun released her 2nd CD titled "Horizon" which is of Acoustic Soul genre of music in November 2013, with an Album Launch event planned for January 25, 2014. She released her first Hip-Hop album "RISE" in 2008.

Website: www.TheRealSun.com

Email: sun@TheRealSun.com

Twitter: @suntherealsun

FB: The Real Sun

Sabrina "Butterfly" Gopaul works with a number of grassroots groups in the Jane and Finch area and across the city of Toronto. She's been working with Jane and Finch Action Against Poverty for over 5 years responding to the social determinants of health in the community of Jane and Finch/Black Creek.

She graduated in Journalism Print & Broadcast with honours from Humber College and also was the first woman of colour and single mother who earned the Board of Governors Achievement Award. Butterfly is a Community Health Worker at Black Creek Community Health Centre with a focus on advocacy and community development.

As a resident she's the Head News Correspondent for Jane-Finch.com; founding member of the LIFE movement and Freedom Friday (as a BCCHC staff); former host for CHRY 105.5FM, the Wednesday edition of News Now a magazine radio show for five years; resident member of West-Side Arts Hub Collaborative; a TCH Tenant Representative for Tobermory; is an Executive Board member for Schools Without Borders; a member of Nomanzland youth-led theatre group; just to list a few. She's a mother to her almost 18-year-old son, 'Zea' and one-year-and-three-month-old Papa.

Butterfly is an advocate for issues related to children/youth, women, access to education/employment, policing/community safety, social justice using the arts and affordable housing. Butterfly voices passionate viewpoints about her lived experiences and her vision for a stronger, more organized and mobilized Jane and Finch community and City of Toronto.





My name is **Andrea Boucaud** and I am currently the Managing Director of the West-side Arts Hub. I have worked within the social service industry for over 15 years in many roles including youth employment, youth outreach, city building, small business creation, advocacy and social justice. I have a passion for fashion and arts based work as I see this as an avenue to future financial stability and career choices for many individuals cutting their path in the City of Toronto and world-wide.

When looking at my strategic career moves there is a clear path which highlights my interest in community and city building which includes working within community organizations such as Tropicana Community Services, Promoting Education and Community Health- PEACH, Toronto District School Board- TDSB, the West-side Arts Hub, many grassroots initiatives and owning my own women's clothing and accessories business called Courageous Morningstarz Fashions. Within these roles I held positions of Child and Youth Worker, Community Support Worker, Youth Employment Site Manager, Provincial Youth Outreach Worker, Studio Manager, Owner and Creative Director.

In 2011 I was awarded the Outreach Worker of the Year award by the Toronto Youth Cabinet with the City of Toronto. This award nomination came from the youth I have worked with, created relationships with, cried with, laughed with and watched become young men and women. I continue to be a vision and view of becoming a great city builder and a person who promotes individual and community capacity building. I have chosen a career within social services and community development as helping people, mainly youth and children, is my passion. The West-Side Arts Hub is a visionary organization with innovative programming that promotes the arts to not just artists but community members, local organizations and the broader arts community in general.

Sam Teele holds an undergraduate degree in Kinesiology and African Studies, as well as Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education. Currently a PhD candidate in Sociology at York University, Sam's research interests include Black Cultural Studies and educational issues as they relate to black youth. For the past decade Sam has worked with many community organizations across Toronto as a facilitator dealing with topics ranging from educational attainment, sex education, and the personal and career development of youth.

As a teacher with the Toronto District School Board, Sam has taught in high and middle schools, as well as in alternative educational programs. He brings to his examination of youth issues, his City of Toronto community organizing experiences in the areas of equitable education opportunities and outcomes for families from lower income areas, anti-poverty, racial profiling and police brutality.



LolaBunz Emcee, Spoken Word Artist, Actress and Community Leader

"I love the opportunity to promote youth to use their voices. And I will continue to speak for the unheard voices of my city."

LolaBunz is making big strides in representing females in the City of Toronto in her hope to be a voice for the unheard. Born and raised in Jane & Finch, LolaBunz brings a different approach to the game, through her own unique style and vocal ability. Introduced to hip-hop by her older brother, LolaBunz was encouraged to listen to hip hop as a child. Soon, she grew to love the Art of Hip Hop and became inspired to create her own brand of it. At 22 years of age, LolaBunz has already performed on various stages and at some of the City's largest urban music festivals, including 106 & York and Manifesto. In 2009, she performed on-stage with Hip Hop legend KRS-One during Toronto's Week Without Violence. In 2011 LolaBunz opened for pop sensation Dev. In the same year, she created, and was featured in the first all-female Jane and Finch Cypher in Toronto, which went viral within days and was featured on many blogs and websites such as Torontorappers.com, HipHopCanada.com and many more. Lola has also made an international appearances performing in Lagos Nigeria at some of Nigeria's largest music events in December 2012. 2013 will prove to be even better for LolaBunz. She has already landed radio interviews with some of the city's hottest DJ's and radio hosts such as Dj Mel Boogie, JJ Rocks and Royalty radio. LolaBunz has also received props from female Emcee's South of the border such as Lady Luck.

For bookings or more information, contact:

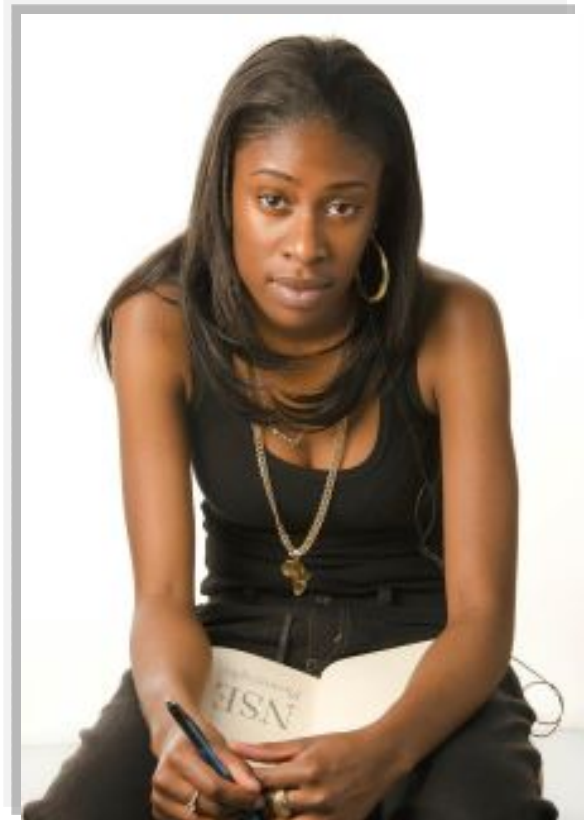
E-Mail: lolabunzmusic5@gmail.com

Phone: 416 606 7344

Youtube: TheLolaBunz

Twitter: @TheLolaBunz

www.facebook.com/TheLolaBunz



Nomanzland first and foremost is a family. We are raw and revolutionary. We rep the hood. Nomanzland is a collective that comes together to create theatre, poetry, music, and art that represents the struggle of marginalized and oppressed people all over the world.

We are: Real Life. Real Drama. Real Theatre

Nomanzland was created in 2006 under a different name "CAST". Since then we have grown, evolved, to become who we are today.

Nomanzland meets every week on Thursday from 4-8pm at the West-Side Arts Hub located at 1785 Finch Ave. West, (Jane-Finch). All artists, community members, and youth (15+) are welcome to come join us, and create, politick, talk shit, and fight for the revolution. Ya dunnoe.

Farid Partovi Chaharlangi (also known as Farid C. Partovi) is a Community Development Worker with the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre (JFCFC). Farid started working with JFCFC in June 1996 as a Community Outreach Worker. Since then, he has worked as a Settlement Worker for a few years and then primarily as a Community Development Worker concentrating on social justice and community and grassroots' engagement, organizing and leadership, as well as various access and equity issues and anti-oppression strategies and initiatives. Farid has been working closely with Jane Finch Action Against Poverty since its inception in October 2008 on anti-poverty actions in the community and across the City. In addition, Farid is a labour and international solidarity activist and has been an elected representative of CUPE Local 4772, which includes front-line employees of Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre and the Jamaican Canadian Association. Farid came to Canada 25 years ago as a political refugee.



LIFEmovement is a collective of youth advocates who come from various backgrounds with deep insight, experience and knowledge about the issues that affect today's youth. Through our roles in work and life, we represent a large constituency of community organizations, agencies and grassroots groups who are all working toward similar goals. Today, this movement is comprised of people who love and work in the fields of Journalism, Film, Radio, Marketing and Sales, Community Development, Program Design, Facilitation, Fashion, Dance, Music Production, Social Work, Labor Unions and Alternative Education.

LIFEmovement MISSION

As "LIFE" Learning Initiatives Fostering Elevation, we address inner city aggression, literacy, poverty and employment, by using the Hip Hop Culture as a tool to elevate the community.

LIFE Movement is providing documentation and catering for the Connect the Dots Symposium.

theLIFEmovement@gmail.com



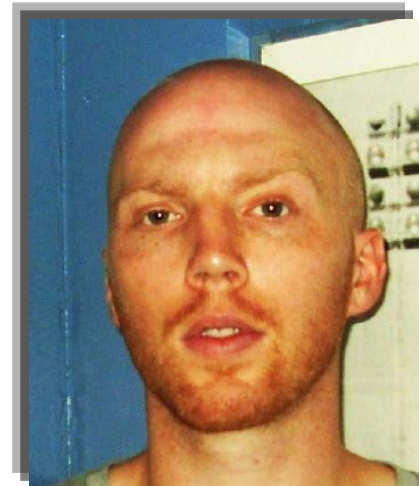
Drae Walsh is a Community "Artist", Activism through Art. Born and raised in Regent Park, he discovered a love for all media at Trinity Square Video, an artist co-op on Adelaide St. in downtown Toronto.

He then facilitated an award winning program for emerging video artists called "Fresh Voices". While becoming co-founder of 4Unity Productions, a non-profit interdisciplinary audio/ video studio space in Parkdale, Drae was writing treatments and directing visuals for Much Music +Juno award nominated recording artist "Point Blank".

He has worked as assistant D.O.P. on "Exchanging Vows" produced by Life network. He went on to play the principal role in Canada's first "Hip Hoprea" called "Da Real Deal" a play about resourceful youth, relationships & AIDS.

He has received numerous awards but none so needed as a scholarship into the Community Arts Practice Program, part of the Environmental Studies Department at York University. Drae Walsh's current area of study is Food Sovereignty/Food Security, and his placement is at the Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF). Drae has set a goal of delivering a global balance of diversity, inclusion and equality in all artistic and educational endeavours he is a part of.

Simon Black is a writer, activist and academic. He teaches *Hip Hop and the City* in York University's Urban Studies Program and is a resident PhD student at the City Institute. *Hip Hop and the City* explores themes and topics in urban studies through the lens of hip hop culture and was named one of Spacing magazine's "10 Amazing Urban Studies Courses to Take at University". Black is a frequent contributor to The Toronto Star, Canadian Dimension, and Peel Region's anti-poverty newspaper, The Tough Times. He is also a member of Peel Poverty Action Group.





Yvette Munro is the Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives Officer, within the Office of the Vice Provost Academic, at York University. Her current responsibilities include planning and project management in the areas of academic access programs/initiatives, credit transfer, community engagement and inter-institutional partnerships. From 2008 – 2010, she was the Manager Community Relations at the University and also served as Secretary to the President’s Task Force on Community Engagement.

Prior to her position at York, Yvette held various positions within the not-for-profit and government sectors with a focus on community development, children/youth services, equity/access and policy development. Throughout most of the 1990s, Yvette worked in local organizations such as Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre, The Youth Clinic and Upwood Park/Salvador del Mundo Co-operative. She credits the Black Creek community for providing formative learning experiences that have informed her subsequent work. A former staff member of the Ontario Public Service, Yvette received the Discovery Award for her work in the development of the Community Use of Schools Policy and implementation of a multi-million dollar provincial funding program to improve access to school facilities by community groups.

Yvette is currently pursuing her PhD in Education at York University and her research interests include access to post-secondary education and the civic roles of higher education institutions. She continues to volunteer on the Boards of Directors of Success Beyond Limits and Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre and is a member of Civic17 (a non-partisan volunteer organization of Ward 17 residents).

Isiah Lea is an Artist, Activist, and Community Leader born in Toronto, Canada. Isiah is a resident of Jane-Finch who lives in Toronto Community Housing, and is recent high school graduate.

As an artist Isiah expresses himself through various artistic mediums of Performance Arts as well as Visual Arts; including Theatre, Spoken Word, Painting/Drawing, Piano, Guitar, Dance, and is now dabbling in Photography/Graphic Design.

As a self-taught guitar and piano player, Isiah is now able to add another layer to his artistic identity, as he is always looking for ways to expand his artistic horizon. By using all of his formal and informal training and natural talents, he centers on issues related to social justice. For Isiah, the arts and theatre especially serve as tools of healing. As someone who is interested in naturopathy, Isiah also believes that theatre and the arts can be used to help people heal.

Isiah has also been actively engaged in many community and grassroots initiatives and movements past and present, such as Lost Lyrics, Jane and Finch Action Against Poverty, Nomanzland, and most recently the Jane and Finch Film Festival, among many others.



iii. Evaluation

Seventeen written evaluation forms were completed following the Symposium. These were collected through hard copies left at the end of the day and through a google docs survey sent out to all participants. This is a snapshot of the evaluation responses. For a full summary, please contact the CEC.

What was the most meaningful part of the conference for you?

- The high degree of participation between York and community leaders and the high degree to which community members were involved (leading, facilitating, speaking) [4 replies]
- Spoken Word by Isaiah [3 replies].
- Nomanzland as first keynote speaker [1 reply]
- Group Discussions [4 replies], with [1] reply indicating desire for more time.
- Learning about the emergence of the J&F community along with its social history, misrepresentation and oppression felt by community [1 reply].
- Breakout Groups [1 reply], conversations [1 reply].
- The collection of people involved in the symposium [2 replies], being challenged [1 reply], great facilitators [1 reply]. Chance to work with other York affiliates [1 reply]
- The way the day was opened (checking privilege and feeling uncomfortable) was very important

How would you define “best practices” after this conference?

Working together and taking action.

- Conduct; restorative practice, trust, incorporate indigenous research methods.
- Consult the community and make sure your research results are being brought back to the community.
- Ensuring a holistic understanding of the area in which you work and being able to interact with others in the community in a way that is meaningful.
- Great.
- Best Practices= the medium between bridging the needs/wants of the community with the realistic system that exists within Canadian institutions.
- Practices that are based in mutual respect, trust and collaboration.
- Understanding the needs.
- The best practices are those that listen to the needs of the community.
- Best for everyone or a common ground.
- Relationship building is vital.
- Almost feel that title was not the essence for more. This was more foundational than that.
- Think communication, collaboration, co-operation and transparency are key. Think that came through clearly. Has to be shared ownership and where appropriate ownership should reside in community if possible.
- Mutually beneficial, respectful, valuing multiple knowledge sources (institutional, university, community, lived experience). Also best practices are contextual and emerging – it’s more about working towards a better practice than getting there.
- Best practices were not really shared; it was more of a sharing of what best practices are not.

Any other comments:

- Thank you this was great.
- Good to have the various perspectives aired for all to hear – understanding is the beginning of change.
- Well done, thanks for a thought provoking day. Now we need some action items.
- I am limited by time and geography but I am 100 percent onside in spirit and solidarity with your work. I feel great attachment to the Jane Finch community and am deeply grateful to the way involvement has impacted my life.
- A very important conversation and foundation for us to work together from.

iv. Connect the Dots Creation Story (How the day came to be)

Connecting the Dots Coalition originated in 2012 under the name “Best Practices for Partnerships with Jane-Finch”, also known as the “Jane-Finch Best Practices Table”. The initiative was created as a response to an onslaught of negative experiences of partnership with outside organizations entering the community. The aim was to address an age-old pattern of oppressive behaviors and attitudes practiced by people from outside of the community, coming in to deliver various social and arts-based programs, projects, and academic research. The goal was to develop a set of ‘best practices’ for partnership, trainings, and tool-kits, as a way of protecting the community and better equipping those who wished to work with the community. This initiative was led by ‘The Real Sun’, Andrea Boucaud, Sabrina ‘Butterfly’ Gopaul, and Laura Metcalfe, with the support of many other community organizers and residents.

Background Context

It all began long ago when Jane-Finch became a hot spot in the city for stigmatization, criminalization, and a target for charitable sentiments. People who started hearing about the instances of violence and poverty in this community, took it upon themselves to offer 'help'. And thus began the inflow of people who were not from Jane-Finch, entering the community to conduct programming, research, and various projects. These types of initiatives began in the mid to late 80's. It is important to also note that social programs developed locally, led and delivered by residents of the community, had been in existence since the 1970's.

In the mid to late 80's many people started to enter the community, without adequate context around the culture and day-to-day reality of people who lived in the community. Many of them carried stigmatizing, racist, and classist stereotypes, which they had been fed through the media, and other mainstream rhetoric. This resulted in a perpetuating of age-old oppressive power dynamics, through displays of the “savior complex”, combined with attitudes of privilege as people came into the community to carry out various social programs and projects.

Community programs in Jane-Finch led both by local residents, as well as initiatives brought in by those from outside continued to grow. In 2005 Toronto faced what is now popularly known as the “summer of the gun”, during which time a record number of youth lost their lives as a result of gun violence. A great amount of government based grants and funds began to focus on youth and arts-based initiatives. With the support of these funds, new programs and projects spread across the city, growing exponentially, targeted at “priority neighbourhoods”, including Jane-Finch.

By 2012 arts-based youth programming was a common thing in the community, as were the continued oppressive practices that accompanied initiatives involving those who were coming from outside of the community. Many people from all over the city were able to capitalize off of the new streams of funding, by proposing to conduct social community projects and programs for youth in various communities facing systemic barriers, including Jane-Finch.

In 2012 after a particularly severe partnership experience with an outside organization, members of the community rallied together to address this issue and move forward to create a set of ‘Best Practices’, and the “Jane Finch Best Practices Table” was formed.

Jane-Finch and York University

The relationship between Jane-Finch and York University carry the same type of patterns as described in the above section. Again, a relationship based on unequal power, with a history full of instances of oppressive behavior, attitudes, and continuous stigmatization and criminalization from members of the York U Institution towards the Jane-Finch community. Over the years, there have also been some successful partnerships between York U and Jane-Finch as well. Although unfortunately they do not seem to out-weigh the experiences that perpetuated patterns of systemic oppression, rooted in unequal power dynamics and inequitable and unethical practices.

The experiences of the past have left a general sense of distrust between Jane-Finch and York University, on both sides. Fortunately with this symposium and other initiatives planned to address this issue, there is hope for the future

for an improved relationship based on equitable, anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and anti-classist principles of partnership.

Moving Forward: Connecting the Dots

In 2013 members of the 'Jane-Finch Best Practices Table' were approached by the York Community Engagement Center about a possible Orientation about Jane-Finch for York University students who would be doing their placements in the community. The conversation grew as people engaged in deeper dialogue about the need to get to the roots of the strained relationship between York U and Jane-Finch.

As a result of these conversations a commitment was made to partner on delivering a longer-term more extensive training program for York Placement Students (taking place in January-April 2014). A conference between York Faculty/Staff and Jane-Finch residents/long-time community organizers to begin addressing these issues was also planned. This became the Connect the Dots symposium that you are currently attending. During this period of time, the 'Jane-Finch Best Practices Table' re-named our group to 'Connecting the Dots Coalition'.

This symposium and the pending training program are small stepping stones for a longer-term vision, to address a much larger issue with a long oppressive history, with a goal to develop a foundation for better partnerships between Jane-Finch and York University in the future.

v. Glossary of Terms

There are many terms that are commonly used in the community organizing sector. These words have different meanings and/or connotations for people, often based on the place, position, and experience that they come from. Here are some words that come to mind that would benefit from common understandings as we explore partnership issues together.

If you would like to help to edit the given definitions or would like to add additional terms to our glossary please make your edits or additions on these pages and hand them back to one of the Connect the Dots organizers before the end of the day. Thank you!

Youth-led: Projects or initiatives that are created and directed by youth. Youth is defined by ages 13-29 by the City of Toronto.

At-risk youth: A label that is put on youth from communities that have high levels of poverty and are highly policed. Traditionally understood as youth that are at a high level of risk for engaging in criminal activity. It is a term that is popularly viewed by the community as being a label that serves to further stigmatize youth.

Anti-oppression: A framework aimed at establishing equitable practices and thinking that is about dismantling, challenging, and providing alternatives to oppressive power structures, practices, and relationships, rooted in systemic oppression; especially important when working with institutions.

Best practices: A set of practices that provides guidelines for equitable and anti-oppressive approaches to organizing.

Anti-racist: An approach that provides a framework for eliminating racist attitudes and the practices that spring from them.

Community led: Projects or initiatives that are created by and are under the direct leadership of local members of the community directly impacted by the issue at hand.

Resident led: Projects or initiatives that are created and are carried out under the direct leadership and direction of the residents of a given community.

Grassroots: Groups, initiatives, and projects that are created independent of government, institutional, or corporate support.

Arts-based: An approach that engages the arts as a method in delivering a message or activity.

Marginalized: excluded from access to rights and/or resources on the basis of an individual or group's identity or social location rooted in systemic oppression, moved to the fringes, excluded, disempowered.

Collaborative: Working together as a collective. Usually implies a group that operates on a consensus based decision making process.

Partnership: A relationship between individuals or groups based on negotiated terms. Ideally includes equitable ways of sharing of power amongst groups or individuals.

Support: Formal or informal systems put in place to service/ maintain an intervention.

Resources: things or capacities that are useful toward a given initiative, project, program, or group (e.g. money, time, labour, information, space, etc.).

Research: Formatted studies designed to gather information about any chosen topics or subjects.

Consultation: use of external expertise to provide perspective on an issue/question.

Focus group: a method of research, where a collection of individuals are brought together to discuss a topic and whose opinions are documented for the purpose of gathering information.

Build capacity: developing or growing the ability, efficiency, and number/level of skills within an individual or group.

Engagement: level of interest or action of a given participant or group toward a particular task, topic, or initiative

Strategic direction: vision or actions derived from a pre-determined goal or objective.

Power dynamics: implicit or explicit interactions of power within relationships among individuals or groups with varying levels of power.

Conflict of interest: When one is carrying out an action or holding a position that is contrary in value to another action or position that they are engaged in.

Stigmatization: To attach a social stigma to any given person or group of people. Stigmatization can lead to discrimination, and is an unethical exertion of power where a person or group of people with less power is negatively labeled by a person or group with more power. Rooted in systemic oppression of a given group of people.

Racialization: The processes of ascribing ethnic or racial identities to a relationship, social practice, or group. Stigmatization/marginalization through the use of the artificial social construct of 'race'.

Spatial (in)justice: the ways in which justice or injustice is produced through relations of space.

Researcher/ student positionality: subjective bias of those involved in research process; factor to be considered when designing controls. Involves an unequal power dynamic between researcher and subject

Social justice: The practice of anti-oppressive, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist etc. approaches and actions aimed specifically to address or remedy social injustices and to work towards human rights and social equity. Equitable access to resources and power serves as a key function.

Parachuting: working or taking up space in a community usually for a short period of time without ever establishing roots, committing to long-term engagement, or solidarity. E.g. employees of institutions, organizations, or stores who work in the community but live outside of the community and do not build with the community in a meaningful way.

Petting Zoo Effect: treating the community or community members as ‘exotic’. Objectifying the community or community members e.g. National Geographicking

Please feel free to amend or add to the Glossary in the space below and give back this sheet to an organizer before the end of the day! Thanks.