York University Faculty Association Community Projects (YUFA-CP)

Annual Report, 2025-2026

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

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

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

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

YUFA-CP is guided by a commitment to social unionism and the shared development of knowledge. The committee meets monthly through the fall and winter terms, and continues in an ad hoc manner through the summer term. Membership is drawn from across YUFA, and two Co-Chairs are elected annually for two-year terms. YUFA-CP practices rotating Co-Chair positions each year, so a fresh Co-Chair works alongside an experienced Co-Chair. The 2025-2026 Co-Chairs were sava saheli singh and Jennifer Foster.[1] YUFA-CP was supported by a $130,000 annual allocation approved by YUFA Trust at the 2025 AGM.

YUFA-CP fulfills its mandate in many ways. Activities undertaken by the committee evolve with community needs and interests, in response to issues and priorities that are identified by community members. YUFA-CP has both integrative and facilitator functions, which include: (i) to support and help coordinate existing faculty-community projects, and (ii) to contribute to the design and implementation of new and evolving projects. An important committee function is the review and allocation of YUFA funds to support applications for funding. However, much of the committee's work is unassociated with budget lines drawn from the YUFA Trust allocation and includes contribution of members' time, experience, and expertise in support of community groups.

The geographic focus of YUFA-CP work expanded this year to include the communities surrounding York's new Markham campus. Although the primary focus of YUFA-CP remains Jane Finch and north-west Toronto, discussion with a variety of community-engaged YUFA members suggested that the CP mandate could apply to the Markham campus and surrounding community. This sentiment was affirmed at the 2025 YUFA-CP community conversation hosted at the TD Community Engagement Centre, with community members in favour of supporting groups in Markham. The first step in outreach to Markham and York Region was the creation of a preliminary database of organizations and groups that respond to the CP mandate. Organizations were then included in the YUFA-CP correspondence list, invited to the annual community conversation dinner, and encouraged to apply for funding in spring 2026.

[1] 2025-26 was an irregular year, since 2024-25 returning Co-Chair Joel Ong accepted an appointment at another university and Jennifer Foster agreed to replace him for the second year of his term.

In making decisions on how to best support the community, YUFA-CP has adopted a set of guiding principles (found on our website). Each year the committee reflects on ways to increase openness, transparency, and accountability. For instance, over the past few years CP has adopted a conflict-of-interest policy that is regularly successfully enacted, the YUFA-CP website evolves in response to queries and feedback, and Co-Chairs seek ways to engage directly with members through open dialogue at YUFA AGM and GMMs.

The 2025-26 strike by YUFA staff interrupted some of the YUFA-CP workflow and routine operations, such as record-keeping and disbursement of funds. It also gave rise to differences of opinion about what constitutes "struck work" and delayed some communications and meetings with community groups.

Non-budget activities by YUFA-CP, 2024–2025

Community Conversation

YUFA-CP hosted a community conversation to discuss ongoing and emerging concerns in the community and how YUFA-CP can support community work. The evening included a catered buffet dinner and round-table discussion. The gathering was well attended and included a range of representatives from groups that CP has previously funded, new community organizations, CP members, the incoming YUFA Treasurer, and staff from the York University Community Engagement Centre. Many participants expressed appreciation for the relatively low barrier application format, the responsive CP mandate, the unique opportunity to fund nascent and emerging initiatives that are in developmental stages, and the grassroots commitment of YUFA-CP. There was a lively discussion about concerns and ideas to enhance the positive relations between YUFA and the local community, including suggestions like hosting a community day on campus, cultivating more connections to YUFA members with skills and knowledge that could be helpful to community groups (especially engineering), opening access to York facilities and hosting guided tours of the Keele campus.

Website

Since 2024 there have been ongoing efforts to increase transparency, access, engagement, and visibility with community partners, we have been continuing to refine our new website (bit.ly/yufacp). This site is decidedly community-facing, in contrast to the page which is a part of the YUFA site and which is oriented toward communicating with other YUFA members (e.g., a place for these detailed annual reports). Our site provides information regarding YUFA-CP in a friendly, easy-to-access manner and includes our mission, the process to apply for funding, news and events, community partners, and means of contacting us directly. It also includes several different ways that partners can now apply (via PDF, form-fillable PDF, or a web form); a directory of York faculty who are willing to collaborate with Jane-Finch organizers; explicit wording that encourages creative and ambitious proposals and a tolerance for projects that have the potential not to succeed; and an example of a completed application form to assist those crafting a new proposal.

Mailing List

In addition to the website, we continued to grow our mailing list of past and potential community partners this year. We have used this mailing list to communicate directly with members of the community regarding policy changes, initiatives, and to provide reminders of our deadlines and updates on events. In 2025-26 the mailing list expanded in scope to include organizations in Markham and York Region.

Advocacy

- In response to community interest in greater access to York facilities (such as libraries, labs, athletic facilities, studios and gathering spaces), CP began the process of researching and advocating for community access to these spaces. CP opened dialogue with a variety of York "stakeholders" in order to develop a clear picture of the current practices and range of possibilities. Unfortunately, the outcome was not clarity but rather greater complexity and a sense that barriers are not just institutional practices but require sustained and strategic advocacy. This remains a priority going forward.
- YUFA-CP assisted in bridging connections between community members and CLASP representatives, with a view to smoothing some of the uneven yet time-sensitive communications affected by cyclical turnover of CLASP staff.
- YUFA-CP advocated for ongoing support to CP as a critical feature of YUFA's commitment to social unionism at the YUFA AGM and at YUFA Trust and Foundation. CP welcomes YUFA members to join the Community Projects committee to be part of the process.
- members of YUFA-CP participated in the annual Walk with Excellence, and plan to continue to discuss ways in which additional support from the university could be directed toward this necessary and impactful initiative.

Volunteer service in the Jane Finch Community

Members of YUFA-CP commit to advancing the mandate, programs and projects of a variety of community organizations across Jane Finch. Over the last few years this has included elected Board positions at organizations such as Black Creek Community Health Centre, Success Beyond Limits, and Promoting Education and Community Health (PEACH). Members have participated in panel discussions on university-community relations and have counseled numerous community groups on diverse means of supporting their initiatives.

Funding Updates

This year we received 48 separate requests for funding for a total amount of $378,892.65. This is an increase from the 34 requests received last year, reflecting the critical role that YUFA-CP's low-barrier and accessible funding plays in supporting innovative and responsive community work. The amount requested far exceeds our available budget for ongoing programs and seed projects, which this year was $110,373.28 (after course-releases). This represented a shortfall of $268,519.37.

Membership

Increasing our membership has been a priority, both in terms of absolute numbers and breadth of representation. Breath of representation has been achieved via various methods, including individual recruiting by current members, and calls for new members on the YUFA-M listserv. The Co-Chairs initiated a scan of YUFA members in under-represented faculties and extended personal invitations to members whose work and interests correspond with the CP mandate. We currently have representation from across much of the university. Committee membership recruitment and renewal remain priorities going forward.

PROJECTS FUNDED BY YUFA-CP, 2025-26

Proposal evaluation is led by co-chairs, with active participation by members over the course of 1-2 meetings for each cycle. This includes a review of proposed budgets. Co-chairs may also consult with colleagues at the York TD-Community Engagement Centre. Their valuable input is appreciated.

Baskets Over Barriers
$2500
This initiative brings youth from the North and South areas of Jane St together in unity through a basketball tournament named “Basket Over Barriers”. Funding supports refreshments for the activities, honoraria for project coordinators and consumables.

Bet On Yourself (BOYS)
$1000
The BOYS program for Jane Finch youth provides free programming focuses basketball training as a conduit for child and youth development through life skills integration, physical health and wellbeing; academic excellence and scholarship pathways; and mentorship.

Toronto Black Farmers Collective
$1000
TBFC is an urban farm employing ecological methods to advance food as a human right. They cultivate and maintain a farm at Downsview Park and serve over 30 neighborhoods through strategic alliances with residents in buildings experiencing food inequities. They also provide training for those who want to build their food producing capacity. Funds support purchase of a trailer to be retrofitted for a commercial scale cooler with solar panels and a renewable battery.

The Black Women’s Institute for Health
$2800
This project is designed to provide workshops on mental and physical health and preventative care for Black women; connect participants with mentors; support confidence building, self-advocacy and education; and provide structured programming for educational engagement and retention.

Butterfly – Asian and Migrant Support Sex Worker Support Network
$5000
This project advances the rights, safety and dignity of Asian and migrant sex workers and massage workers in the Jane Finch community. These workers are often excluded from service due to language barrier, criminalization, racism and immigration barriers. Funds support outreach, harm reduction supplies, accessible legal information, and “know your rights” education.

Canadian Black Nurses Alliance – York University
$1520
The Canadian Black Nurses Alliance – York University inspires and empowers Black, Black-identifying and racialized high school students, particularly from Jane Finch, by providing hands-on exposure to nursing and health care through the CBNA-YorkU Summer High School Workshop. Additionally, they foster leadership development among current York nursing students.

Downsview Secondary School Girls' Soccer Team
$7000
The goal of this project is to bridge the persistent gap between sports opportunities for boys versus girls; fight against the growing impact of socio-economic status determining which teams win, lose and advanced to tournaments; and use sports to support girls engage in healthy and active lives. Funds support food for athletes, basic equipment and sports hijabs, coordinated shorts and socks, travel costs and video camera equipment.

Finding Your HeART
$5500
This sneaker customization project creates safe, youth-centered arts spaces to explore identity, process lived experiences and build emotional awareness. The project integrates sneaker customization, storytelling and guided mental health conversations to foster engagement and healing. The project strengthens per-to-peer mentorship by supporting youth with traumatic lived experience to lead and support others.

Firgrove Learning and Innovation Community Centre (FLICC)
$4500
FLICC is conducting after-school programming for children and youth from the Firgrove community to build academic and social skills. Programming focuses on community-based learning and consistent support to students.

First Lego League Camp
$600
This project provides access to high quality STEM education to design, build and program LEGO robots to solve real-world challenges. The camp is offered to community youth at no cost and is available for youth aged 8-14 who may consider joining the FRC Team 5031 Full Metal Mustangs robotics team at Downsview Secondary School.

Flaunt It Movement
$6000
Flaunt It will deliver 12 free workshops for 2SLGBTQ+ BIPOC women and gender-diverse residents and youth primarily based in Jane Finch. These workshops will provide educational, creative and entrepreneurial resources, encourage experiential, immersive learning. "Flaunt It Fridays" has been providing hands-on, barrier-free and inclusive events through the community's first creative coworking space, known as Flaunt It Studio.

FRC Team 5031 Full Metal Mustangs
$4000
This project builds on a 12-year-long goal for the Downsview SS Robotics Team to support students to qualify for the Worlds. A long-term strategy for investing in students and breaking down barriers has yielded impressive successes at competitions and has provided a foundation for many students to pursue STEM-related professions such as engineering, aeronautics, and nuclear medicine.

Garland Seniors Initiative
$1100
The goal of this project is to enhance the mental, emotional and physical well-being of senior residents of Jane Finch through intergenerational engagement. The project delivers a series of social activities that reduce social isolation and encourage youth to connect through 20 structured sessions at three senior facilities in the community.

Indigenous Students at York (ISAY)
$5225
ISAY is a student community service group that advocates for Indigenous students and provides accessible community and cultural programming. This project supports the All Nations Powwow as a cultural event for Indigenous students on campus. The All Nations Powwow was on a two year hiatus, and this year it sought to strengthen the relationship with the Indigenous community and provide educational moments for non-Indigenous students.

Jane Finch UNITY + Jane Finch Ministries
$6000
The annual BBQ event promotes healing and reducing gun violence in the Jane Finch community and supports respectful police engagement with the community. The event includes motivational speakers, performances, children's activities and a vigil and moment of silence. The annual event draws approximately 400-500 participants and includes organizers and volunteers from communities across Jane Finch.

Konnecting-wit-Humanity
$1000
This project elevates youth digital skills in the Jane Finch community through literacy, computer proficiency, internet safety, job search strategies and by creating a collaborative learning environment where youth can connect, share experiences and build lasting networks. A social worker provides essential support and guidance for vulnerable youth.

Nu Rising Community Services
$4800
The COURAGE (Community OGs Using Restorative Actions for Growth and Evolution) program interrupts youth violence pathways with mentorship, skills development and alternatives before crisis. The program bridges the generational gap between youth and community elders, restores intergenerational accountability and care, and reclaims the village model where adults and youth collectively invest in each other's wellbeing and future. COURAGE builds self-esteem, conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation and decision-making capacities.

Project Changing Lanes
$3500
The goal of Project Changing Lanes is support to Jane Finch youth and families through literacy, mentorship and exposure to post-secondary pathways. The project brings together community leaders, York partners and creative facilitators to help participants strengthen their writing, build confidence and envision university as an achievable goal.

Promoting Education and Community Health (PEACH)
$6500
PEACH's Work the System-Navigate Your Power project is a community-empowered workshop series for Jane Finch residents aged 16 and up. The project focuses on understanding and engaging with the systems shaping daily lives, including the rapidly changing educational system. Knowledge and skills include building connections with elected representatives, making deputations, navigating the school system as parents, accessing City services and using voices to be heard at every level of government.

Rittenhouse
$5000

Rittenhouse organized a demonstration in honour of the 51st annual Prisoners' Justice Day, to amplify voices of those who are incarcerated, and to support their families and communities. The public demonstration and gathering fosters solidarity, grief and reflection by assembling people with lived experience, advocates and allies.

S4 Collective
$5000
The Sanctuary Students Solidarity and Support Collective (S4) supports equitable access to education by responding to barriers that prevent precarious migrant and newcomer students from accessing education. S4 collaborates with community schools, agencies and organizations, develops community-informed resources, and provides direct support to mentorship and guidance.

Toronto Area Solidarity Summer Alliance
$4000
The TASSA Summer Workshop Series sharpens critical political education and support collective leadership for BIPOC and working-class peers to build intraracial/intraethnic, cross-caste kinship and unity. TASSA is a youth-led organization that prioritizes South Asian and Indo-Caribbean youth and allies, building community by learning practical skills for community organization and to build solidarities with each other for collective action. This year's initiative incorporates 20 TASSA Youth Fellowships and TASSA Solidarity Sessions.

Woke Mommy Chatter
$5000
This project strengthens the Africentric Parenting Collaborative, baby-caregiver support programming, and launches a youth- and justice-informed workshop series. The overall goal is to create Black parenting by centring Black wisdom, generational memory, and healing as parenting pillars.

York Non-profit Housing Society Collective
$1899
The York Non-Profit Housing Society Collective provides reliable co-op housing dedicated to student renters at 24 Romfield Dr. This project supports efforts to expand to a second property at 14 Council Crescent by hosting community consultations, building visibility, hosting a community BBQ, educating neighbors about the cooperative housing model, and building a neighborhood coalition.

Prepared by Jenny Foster and sava saheli singh (co-chairs)
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