

IT TAKES A VILLAGE!

AN ODE TO THE BLACK STUDENT SUMMER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (BSSLP) COMMUNITY



“Ubuntu - I am because we are.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1

Making Meaning Through Community	03
BSSLP Staff	04
Peer Mentors Visit York University	10

SECTION 2

Emancipation Day	11
Wellness Fridays	12
Black Joy	13
Thank You	14



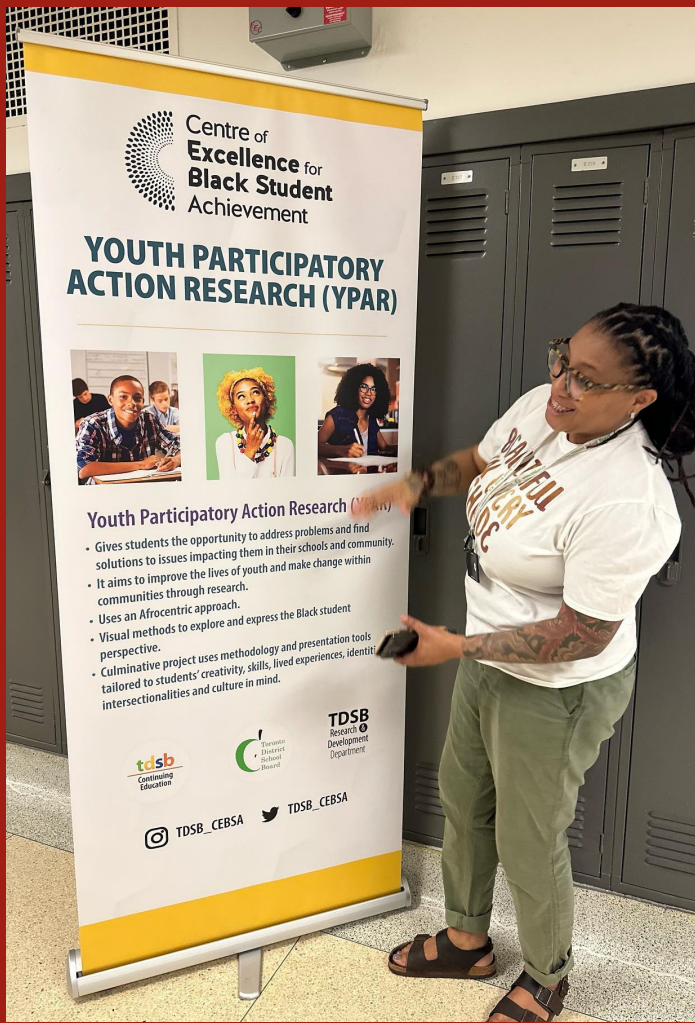
MEANING-MAKING THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community building and engagement is an active component of the Black Student Summer Leadership Program. Student leaders are provided with multiple opportunities to engage with the wider Black community in Toronto - whether that is through scheduled excursions to community organizations, hearing from Black community leaders who visit the BSSLP, or through conversations with their peers about issues that impact Black communities across the diaspora. We continue to impart the values of community, unity, cooperation, responsibility and concern for others.

To model active community building and engagement, in week four we invited MPP for Toronto St. Paul's, Dr. Jill Andrew to speak to BSSLP student leaders. Jill shared her lived-experience as a Black Queer woman in Parliament and invited students to reflect on Black representation in politics and the actions that they can take to impact positive change in their communities.





Tanitiā Munroe, Senior Research Coordinator at the Centre of Excellence & Research and Development Department

LET'S GET TO KNOW THE BSSLP STAFF!

This year, the Black Student Summer Leadership Program (BSSLP) has a full complement of staff to support the junior leaders. They include the graduation coaches, research team, teachers, wellness team, program coordinator, office assistant, communications officer and the centrally assigned principal.

The saying “it takes a village to raise a child” (Yoruba/Igbo proverb) comes to mind as we think about the message it conveys that suggests it takes many of us (“the village”) to provide a safe, healthy environment for children.

The village provides the security they need to develop and flourish, and to be able to realize their hopes and dreams. This Africanist perspective is more about community and less about what we can do individually. For the staff at the BSSLP, it means how they continue to collaborate as a team to support and uplift the Black junior leaders. More importantly, provide them with tools and guidance they will carry with them beyond the summer program.

GRADUATION COACHES

Keisha Evans, Jason Brissett, Asia Mohamed (Back Row)

Kai Gordon, Veronica Montague (Front Row)



“

One fundamental action schools can take to support Black students during this crisis is to love them. ”

— Shannon R. Waite

RESEARCH TEAM



Willis Opondo, Nordiah Newell, Andre Harriott, Sewsen Igbu, Dr. Shawnee Hardware, (L-R)

“It’s important that we recognize the Black/African voices and scholars in research. We have a duty to centre their knowledge production, ways of being, interests, needs, culture, heritage and worldviews through living and learning in our scholarship that focuses on the intersectional experiences of the Black community.”

**Tanitiã Munroe, Senior
Research Coordinator**



Entisar Yusuf



Camisia Hutchinson



Kenneth Gyamerah



Dr. Annette Walker



Margaret Douglin

WELLNESS TEAM

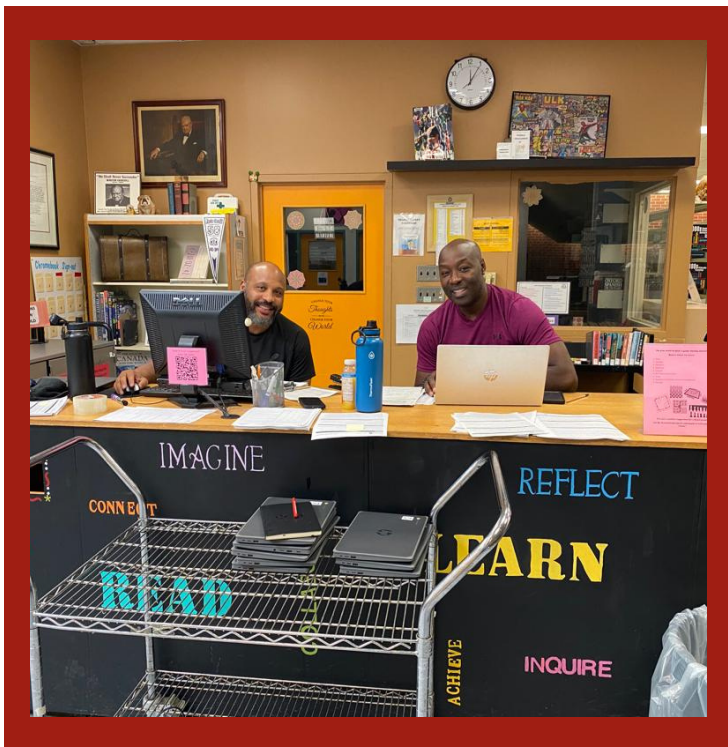


Monique Webley, Marilyn Opoku-Boateng, Anne-Marie Thomas, Takiyah Wedderburn(L-R)

“ Black joy is the heartbeat and pulse of our survival, our resiliency, our perseverance, our health and wellbeing. ”

— Anita Dashiell-Sparks

OCT TEACHERS



Sheldon Benoit and Charles Walters (L-R) CO-OP Teachers

Junior leaders participating in CO-OP earn two credits during the BSSLP. Having CO-OP as part of the program helps to bridge the gap between school and work or school and post-secondary education.

Bethel Soressa, Antonia Ikemeh, Abduljabar Nasser, SA Arauz Cisneros (L-R)



To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin ९९

— bell hooks

PROGRAM STAFF



Amanda Burnett
Communications Officer



Jeffrey Caton
Centrally Assigned Principal



Alorna Griffin
Office Assistant

“The return from your work must be the satisfaction which that work brings you and the world’s need of that work. With this, life is heaven, or as near heaven as you can get.”

-W. E. B. Du Bois



PEER MENTORS VISIT YORK UNIVERSITY!

On Wednesday, July 26th the Peer Mentors and program staff visited York University campus. They met with Dr. Carl James, Jean Augustine Chair for a tour. Dr. James arranged for the peer mentors to do a campus tour where they met students and faculty from different departments.



We stopped by and visited with the staff at Lassonde School of Engineering heard about the important work being done by faculty and students.

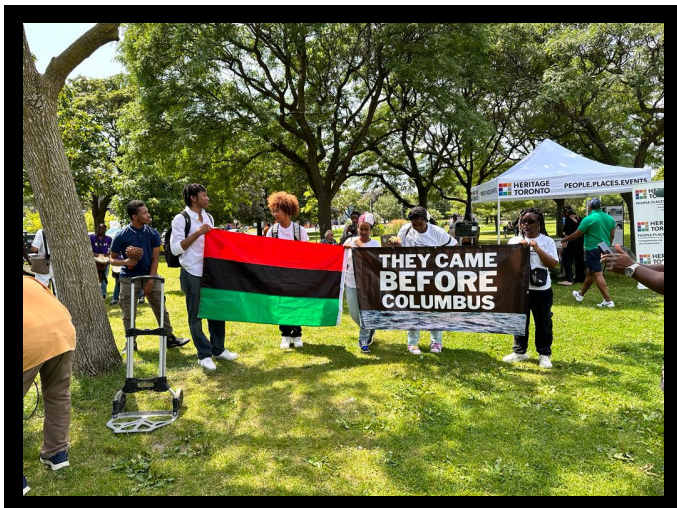
We appreciate your commitment to creating solutions to "global problems and addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals."



EMANCIPATION DAY



On August 1st, the junior leaders and staff joined community members for the "Emancipation on Bloor" walk organized by the Blackhurst Cultural Centre. It was filled with meaningful engagement with the elders and they learned about their history, culture, and identity. Not to mention shared cultural memories!



Junior leaders understood that August 1st is not just about honouring the past but it is learning Canada's collective history. The conversations among the elders recalled the long history and diversity of the Black experience during and after enslavement. They also reminded everyone that the historic and contemporary accomplishments of Black people are important parts towards building this understanding in schools and communities.



WELLNESS FRIDAYS

We are grateful for the support of the wellness team that works alongside the junior leaders. They share resources and assist with developing coping skills so the junior leaders can cope with the normal stresses of life and to help them to work productively and fruitfully both in school and community. We understand the importance of building healthier communities and it begins with actively engaging in discussions about mental health and wellbeing.



Sophia Jackson, Author & **Danoya Thomas**, Junior Leader



For more information about mental health in the Black community please [click here](#)



BLACK JOY

☺☺ Black Joy is finding the positive nourishment within self and others that is a safe and healing place. It is a way of resting the body, mind, and spirit in response to the traumatic, devastating and life-altering racialized experiences that Black people continue to encounter. So, bring on the Joy. Bring on the Black Joy. ☺☺

— Elaine Nichols

Being able to experience and share joy is especially needed among our Black youth and within our communities. In its purest form, the essence of happiness and enjoyment are inextricably linked to our joy. We recognize that joy is part of our personal or collective development as a community that allows all of us to soar. Therefore, we welcome moments of laughter and happiness as we go through the seven weeks of BSSLP. It is a reminder that we all deserve true freedom to express ourselves whether we are laughing, singing and dancing, or hanging out with the junior leaders or staff.

THANK YOU!

We would like to thank the staff, community members and experiential learning partners for their commitment to supporting the growth and development of the junior leaders. Special thank you to Dr. Jill Andrew, and Itah Sadu from the Blackhurst Cultural Centre for being part of our summer learning and experience. Your ongoing dedication to the Black community gives us purpose, strength and a constant reminder that together, there is always a way forward!



Dr Jill Andrew, MPP & Angelika Bell,
Student Trustee



Itah Sadu, Author, Storyteller and
Managing Director of Blackhurst Cultral
Centre