

# Jane Finch Initiative

## Community Advisory Committee Members



**William Ballard.** Hi, my name is William Ballard. I have lived in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood for the last 32 years, since moving into Glen Gardens Housing Co-op. I've been a community activist since moving into the community. I have many ties to several community-based organizations. Presently, I am in the Social Sector, working with, and on behalf of at-risk youth.

**Maria B.** is a relative newcomer to Canada and has been calling the Jane and Finch neighborhood home for a few years. As someone passionate about improving the quality of life for herself and her two children, Maria has been actively involved in the community and speaks up when she believes things can be better. She has experience in the non-profit sector and is currently a volunteer member of the board at a women's centre. In the past she ran youth programs aimed at fighting xenophobia and promoting equal opportunities in Europe. She has a degree in social and political geography, a well-travelled history, and a belief that we can create a sustainable future by addressing climate change, empowering women, and amplifying Indigenous voices, among other things. When she is not busy building her own coaching practice, you can find Maria spending time in the local parks with her kids, meditating in nature, or picking up plastic litter along the ravines.

**Maize Blanchard.** My name is Maize Blanchard. I have lived in Jane and Finch for over 25 years. I am a housing advocate for ACORN York West have also been a co- chair for the Jane and Finch Planning Table until Covid-19 closed us down. I have worked with other organizations as a volunteer here in Jane and Finch. Currently, I sit on this Community Advisory Committee, and I am involved in community gardens and the food bank.

**Asamoah (Sam) Boakye.** In Memoriam.

**Jennifer Boakye.** My name is Jennifer Boakye and I have been living in the Jane and Finch community ever since migrating to Canada in 1989. I am a nurse by profession and have worked at Humber River Hospital Emergency from 2008-2018. Currently, I am working with Toronto Public Health's vaccination team with the Rexdale Community Centre.



**Troy Budhu** is a social sector professional, community organizer, DJ, and a lifelong resident of Jane and Finch. In the last 12+ years, Troy has worked on several initiatives in the community, including running a local non-profit, working with multiple collectives to increase local employment and procurement, renovations of a local park, and advocating for local policy improvements. Troy is currently the co-chair of the Jane-Finch Economic Opportunities Action Group and the Jane-Finch Community HUB and Centre of the Arts Organizing Committee.



**Devayani Chitnis** is an International Postgraduate in Physics and has worked as an educator for more than a decade. In Ontario, she is associated with Maple Lion's Club and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in conservation of water, energy, and electronics recycling. Currently, Devayani is promoting these conservation practices with bee harvesting in the community.



**Veronica Eastman.** I enjoy being a resident of this culturally diverse part of the city. When the call was put out for individuals to sit on the Community Advisory Committee, I immediately put forth my name for consideration. I am passionate about helping to build a sustainable community where we are all made stronger by our collective goal towards building neighbourhoods where everyone feels safe, is respected and can live in harmony. Currently, I am a board member on a committee for people with disabilities. We must be a strong voice for the marginalized and most vulnerable in our society. I strongly believe that supporting and encouraging our youth will give them the courage to follow their dreams and be proud and productive participants of our community. On this committee, we have the opportunity to share ideas and experiences on making our neighbourhood a thriving, and vibrant place where everyone is valued, has a voice, is respected and treated fairly.



**Stephanie (Edna) Cofles Gualtero** Hello, my name is Stephanie, (also known as Edna)! I was born in Colombia and raised in the Jane and Finch community for over 15 years now. I love to spend quality time with my friends and family. I also enjoy spending leisure time outdoors, exercising, and in sport related activities. I have a passion for singing, and for my faith. I am also currently finishing up my biomedical sciences degree at Ryerson University, while minoring in psychology. I aspire to become a healthcare professional and work towards the advancement of minority communities. Ultimately, my love for the community has inspired me to participate on this committee and I hope that through this team we can contribute to developing a stronger and healthier home.

**Mena Hervieux** is a resident of the Jane and Finch neighbourhood since 2001, a native of Toronto and of Italian, French and Indigenous heritage. Mena is also a Licenced Paralegal and Legal Assistant, earning a Diploma in Legal Assistant and Paralegal from George Brown College – Working in the legal field since 1998. Mena now devotes her time to raising her youngest daughter and has a passion for giving back to families in the community by helping them connect with local resources. In her spare time, she loves to travel, being outdoors, planning playdates and Sunday dinners with her children and father.

**Terryl Knox** was born in the Philippines and grew up in York South Weston by Weston and Eglinton. He's been involved in arts, culture, politics, and community engagement since High School. Terryl has worked as a political staffer federally and municipally and has been an avid volunteer, previously working for Passages Canada as a speaker, Toronto Youth Cabinet as Youth Advocacy Director, and for the local food bank.



**Christine Le** is a second-generation Vietnamese Canadian who is passionate about helping marginalized communities by participating in student associations and non-profit organizations. After receiving her bachelor's degree in political science and urban planning from the University of Toronto, Christine represented Humber River Black Creek in the Daughters of the Vote Equal Voice program. She was featured in Canada's National Observer and the Toronto Star on Asian Canadian representation in politics. Christine is a co-founder of the Asian Resilience Collective Canada which aims to promote Asian Canadians in under-represented areas through civic participation and celebrate the diversity of Asian cultures and identities.



**William Lopez:** It's the cultural vibrancy, proximity to Toronto's best attractions and the fact that the area represents *home* that makes William such a proud resident of the community. A first-generation Canadian born and raised in the north-west corner of Toronto, and a graduate from the Humber College North Campus, he has held a career in publicity and marketing for global brands since 2003. On evenings and weekends he's likely spotted on a walk with his wife, grabbing some take out from the local restaurants or having a friendly game of tennis when weather allows on one of the many public courts in the community. For William, contributing to the community voice alongside other committee members is exciting because it's a chance to add to, and protect, the foundation of our home.



**Susel Munoz** is a Jane and Finch resident and an influential disability rights and safety advocate. She is the Director of HAACO Ontario; A grassroots organization run in the heart of Jane and Finch. Susel is a community organizer who runs educational talks on autism, human rights, inclusion in education and community safety. Susel uses her personal experiences and strong voice to raise awareness about societal issues affecting children and families impacted by autism disorder. Susel is a registered Social Service Worker with a diploma in Social Service Work from Humber College and a bachelor's degree in sociology and Spanish from York University. In addition to being a member of the Jane Finch Initiative CAC, she is also a member of the Toronto Police, Community Advisory Panel for Training (C.A.P.F.T).



**Allan Ramsarran** is a native of Guyana and grew up in Toronto where he has been a resident of the Jane and Finch community for over 20 years. Allan began his entertainment career in 1989 as a student at North Albion Collegiate Institute. He has played with many of Toronto's steel band orchestras, performing in Ontario, across Canada, the USA, and the Caribbean. As a performer he specializes on the Double-second Steel Pan and Afro-Caribbean drums and percussion. Allan has been an active member of Ballet Creole musical ensemble (The Creole Drummatix) and now serves on its Board of Directors. He also is a professional dancer and choreographer, model, TV host and producer. He was a flight attendant for Emirates Airlines in Dubai and is a Lead Flight Attendant with Swoop Airlines and the Base Vice President for Swoop Cabin Crew Members in Hamilton, Toronto and Edmonton.

**John Romano** is a resident of the Jane and Finch community, and he has lived here his entire life. He has attended schools in the area and is raising his family in this community. John looks forward to providing his input into the CAC initiative.



**Kayzie Sutton** is an empathic, creative, energetic healthcare professional and advocate, specializing in natural health methods with a focus on anxiety and lifestyle disease. Sutton has always valued health and wellness and uses her excellent communication skills to encourage difficult but critical conversations. She is a natural advocate for people, encouraging all to be remain hopeful and honest in both the way they communicate and how they are feeling. She has years of experience working in the fields of health and wellness as well as social justice.

**Sharon Taylor** is a resident of Jane and Finch for well over a decade. Always interested in her community, she chaired the parent advisory council at three schools in the area and was a two-term president of the board of directors at a co-op. Sharon holds a paralegal diploma and works as a legal administrator. *“I’m honoured to be part of CAC as we contribute to the revitalization of Jane and Finch. My hope is that in addition to all the positives this project will bring, it will also help the area lose the stigma attached to it because, like everywhere else, Jane/Finch matters.”*

**Kemisha Thomas.** My name is Kemisha Thomas I am a resident of the Jane and Finch community for the past 11 years. I am a parent of four beautiful children. I am a member of the Jane Finch Education Action Group, and CAC. I have volunteered previously with ANC. My passion is to build the Jane-Finch community to its highest potential and to show the outside world what a wonderful and diverse group we are.