



# **YEAR-END REPORT**

**JUNE 23, 2021 – DECEMBER 16, 2021**

**Report of the Toronto Youth Vaccine Advisory  
Committee**

Developed by Savannah Torres-Salbach

# **TORONTO YOUTH VACCINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS**

Edna Ali  
Richard Kirwan

## **LEAD STAFF**

Savannah Torres-Salbach

## **CO-CHAIRS**

Nada Dali  
Samir Janmohamed

## **EXECUTIVE TEAM**

Andy Feng  
Beles Lezina  
Shahithya Ravindran  
William Pham  
Ryon Dalir  
Stephen Mensah



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Committee Activities and Achievements</b> .....	<b>2</b>
ArtWorksTO COVID-19 Story Video Series .....	2
School Outreach Survey .....	3
School Archive for Vaccine Equity .....	3
Youth-Targeted Communications Guideline Document .....	4
<b>Message from the Co-Chairs</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Future Aspirations</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>7</b>

On May 23, 2021, youth in Ontario aged 12 years and older became eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to make access to the vaccine equitable for young people, the City of Toronto launched the Toronto Youth Vaccine Engagement Strategy in June 2021.<sup>2</sup> This strategy aims to mobilize City resources towards youth-targeted vaccine engagement that accounts for the needs and perspectives of equity-owed youth, namely those living in communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

The **Toronto Youth Vaccine Advisory Committee** (TYVAC) was created to support this strategy and allow vaccine engagement to be informed by young people themselves.<sup>2</sup> Representing a collaboration between the City of Toronto and the Toronto Youth Cabinet, TYVAC is composed of young people who are already active in their communities and reflect the diversity of the young people in Toronto.<sup>2</sup> The committee comprises of two co-chairs and three subcommittees: *Communications*, *Outreach*, and *External Relations*. Each subcommittee is headed by two co-leads. TYVAC's mandate is to bring a youth-friendly lens to vaccine engagement and promote youth voices and leadership in Toronto.<sup>2</sup> The advisory committee is also committed to a data-informed approach to vaccine engagement; they receive weekly updates from lead staff to allow their work to be guided by COVID-19-related data, such as infection and vaccination rates, and sociodemographic information by Toronto neighbourhood. As a result, they are able to identify neighbourhoods and populations in most need of engagement related to the COVID-19 vaccine and provide informed counsel as an advisory body. The members of TYVAC have developed expertise in building community partnerships, directing youth-targeted vaccine communications, and spreading awareness on the youth perspective.

**Overview:** This report will touch on TYVAC's most notable activities and achievements since the committee's formation, and will feature messages from the committee's Co-chair. Finally, this report will provide the future aspirations of the committee and what there is yet to come for the TYVAC team.

---

<sup>1</sup> Government of Ontario. (2021, May 21). *COVID-19 vaccine booking expanding to youth 12+ ahead of schedule* [News Release]. Retrieved from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000185/covid-19-vaccine-booking-expanding-to-youth-12-ahead-of-schedule>

<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto. (2021, June 23). *The city of Toronto launches the Toronto youth vaccine engagement strategy to coordinate vaccine outreach to vulnerable youth*. [News Release]. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/news/the-city-of-toronto-launches-the-toronto-youth-vaccine-engagement-strategy-to-coordinate-vaccine-outreach-to-vulnerable-youth/>

Since its formation in June 2021, TYVAC has initiated divisional and external partnerships and earned recognition for its various activities and achievements in pursuit of equity engagement among the most underserved youth. Most notably, TYVAC have been influential in the generation of the ArtWorksTO COVID-19 Story Video Series, and the development of a school outreach survey, a school archive for vaccine equity and a youth-targeted communications guideline document. The following sections of this report will describe TYVAC's role in each project and how these initiatives intend to support equitable youth vaccine engagement.

### **ArtWorksTO COVID-19 Story Video Series**

In September 2021, TYVAC partnered with Strategic Communications and Social Development, Finance and Administration (S DFA) to support the development of a testimonial-based video series that featured the stories of Toronto residents and community leaders impacted by COVID-19. This video series aimed to reach unvaccinated residents by telling captivating and thought-provoking stories from those impacted by COVID-19, while also providing multilingual, AODA-compliant, and culturally inclusive content to undecided Toronto residents. The collaboration incorporated input from various vaccine engagement partners, such as the Black Scientists' Task Force on Vaccine Equity, the Accessibility Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccines, as well as Vaccine Engagement Team (VET) agencies and community ambassadors. Most notably, this project was strengthened by the creative expertise of Serville Poblete of Slow Drip Studio, and young artists from ArtWorksTO, a media arts program that helps young creatives – specifically those who identify at Indigenous, Black, People of Color and/or 2SLGBTQ+ – to develop professional experience and skills in the creative sector.<sup>3</sup>



---

<sup>3</sup> Neighbourhood Arts Network. (2021, December 16). *ArtWorksTO*. Retrieved from <https://neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org/artworksto>  
Toronto Youth Vaccine Advisory Committee Report

TYVAC's Communications co-leads, were involved in the preliminary developmental stages of this project and were consulted on an ongoing basis to provide a youth-friendly lens to this initiative. The co-leads were influential in the conceptualization of the video series, and advised on the recruitment of local micro-influencers and youth videographers who would be committed to amplifying the City's messages on COVID-19 immunization. The co-leads were also two of the few individuals who were permitted to view the series before the first few installments were released to the public in December 2021.

To view this testimonial video series, please visit the City of Toronto's Vaccine Resources webpage under the tab "Videos – COVID-19 Stories" at [www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-resources/](http://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-resources/).

### **School Outreach Survey**

To allow TYVAC's work to be representative of the Toronto youth perspective, TYVAC's Outreach co-leads, developed an outreach survey to disseminate among school-age youth through the Toronto school system. The aim of the survey is to identify key barriers (i.e., sociocultural, economic, physical, and/or religious, etc.) to vaccine confidence among youth and cultivate an understanding of the influence of external sources on the decision to get vaccinated (e.g., close social networks, including family and friends, social media, municipal government, and public health agencies, etc.). The hope is that, by targeting school-age youth (12-17 years) who are eligible for vaccination but remain hesitant, the knowledge gap related to vaccine hesitancy associated with this age group will narrow. According to Toronto Public Health, as of December 13, 2021, 87% of youth (aged 12-17) in Toronto are fully vaccinated.<sup>4</sup> The findings of the school outreach survey will help TYVAC to tackle the remaining 13% of youth aged 12-17 who remain unvaccinated or have had one dose administered. The survey will close in January 2021.

**AS OF DECEMBER 13, 2021, 87% OF YOUTH (AGED 12-17) IN TORONTO ARE FULLY VACCINATED.<sup>4</sup>**

### **School Archive for Vaccine Equity**

In alignment with the City of Toronto's commitment to a Data for Equity<sup>5</sup> strategy in pursuit of equitable programs and services for all, TYVAC External Relations co-leads used COVID-19 vaccine data to localize outreach efforts. To achieve this, they evaluated COVID-19 vaccine-related data, including vaccination rates, infection rates,

---

<sup>4</sup> City of Toronto. (2021, December 13). *COVID-19: Vaccine Data*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-pandemic-data/covid-19-vaccine-data/>

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, D.A., Akintan, O., Eta, L., & Young, S. (2020). *Data for equity strategy: Supporting equitable services, equity priorities, performance measurement and accountability*. (Report No. 18.6). City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-158045.pdf>

and socio-demographic (such as race- and income-based data) data, to identify key Toronto neighbourhoods in most need of youth-targeted vaccine engagement. Within those priority neighbourhoods, the co-leads pinpointed several schools and developed an archive for vaccine equity, recognizing schools as a space in which youth regularly congregate. This archive will be leveraged to advance targeted, neighbourhood-specific outreach in communities that are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

### **Youth-Targeted Communications Guideline Document**

To optimize youth-targeted vaccine messaging, TYVAC's Communications co-leads, assembled a best practices document to guide the creation of virtual and print media envisioned for Toronto youth. In order for these best practices to be representative of a diverse youth perspective, the co-leads ran a small focus group made up of members of the TYC to draw upon their experiences with vaccine engagement. The co-leads also consulted Strategic Communications for their advice and expertise. The resulting document provides suggestions for the development, delivery, and content of youth-targeted media, including advocacy for the use of visual-based messaging, such as infographics and videography, the use of youth-centric language, such as slang, and tapping into the power of social media platforms. This document is intended to be used by youth and community organizations that wish to develop and distribute youth-targeted materials, such as flyers, posters, and social media posts and campaigns to increase vaccine confidence and uptake among youth.

The launch of TYVAC in support of the City's COVID-19 Mobilization and Vaccine Engagement responses presented a unique opportunity for youth participation and the emergence of youth leaders. Apart from being comprised of six exceptional executive team members which make up its subcommittees, TYVAC is headed by two outstanding individuals highly committed to the fulfillment of TYVAC's mandate and the amplification of the youth voice. The Co-Chairs of the committee are Samir Janmohamed and Nada Dali, who also serve as the Transit Lead and Director of Policy and Advocacy of the TYC, respectively. As the end-of-year approaches, the co-chairs would like to reflect on the past six months and comment on what is yet to come for TYVAC.



**Nada Dali**, MSc Health Policy Candidate  
*University of Toronto*

"This past year was a year like no other. It has challenged us, made us adapt to new realities and inspired us to never give up. Most importantly, it has made us proud of what youth can achieve together in a time of great crisis. TYVAC has been able to work with internal and external partners, advise on key communication initiatives, and connect with youth across the city to understand vaccine hesitancy and access issues. We are so proud to be a part of this community and we look forward to venturing into 2022 with new goals, continued determination and intentionality."



**Samir Janmohamed**, Policy and Public Affairs Specialist  
*Ontario Chamber of Commerce*

"Over the past 21 months, our collective and individual resilience has been tested. This time last year, we began to see the light at the end of the tunnel when vaccines began coming into Canada. During the same period of time, we have seen community and grassroots organizations come together to support and educate people about the benefits of getting vaccinated. Our work as TYVAC has been central to ensuring youth perspectives and stories were heard. We are particularly proud of the many youth who have stepped up to improve access to vaccinations and information. We look forward to further building relationships with groups that continue to do the important work that will bring us across the finish line in our fight against COVID-19."



As 2021 comes to a close, the members of TYVAC are looking towards the future. Currently, there are partnerships in the works with Toronto-based youth and community organizations, such as Transition Africa and the Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre, in pursuit of culturally competent and equitable strategies to vaccine engagement. Additionally, TYVAC is hoping to connect with more organizations serving equity-seeking groups, namely LGBTQ2S+ and Indigenous youth, to gain insight into population-specific barriers to vaccine uptake. Specifically, organizations of interest include the 519 and Friends of Ruby, who cater to LGBTQ2S+ youth, as well as the Indigenous Affairs Office. In an effort to increase youth-focused door-to-door outreach, TYVAC will also continue to network with VET community ambassadors to information share and develop action plans.

In 2022, TYVAC will also look to expand membership to maximize youth leadership opportunities and civic engagement to diverse youth who want to get involved in vaccine engagement and have their voice heard! Please reach out to Community Development Officers Edna Ali at [Edna.Ali@toronto.ca](mailto:Edna.Ali@toronto.ca) or Richard Kirwan at [Richard.Kirwan@toronto.ca](mailto:Richard.Kirwan@toronto.ca) if you are interested in learning more or becoming a member of TYVAC.

- Campbell, D.A., Akintan, O., Eta, L., & Young, S. (2020). *Data for equity strategy: Supporting equitable services, equity priorities, performance measurement and accountability*. (Report No. 18.6). City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-158045.pdf>
- City of Toronto. (2021, June 23). *The city of Toronto launches the Toronto youth vaccine engagement strategy to coordinate vaccine outreach to vulnerable youth*. [News Release]. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/news/the-city-of-toronto-launches-the-toronto-youth-vaccine-engagement-strategy-to-coordinate-vaccine-outreach-to-vulnerable-youth/>
- City of Toronto. (2021, December 13). *COVID-19: Vaccine Data*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-pandemic-data/covid-19-vaccine-data/>
- Government of Ontario. (2021, May 21). *COVID-19 vaccine booking expanding to youth 12+ ahead of schedule* [News Release]. Retrieved from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000185/covid-19-vaccine-booking-expanding-to-youth-12-ahead-of-schedule>
- Neighbourhood Arts Network. (2021, December 16). *ArtWorksTO*. Retrieved from <https://neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org/artworksto>