



**YOUTH
ACTION NOW**
LA JEUNESSE
PASSE
AUX **ACTES**

DONOR REPORT

DECEMBER 2019

PREPARED BY:
YOUTH ACTION NOW
STEERING GROUP

DONOR REPORT

2018-2019



HIGHLIGHTS

Since its launch in June 2018, *Youth Action Now* has:

- Supported 33 youth-led grassroots initiatives, contributing to the personal growth and collective strength of more than 300 young people directly involved in these groups
- Offered opportunities for learning and capacity building through 3 workshops and skills exchange, targeting young people's priorities
- Organized 3 networking sessions bringing together a diverse, dynamic range of young activists to build connections, confidence and community
- Mobilized broad support locally for youth-led efforts to make positive change, raising awareness and generating resources
- Engaged young leaders in its governance, ensuring YAN is innovative, relevant and responsive
- Enriched the lives of thousands of young people – and the broader community – by tapping into fresh ideas, energy and determination to build a more just, inclusive and sustainable community
- Celebrated the transformative power of young people's collective leadership

This Report to Donors provides an overview of *Youth Action Now's* first 18 months, providing information on its program and process, vision and values, governance and finances.

As well, it provides a brief summary of plans for 2020. Additional information, including further background on the groups and initiatives supported by YAN, can be found at www.youthactionnow.ca.

PROGRAMS



OVERVIEW

Youth Action Now supports youth-led grassroots initiatives aiming to promote positive change in Ottawa-Gatineau. Responding to priorities identified by young people locally, YAN takes a multi-pronged approach, offering resources, mentoring and networking opportunities to groups with members aged 14 – 24.

An essential element of YAN's mandate is to help these groups strengthen collective leadership and increase their impact.

GRANTS

From our first conversations with youth leaders, the need for funding – especially for new groups and initiatives – was identified as a priority.

Responding to this demand, *Youth Action Now* launched its **Start Up NOW** grants in June 2019 and in its first six months, 33 grants have been awarded. Among them:

- **28 Days of Black Canadian History** project, developing curriculum and a social media campaign to highlight Black achievement and anti-Black racism in Canada
- **Win-Win Homesharing**, connecting young people with seniors looking to share their homes
- **Odawa Two-Spirit, Trans and Gender-Diverse March** organizers, creating a safe and affirming event for some of the most vulnerable and marginalized within the community
- **Youth Civic Engagement** phone app developers, helping young folk navigate our political system to hold elected representatives to account – and access and advocate for public services
- **Empower'em**, working to reduce stigma around mental health in Muslim communities, and teach young women about self-care



RAIDEN AND GUNTHER OF SPECTRUM YOUTH

- ***Balling for our Brothers***, engaging teens in social housing in sports and other activities to build confidence and community
- ***Mawandoseg Centre***, promoting culture and well-being among Indigenous students at Carleton University
- ***Woke Studios***, encouraging and empowering young artists
- ***Sidra Treehouse***, supporting young adults to help immigrant and refugee children succeed at school and build trust
- ***Purple Sisters***, tackling victim-blaming and sex-shaming

To be considered for a grant, applications must come from a group that is youth-led, with most members aged 14 – 24. They must share our values and have an impact in Ottawa-Gatineau.

The groups receiving grants have been as varied as the initiatives they've advanced.

- A majority come from racialized groups, with another third coming from mixed groups.
- Almost an equal number (40 per cent) are from groups of women and from diverse groups, with about 10 per cent each from groups of men and from non-binary groups.
- Three-quarters of the applications were from established groups; one-quarter from start-ups.
- While the majority of the projects supported ongoing work, almost half (45 per cent) were one-off initiatives.
- One-half the groups had some relationship to an existing youth-support organization.
- Applications were received from across Ottawa-Gatineau, including a number of low-income communities. Many drew participants from across the region though it appears suburban and Francophone communities were under-represented.

Of the 45 applications, one-third aimed to support services, including tutoring, mentoring and home sharing; one third could be characterized as community development, building capacity or solidarity within a neighbourhood or community; and the balance were for events, arts and campaigns.

The value of the grants varied from \$750 to \$1,000 with funds being used for a variety of expenses: venues, transportation, AV support, refreshments, elder and speakers' fees, promotion, performers, app design, documentation, art supplies and equipment.

Applications are received on an ongoing basis and processed each month, with the Grants Committee – comprised of six volunteers who are well plugged in to the local youth community – meeting at the outset of each month to consider submissions.

The process has been designed to be open and accessible, keeping barriers to a minimum to support the success of emerging groups and start-up initiatives. The criteria for selection all relate to YAN's core values: youth-led; grassroots; collective; inclusive; local; nurturing. Of the 45 applications received in the first six months, 33 were approved.

Groups are encouraged to participate in learning, sharing and networking events and offered mentorship opportunities. Groups report at the end of their project in the form of short videos and/or written reports, recounting their successes and lessons learned and sharing with us the impact of their efforts.

The initial feedback from groups has been very positive.

From an organizer of the Odawa Two-Spirit, Trans and Gender-Diverse March we heard, *"I want to reinforce how appreciative our full organizing team is for the support of Youth Action Now. This event was an incredible success to us, and we believe the impact was larger than we could have possibly imagined. Without your support, the size, scope and power of the event would not have been possible."*

And from Purple Sisters, *"We have worked with a lot of grants that are unreachable or very hard to get and we are really grateful at how accessible Youth Action Now was, especially towards us as a by-youth and for-youth organization! For lots of our members it was their first ever big event and first time writing a grant so thank you for being so cooperative!"*

Over the coming six months, YAN will be developing more robust systems to capture further evidence of impact and added value.



PURPLE SISTERS

MENTORSHIP

Parallel to the roll-out of its grants program, *Youth Action Now* has been assessing how best to support groups' efforts to strengthen their capacity, cohesion, connections and results.

As part of our active engagement with grant applicants, we share resources with groups and encourage them to identify areas where they would welcome assistance, with training needs, for example, or seeking supplementary funding.

Many have expressed an interest in mentorship and “up-skilling” and so YAN has been experimenting with different approaches to see how best to meet their needs.

In the autumn of 2019, YAN piloted two different types of training:

- In October, a workshop was organized for ten grant recipients on publicity and media relations. This two-hour session offered tips and tools as well as practical advice on branding, promotion and marketing.
- In November, in conjunction with Ryerson University's Institute for Change Leaders, a daylong “Building Skills for Change” workshop was offered at no cost to 25 young participants, exposing them to Marshall Ganz's approach to promoting effective action by bringing together strategy (how) and public narrative (why).

The response to both these learning opportunities was enthusiastic. As a result, a six-month program of learning and sharing has been developed for the first part of 2020, covering issues critical to effective organizing such as leadership skills, anti-oppression awareness, event planning and communications, and grant-writing and fundraising. YAN will also offer a session on “how – and whether – to become a non-profit”, for which there is great demand.

Groups receiving Start Up Now grants will be encouraged to participate in as many sessions as are relevant – and where possible to be represented by more than one member of the group, to broaden the pool of active, skilled group members and better anchor the knowledge and connections within the group.

Wherever possible, the groups themselves are encouraged to take an active role in sharing their experience and expertise with others. As YAN develops a deeper engagement with the groups, it expects to play a more proactive role in linking groups with support, counsel and accompaniment – ongoing or conjunctural – as they work to increase their cohesion and coherence, strengthen responsive, resilient leadership, and expand their reach and impact.

NETWORKING

In 2019 YAN began hosting quarterly networking sessions that bring together a dynamic and diverse group of young people to link and learn, share food and have fun. Forty or more young people have been in attendance; some from groups YAN has offered funding, but many not; some seasoned veterans of community organizing at 18 or 22, others venturing out for the first time to connect with local activists.

The networking sessions provide an opportunity to update attendees on YAN developments and showcase the work of youth groups locally. There may be a short more formal “learning moment” but much of the time is protected for informal exchanges one-on-one or around a table, giving participants an opportunity to talk about themselves and their projects, passions and preoccupations.

Beyond the networking sessions, YAN supports links across communities and causes through Connectors – a small number of young activists who are contracted for a few hours per week to reach out to youth-led groups and initiatives, connecting them with YAN and each other.

YAN’s social media channels are a critical component of our networking strategy. YAN celebrates youth activism – locally and globally – and highlights successes of youth-led initiatives locally, including the work of **Start Up Now** grant recipients. While YAN’s social media reach is still limited, it is an increasingly important locus for news among young activists, offering connection, resources and acknowledgement.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Before launching its core grants, mentorship and networking programs, *Youth Action Now* supported a number of one-off initiatives to kick-start its interventions in support of youth leadership.

In September 2018, YAN hosted a **Community Check-In**, bringing together more than 60 young leaders from a wide range of community initiatives and 20 youth-serving organizations. They were tackling an array of issues – diversity and inclusion, housing and homelessness, mental health, employment, responsive schools, civic engagement – and their work took many forms – community organizing, creating safe spaces, school walk-outs, youth teaching youth, activism through arts, culture, sports and service, skills and confidence building, help with connecting and networking. This forum identified strengths and gaps, helping shape the key components of YAN’s programming.

In November 2018, YAN organized **ChangeMakers** and **ExChange**, a two-day celebration of inspiring young leaders who through their art and advocacy were raising awareness and promoting action on environmental justice, Indigenous culture, disability and diversity, anti-Black racism, trans and LGBTQ2 rights, sustainable food, climate chaos and livable cities. More than 240 people attended the Thursday evening presentations and performances, and the Friday workshops and skills-building sessions. Connections were made, insights shared, and skills honed.

In February 2019, YAN sponsored the participation of 20 young activists from Ottawa-Gatineau in **PowerShift: Young and Rising**. With peers, elders and experts from across Turtle Island, participants came together to forge a collective youth movement to tackle the climate crisis. Organized into six streams, the four-day gathering provided opportunities to learn more about movements, campaigning and advocacy – and the transition to a renewable energy economy. Special care was taken to center Indigenous peoples' knowledge, traditions, rights and agency.

In March 2019, YAN sponsored the participation of five delegates to the **Progress Summit**, organized by the Broadbent Centre, creating an opportunity for local youth leaders to link with and learn from 1200 thought leaders, movement builders, elected officials and young activists from across Canada and around the world. Through expert panels, workshops and informal discussion, the sponsored delegates deepened their knowledge, developed their networks and built their confidence as changemakers.



OUR FIRST NETWORKING EVENT AT 250NE COMMUNITY

PLANS FOR 2020

Youth Action Now continues to experiment and innovate, adapting programs and plans based on lessons learned and feedback received.

Given the enthusiastic response and sustained demand for **Start Up NOW** grants, this program will be continued through 2020, with \$50,000 initially budgeted for this purpose. Proactive efforts will be made in the coming year to attract more applications from younger groups, Francophone groups and groups from areas that have been under-represented, including social housing communities and suburban and rural areas. Increased efforts will be made to document and share experiences among groups, and to capture evidence of impact and knock-on or multiplier effects.

Mentorship and “up-skilling” will continue to play a central role in YAN’s work. An initial six-month program of workshops and skills-sharing sessions has been developed for the period from January to June. Learning opportunities will continue to target those groups that are recipients of Start Up Now grants, to build the groups’ competencies while also providing financial resources.

Quarterly **networking** sessions will continue, providing opportunities for young leaders and emerging activists to link, learn and connect socially while discussing how to tackle common concerns, including issues such as building connections, averting burnout and promoting self-care and collective well-being. Networking events will remain open to all young people who share YAN’s vision.

YAN will continue to develop its **social media** presence to acknowledge and celebrate young people’s leadership and expand its capacity to link their efforts and energy. As well, it will build a more robust **resource hub**, using its website to help link youth-led initiatives with a curated bank of tips, tools and tactics intended to increase their success.



FINANCE & FUNDRAISING

Youth Action Now has benefited in its first 18 months from a huge outpouring of support and solidarity, raising \$260,000 from family, friends and fans of Paul Dewar. Complementing these individual gifts, YAN garnered \$85,000 from corporations, unions and foundations, helping build a solid base for sustained funding. While there are start-up costs with any venture, YAN has worked to manage expenses and take full advantage of volunteer efforts and in-kind donations.

Program expenses include grants to youth-led initiatives, expenses for training and networking, and the program portion of staffing costs, including outreach.

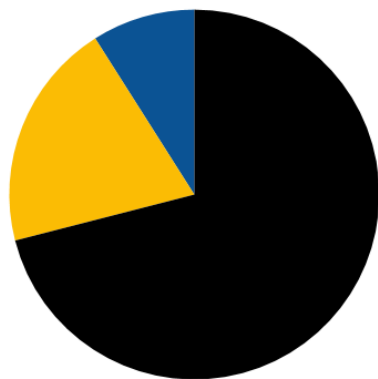
Fundraising expenses include events, marketing, processing fees for Canada Helps and stewardship.

Administration expenses include a portion of staff time, rent, office equipment and supplies, telephony and license fees, promotion, and a contribution to the Social Planning Council for finance support.

2018

In 2018, program expenses amounted to 71 per cent of total expenditures, with fundraising expenses accounting for 20 per cent and administration 9 per cent.

- Program Expenses 71%
- Fundraising Expenses 20%
- Administrative Expenses 9%



2019

In 2019, program expenses increased to 75 per cent, administrative costs totaled 14 per cent and fundraising expenses accounted for 11 per cent of expenditures.

- Program Expenses 75%
- Fundraising Expenses 14%
- Administrative Expenses 11%

