



COMMUNITY OUR STORY

COMMUNITY MATTERS TORONTO



WELCOME TO OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Chris Hallett and I wanted to develop and support community responses to community issues in our neighbourhood. St James Town (eastern Toronto near Parliament and Bloor). We started in an abandoned YMCA site at 650 Parliament in 1999. There, we developed community projects (After School, computer classes, exercise, sewing cooperative, youth programs).

Community Matters Toronto (CMT) was recognized as a charity in 2004. We wanted to plant the seeds of a values based grassroots organization. Our intent was to create OASES OF DECENCY¹ networks of neighbours committed to helping each other. We trained local residents as COMMUNITY ASSISTANTS to respond to their community with programs, support to groups, individuals and families.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Today in 2016, we are taking stock. We planted the seeds of an idea of Oasis of Decency years ago, of Oases of Decency and have succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. About 800-1000 residents participate in our 25+ programs annually. Many are healthier, and have a career path instead of survival jobs. We have thousands of stories, about neighbours genuinely committed to helping others with their random acts of kindness.²

Home Grown Leadership for the past few years we trained 60 Community Assistants (paid contracts and volunteers) They have changed their behaviour, eat better, exercise more, and talk about their challenges. They are models for their neighbours and have become leaders that others observe and learn from.

The Whole Person After School programs, Jobs and Literacy (language, citizenship and computer literacy) were themes that consistently recurred in



“Our aim is to build Oases of Decency, sustainable processes in a community values by nurturing habits of tolerance, persuasion and compromise. Here, people are honoured for what they’re doing, their decisions and their choices. It is a learning neighbourhood. People participate in creating a counterpoint, an alternative community of interactive units of networks and

¹ <http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/Oases%20of%20Decency.pdf>

² <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>



Contents

Welcome to our Neighbourhood	1
St. James Town: An Overview	3
Expanding our Oases of Decency Microcosms of Civility	4
Community Assistants: Community Leaders	7
Responding to a Community's Ever Changing Needs	
Learning to Listen 1998 – 2006	11
Welcoming Environment	12
A Holistic Response	14
Healthy isn't a Goal, it is a Way of Living	15
Empowering People Beyond Job Searches	21



30,000 neighbours
67 cultures

St. James Town is one of the most diverse areas in North America with more than 30,000 residents living in one square kilometer. Over 67 cultures are represented. The most widely spoken languages here are Bengali, Chinese, French, Somali, Spanish, Tamil and Vietnamese.

St. James Town is a rare and multi-faceted jewel that has been home to newcomers who are writers, educators, artists, social workers, doctors, public servants and athletes. It is a gem hiding in plain sight and while easily

James Town is also the starting point for thousands of new Canadians beginning a new life away from home. Immigrants and refugees have made their start here for over three decades.

There are many aspects that make the community of St. James Town unique. Half of the residents are children aged 16 and below, which makes this the youngest population in Toronto.

The majority of families residing in the various

\$15,000. The most recent census figures showed that 65% of the population changed every 5 years. In the absence of the federal census numbers, other studies show areas in our community with an annual 50% turnover rate. Given that immigration policies favour newcomer professionals, it seems that they are stopping in St James Town to get their bearings, then move on to other parts of Canada.

The large population, high turnover, as well as the

1 square kilometre

18 high rise apartments

**St. James Town:
An Overview**

Expanding our Oases of Decency: Microcosms of Civility

Our aim is to build Oases of Decency,¹ sustainable processes in a community values by nurturing habits of tolerance, persuasion and compromise. Here, people are honoured for what they're doing, their decisions and their choices. It is a learning neighbourhood.

People participate in creating a counterpoint, an alternative community of interactions, networks and transactions. We want to give back and to expand these Oases of Decency. Conditions of safety and trust lead to a fabric of connectedness: a collective voice has been developed, so more are encouraged to speak out, and help by negotiating and finding a third way.

Time and time again over these years we watch as common elements of these experiences repeat themselves. These Oases of Decency, 'mini cultures' of safety, respect and compassion are formed, then ripple out to include others or are seeded elsewhere.

A values driven process The HOW of how we responded was important to us as the WHAT: the kind of programs and support residents requested. We said that we are a neighbourhood group: a group of **Neighbours Helping Neighbours**. We think it was more important to create networks of like-minded people committed to helping their neighbours rather than function as a service or an agency. When we are challenged we return to those principles, our Circle approach. We go back to our principles for renewal, to take a step back

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPhT59S1j3w&feature=youtu.be>



1. Adding Tools: Using Circle

The idea of Oases of Decency resonates with many. The challenge is how to make it work over time. To learn about processes of broader community engagement. We used Community Circles¹ as the basis of a community approach to conflict resolution and consultation

The Circle methodology is ancient and comes from traditions of oral history, tribal meetings and communal discussions. The Circle also brings out individual's spirituality, while challenging them to change their perceptions. It helps us understand cultural perspectives and define the core humanity and the heart of an issue. In

CMT circles, participants bring cultural mementos that remind them of their heritage. Every member holds the talking piece or totem and is given time and

¹ <https://ca.ctrinstitute.com/?s=restorative+justice+overview>



USING CIRCLE (continued)

Training in Circle practices helps participants to stand apart from personal ego and judgements regarding any range of situations. It gives respect to the power of each individual's contribution. It is also more free flowing and less restrictive than North American approaches that use hierarchy and situations where whomever is dominant influences opinion and succeeding course of action.

The advantage of the Circle approach is that it can be used effectively to resolve conflict within individuals or groups be it with each other, the community, neighborhood or the law. It is a helpful platform for resolution, healing, education and decision making.

2. Adopting "Neighbours Helping Neighbours" as our motto.

Neighbours helping Neighbours was the slogan that completed our name Community MATTERS. We said that we are not a service organization, rather a neighbourhood group (see Community Work diagram page 6). Our community programs often supplement those offered by professionals and agencies. We are asking residents to participate for their own benefit, then to give back to others and to their community.

3. Participants as MEMBERS of CMT We learned from our Sewing Cooperative¹, helping residents to organize their own Cooperative : to source grants, sewing machines and teachers. In 2016, we introduced a Membership Policy asking new members to define what they need, how they will work with us to find

¹ <http://www.torontothebetter.net/2stjames.htm>

COMMUNITY WORK

SERVICE AGENCY

VS.

Community Based Approaches

Community Based PARTICIPATION

- Increased participation in civic/civil life
- Increased involvement and influence of local residents in wider governance arrangements
- Changes in who takes decisions on resource allocation and/or local priorities
- Increased numbers of formerly marginalised groups engaged with the decision making process
- Increased understanding of the difficult trade-offs required when making decisions about local service provision, and therefore increased perceptions of fairness

- Improved appreciation of the needs of others in the community
- Improved understanding of the issues surrounding resource allocation

- Efficient use of community resources and in terms of obtaining more sustainable and lasting benefits for the community
- Reduction in unit cost of services
- Reallocation of resources to better reflect the wishes of citizens
- Reallocation of resources in favour of those with greatest need
- Improved health and well-being of local residents

REPRESENTATION

- Speak for Individuals and Small Groups
- Service delivery
- Speak with the Community as a whole

METHOD

- Case management
- Business Plans
- Silos
- Reciprocity
- Networks
- Self-Examined Life

FRAMEWORK

- Business Plan/Model
- Neighbourhood

TERMINOLOGY

- Clients
- Patients
- Customers
- Business Plan
- Business Model
- Neighbours
- Friends
- People
- Family
- Community
- Citizens

RESPOND TO

- Political Will
- Community patterns and behaviours

Community Based EMPOWERMENT

- Enhanced skills and confidence
- Expanded social networks, specialist policy knowledge
- Enhanced perception that residents can influence their local place and services
- Enhanced capacity to engage in local issues

Feeling of personal control

- Is magnified when supported by a group
- Is multiplied through group action

- Effective decisions are made in less time than in the past or more decisions taken using the same resources
- Better quality decisions, such as fewer reversals of previous decisions

- communities are able to exercise more influence on decision making
- a sustained shift in power towards communities and, in particular, previously excluded groups
- Increased social capital (including trust in each other and service providers)
- Increased community cohesion
- More people involved in local decision making

Community based DEVELOPMENT

Community Based SOCIAL CHANGE

Community Assistants: Community Leaders

Community Matters Toronto developed the idea of Community Assistants over the years. They are familiar and trusted community residents from many cultures trained to help their neighbours and respond to questions raised in the community.

The idea began in 1999 when two mothers volunteered in a program which identified hearing, speech, vision and/or behavioural issues in pre-school children. These first '**Parent Assistants**' in

Celebrating the Family.:

- Prepare snacks and maintained the space and supplies.
- It quickly became clear that they had far more to offer through their cultural understanding, familiarity with participants and the neighbourhood and their personal desire to learn and make a meaningful contribution. They then provided:
- Translation,
 - Helped families understand and use the professionals' recommendations about speech, behavioural and social issues.
 - Identified families who had not come to the attention of schools and other services and
 - Lobbied in the neighbourhood to help families understand what 'assessments' and 'special needs' meant and how Canadian services could help their children. The Parent Assistants identified areas where they required increased knowledge and were trained in 2004 to run an autism support group, a music program, homework club, and tutoring. When a Job Club was developed they called themselves '**Employment Assistants**'.

As local neighbours increasingly participated in our programs, the quality improved.



The Community Assistant idea is based on the belief and CMT's experience that the majority (80%) of the knowledge and resources required to resolve an issue exist in the community. The remaining 20% is provided by working with CMT

The Community Assistant role has expanded beyond that of providing translation and outreach to program planning, delivery, administration and fund raising. CAs listen to their community who have similar cultural backgrounds as well as knowledge of the supports available in Canada. They are a conduit, able to "interpret" the issue, the suggested course of action, and the necessary follow through. They are readily available with practical suggestions.

CAs know the neighbourhood because they are part of it. As they live there and know its strengths and challenges, their work is precise and relevant, reducing the demand for already limited resources and improving the quality of neighbourhood programs.



A LEARNING LADDER THAT LEADS TO A CAREER PATH 2004-2006

A CA Learning Ladder has evolved over the years. **Level 1** teaches basic community development skills. The CA model tries to identify skills that have more frequently become the work of professionals. We return to the roots of community development and instead, put residents and CAs at the centre of the equation. So for level 1 skills, we used skills which originate in the social work profession and defined those skills that neighbours could be trained to do. (See skills checklist) 7.

Similarly, **Levels 3 and 4** expanded coverage to include skills in advocacy, networking, outreach, and administration. **Level 5** deals with basics of more managerial and organizational coverage (governance, funding and volunteer coordination).

CAs are not the 'peer leaders' or 'ambassadors' models of training residents attached to programs provided by professionals and services. They live in and are grounded in their community, and know its strengths and challenges. They are connected to their neighbours over time

"I ask myself how can I help my neighbours or find ways to make them open up to me so I can find out what they need. Indirectly, I do a lot of counseling on a daily basis,"



"Every year we have more than 25 staff and volunteers with different backgrounds and from different countries," Mariam, a CA explains. These volunteers pass along the information about St James Town, CMT



"What is interesting is to watch the amazing growth of the community Assistants. Some who came in were timid and unsure of themselves. Now they are great community leaders and role models for others. About two years ago, I helped coach the Community Assistants on how to manage projects and also set up systems of feedback, managing expectations for when they manage other people," Sarah says, "I think I get way more out of it than what I offer. I have met so many inspiring people."

LEVEL 2 TRAINING	
Professional Discipline	CMT Program Areas
Education	After School program planning and delivery, English and citizenship classes
Employment	counselling Job cCub, job related training
Health Screening	for chronic disease conditions, exercise, nutrition and self help groups
Business and Health Administration	Partnerships and relationships with local professionals, businesses and services. Governance
Arts, Media and Environmental Studies	St James Town Arts programs, community art, murals and choirs, Facebook and media materials, gardens and outdoor spaces



Level 3,4,5

Advocacy: Individual and Systemic , Administration Board
Participation Project Management Partnerships Program
Development, Best Practices



Level 2 - Program Skills

After School, Health Living, Job Club, St. JT Arts Program
Planning Program Delivery Evaluation: Goals, Pre Tests,
Post
Tests, High Five Evaluation Community Responses:



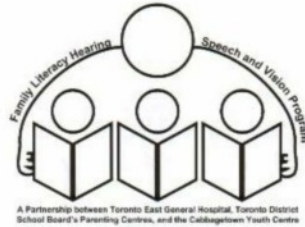
Level 1 - Training And Placement

Reception ,Good Knowledge of CMT programs and
schedules
Childcare, community exercise and nutrition, housing,
financial
and legal resources Community Networks Neighbourhood
Resources Toronto Services
Local Services Forms Completion Coordination and
advocacy
on behalf of our neighbours Beyond Follow up
Recommendations: CMT responses and programs and



CELEBRATING THE FAMILY 1999- 2005

At Rose Avenue Junior Public School.
Screening children for hearing,



650 PARLIAMENT ST. SUB-BASEMENT 2000-2004

Youth Programs
Swimming
Computer Classes
After school
Gymnastics



PROSPECT/PARLIAMENT ST. NEIGHBOURHOOD GARDEN

1999-Present



Responding to a community's ever changing needs

"We wanted to develop a grass roots group. With our neighbours and residents, we wanted to build strong networks of relationships, linking people with common interests to learn from and support each other.

These first community development years taught us to listen to what residents wanted, and the degree to which some would work to address challenges they faced. We learned that residents skills and willingness to help are the backbone of this neighbourhood. Our close ally in working through through crises and possible evictions became the landlord. Our actions became more precise due to our direct and

ST. JAMES TOWN SEWING COOPERATIVE 2000-2006 240 WELLESLEY ST. E. BASEMENT



Responding to a community's ever changing needs

B. Welcoming Environment

CMT has been successful in developing a number of programs to respond to issues raised. However as we have learned over the years, that is only one part of the equation.

Using **Neighbours Helping Neighbours** as a slogan keeps us honest and is our ballast. It forces us to return to our roots again and again. We are trying to imitate daily life, welcoming conversation, exercising with a group, talking to and encouraging each other, and chances to meditate. We strive to attract people, to encourage them so they want to join in for their own and others' benefit.

We often remind ourselves that we are not an agency, we are a neighbourhood group.

Again whether a new neighbour from elsewhere in Canada or abroad, seeing a friendly face helps newcomers connect to others, and orients them to the area.

Build Networks so neighbours help each other

One study reinforces what we know intuitively: newcomers' successful **settlement** depends on their ability develop new networks and relationships to replace those from back home. As waves of immigrants have in the past, many initially associate with those from their own culture to ground them in this new often alien culture. They don't just need settlement services per se, but practical ongoing help to build broader

Poonam has had to learn to get out of her own shell and overcome the initial shyness that is common to anyone



"I'm more of a community person now. I was shy as a new immigrant; it hasn't even been two years for me now. When I first arrived, I was shy and not too outgoing. Community Matters has really helped me out. Now, so many people know me and I am happy to talk to them, to

Responding to a community's ever changing needs

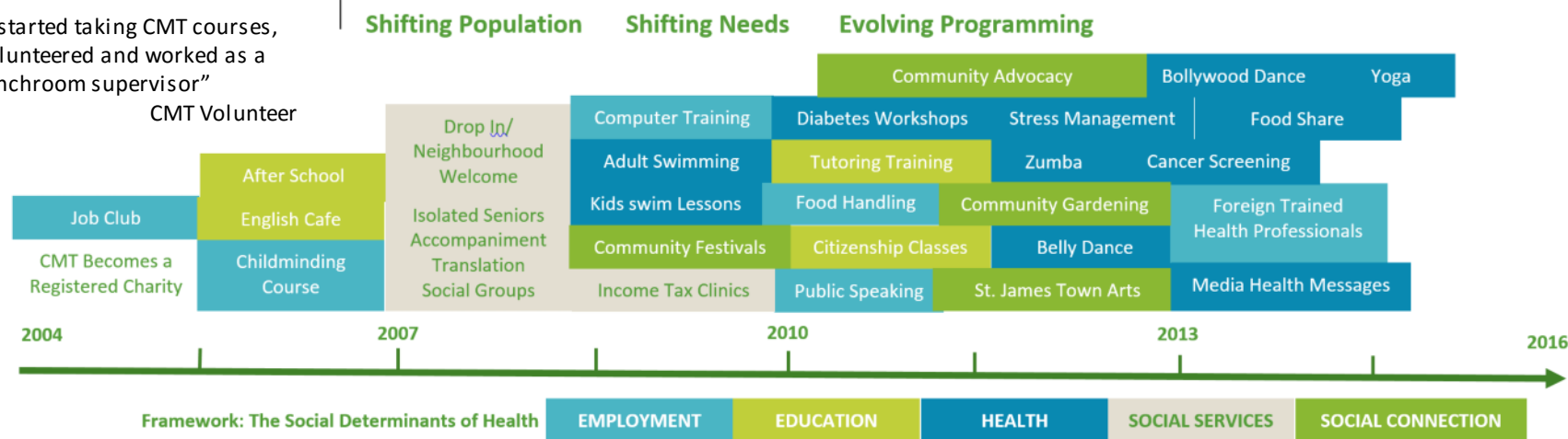
It suggests that their successful **integration** consists of having one foot rooted in the traditions of their culture, the other rooted in the future. The more we are successful in helping our neighbours develop their own webs of connectedness, with other new and established Canadians, the more opportunities to learn and understand this culture.

- **Ongoing self help** Over the years, our seniors have learned how to help themselves and each other. They are now doing active outreach to find other frail seniors, volunteer to help each other, and help plan their

- **Provide an infrastructure for residents' evolution over time.** Some women have taken 5 years to overcome their fear of cancer screening, others have persevered over 7-8 years to find the resources and strength to retrain and others do not talk about their depression until they deeply trust us. We have tried to build an infrastructure of support, a safety net to catch the different levels people are at. It sometimes takes years so we try to provide a safe place and continuity for them.
- **A Learning Ladder for residents** CMT is many residents first job experience in Canada. Neighbours watch as Community Assistants learn and grow in confidence,

"I started taking CMT courses, volunteered and worked as a lunchroom supervisor"

CMT Volunteer



Responding to a community's ever changing needs

Ask people what they need to learn to improve their quality of life.
In

2004 the first programs were a Career Preparation program for women wanting to return to work, A Sewing Cooperative to teach industrial and domestic sewing skills, English conversation classes, a

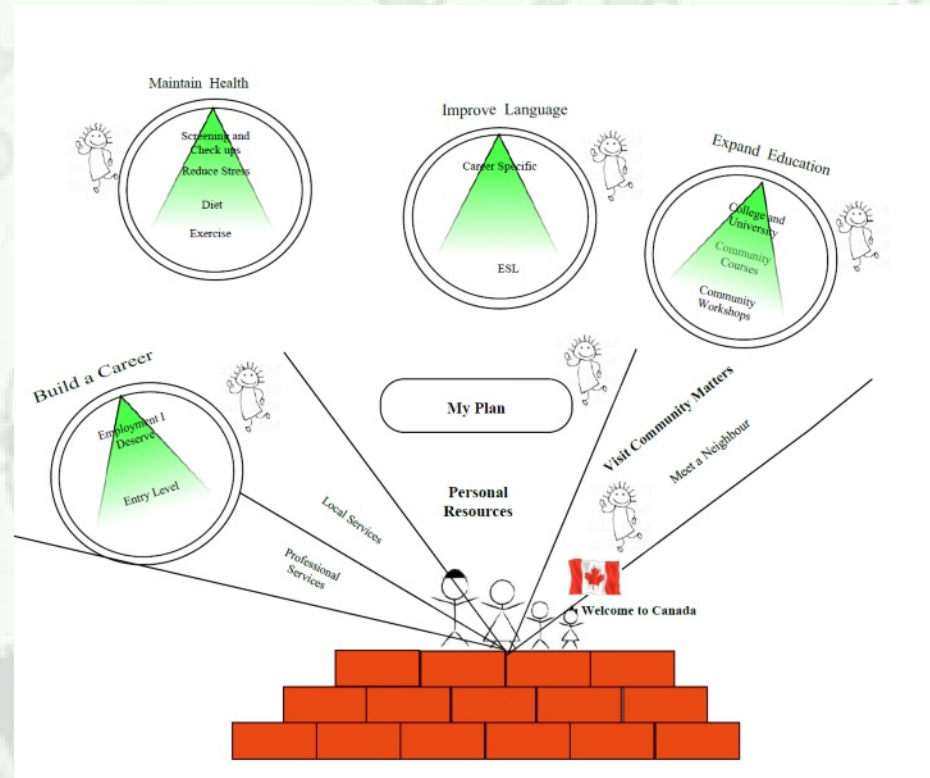
Homework Club and support groups for parents with children with special needs.

C, Looking at the Whole Person

In addition to a welcoming environment we wanted a structure that would force us to look at the whole person and their family.

The World Health Organization's Social Determinants of Health were used to define community program areas

Jobs



Responding to a community's ever changing needs

D. Healthy isn't a Goal, it is a Way of Living

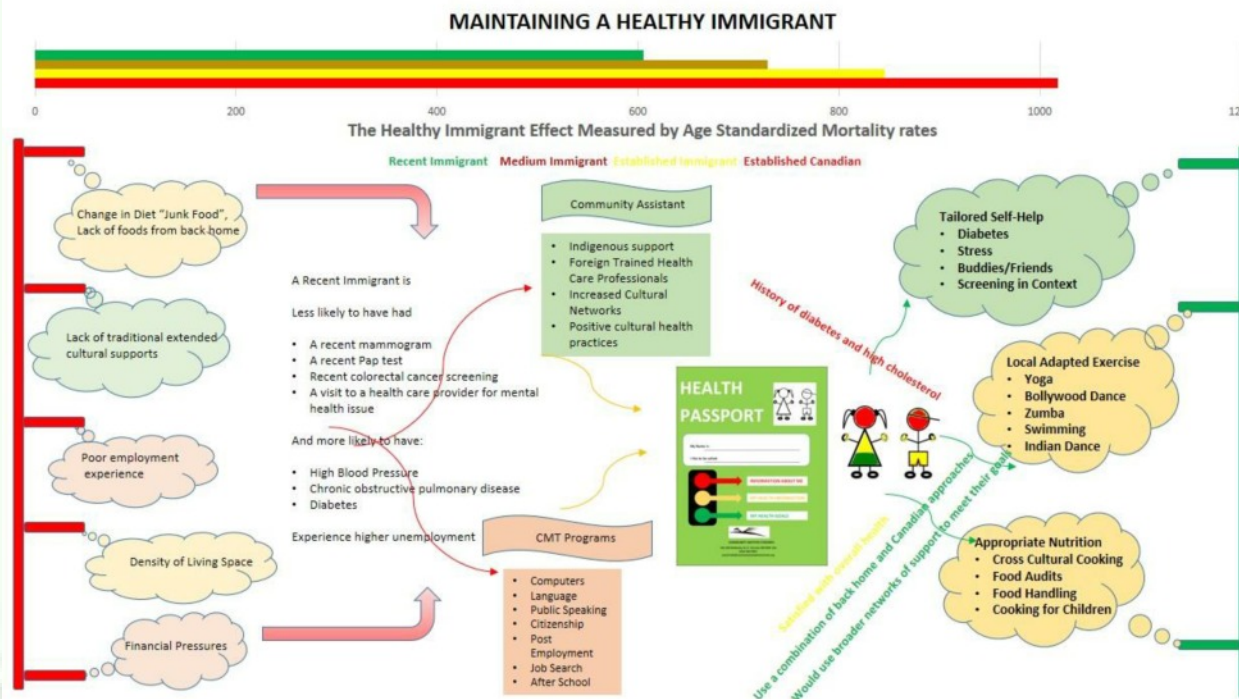
Healthy Living started in 2006 with a partnership with Toronto Public Health and their community Nutrition program. CMT worked with their staff to adapt their curriculum to the learning styles of our neighbours.

Over the next 10 years, a community based **chronic disease prevention** model evolved, to help newcomers

The objective is to promote health and prevent disease in this fast growing multicultural community:

'The health of non European and non white newcomers is twice as likely to show deterioration over time and compared to Canadian born residents and European Immigrants'

Tackling Health Inequalities lessons from
International Experience Raphael, Dennis



The '**Healthy Immigrant Effect**' defines how newcomers are initially healthier than established Canadians when they arrive. Within 5 years however, their health declines quickly.

One reason may be the adoption of less healthy Canadian practices (eg junk food), the stress of settling in a new country, of retraining, learning a new language and culture and the loss of friends and family networks.

In addition, new immigrants have the lowest rates of screening for cervical and breast cancer



Nutrition

classes were the first step. Then there was a demand for Family Nutrition, Cooking with Children, Cross Cultural cooking,

“We have grocery store tours where we show newcomers each and every section and teach them to look out for the ingredients and the expiry date,”



Exercise

CMT has delivered swimming lessons delivered at the local Jarvis Pool. We have experimented with aerobic classes, jogging, Family Walks over the years and now run more culturally appropriate classes:



Screening for Chronic Diseases

We were trained to screen people to see if they were at risk of diabetes, then heart and stroke and cancer. In 2016, we began screening of adults' dental health

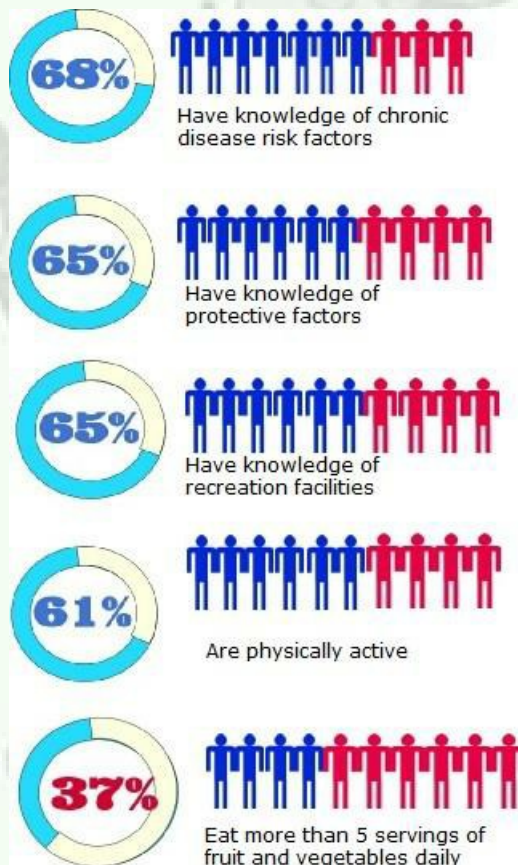
Surabhi Khare asks "Immigrants start out really healthy, but within five years, this just drops. What's the reason they are getting sick in Canada or developing high blood pressure or depression?"



As Community Assistants, we represent the majority of the cultures in St James Town. We work with residents to withstand the stresses they feel, talk about what they did back home, reinforce what they eat well, exercise and help them develop new social networks. It is a process of trial and error to continually adapt what you are doing so residents participate actively.'

Social Support and Self help Groups

Networks of social support are crucial for healthy living. This perspective is much more popular than saying calling this 'Mental Health', as this carries a strong stigma for many. We ran '**Life Through Art**' as our first group, using art to talk about



Health Planner Results 2015-2016

Participants use their Health Planner to identify where they may be at risk, develop incremental goals for themselves and their families and then monitor their progress in learning new lifestyle habits.

What are we learning?

1. Newcomers need help to understand Canadian practices

Surabhi herself has learned about how to effectively use Canadian health services and knows the importance of ensuring a clean bill of health, one that she understands and is comfortable with. We developed a flyer and video to help us explain the Canadian Health

2. Cultural Health Practices and Internationally Educated Health Professionals

Maintaining newcomers' health means that we have to understand their health practices learned back home. It would be a daunting task given the 67+ cultures in St James Town. However, a number of internationally trained health professionals (IEHPs, which include, doctors, specialists, dentists, nurses and pharmacists) asked for job search help from CMT's Job Club. In addition to helping them with licensure and planning for alternate careers, the Health Living program offers these IEHPs a ***Certificate in Health Promotion***. They work as Community Assistants and help residents to identify their positive health practices and are trusted by them given their knowledge of health care in their home countries.

Poonam Sharma, an artist and resident says:

'We talk about the different types of doctors you can have, family doctors, and a lot of things newcomers need as residents here. The second thing is the knowledge about healthy lifestyles, various tips and ways of preventing chronic disease. We take our

What are we learning? (cont'd)

3. Health Literacy and Social Media

Considering the power of social media, especially its influence and reach with younger adults, CMT understood the value of both its low technology solutions and the need for high technology applications to have the widest possible reach across its diverse community. Many people do not read or understand the health information they get. Much of the advice given by during a doctor's visit is forgotten or the treatment suggested is not continued as soon as the person's symptoms abate. People learn more these days from videos and pictures than from text (much of which is written at a high level of literacy).

Media is increasingly important when considering strategies for behaviour and social change, so CMT has:

- **Upgraded the visuals and writing** on its flyers
- A **CMT Neighbours Facebook** page was launched in 2015. Health Messages based on the data we gather from participants, are developed and posted 3 times a week. Our reach has expanded so there are over 1000 readers.
- **Health Literacy Workshops** A Health Librarian helps deliver sessions for participants conducting Internet searches for health information; where to look, how to assess the credibility of a site, and to check their findings with their family doctor.
- **Health Library** A Health Library has been uploaded on the CMT website. There are thousands of health related articles and videos on the internet. CMT's Health Library is designed for use by residents and community workers in other settings who are looking for screened videos, articles and websites that focus more on newsworthy health gardening, where residents can come together to enjoy and learn about outdoor activities like

5. Outdoors and Festivals- Celebration



6. Changing Definition of Programming

Many community groups provide service through individual support, and group programs. As Healthy Living evolved to include screening, nutrition, exercise and self help, the boundaries between programs began to blur. Our **BioDanza** program, based on South American examples, included self-awareness exercises, music, song and dance.

Life through Art added art into a self help format.

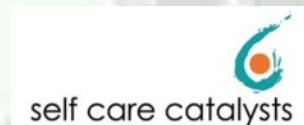
7. Sharing Resources Through Partnerships

Changing the behaviour of those residents most at risk for chronic diseases is the focus of Healthy Living. Our team of Community Assistants are teaching by example. They have helped each other to change their health practices, eat better, exercise more and talk about their challenges. They are leaders and models for their neighbours who watch and imitate them.

This year a Walking Group began with Surabhi Khare, walking around the school yard. She was the Pied Piper, leading by example. The group meets to walk throughout the hot days of summer, has branched out to other buildings and people are talking about moving in to continue with stair climbing during the cold

'We are proud of our integrated Yoga classes. They include residents from all over the world, mingling with older established Canadians and students.'

Margaret



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

EMPOWERING PEOPLE BEYOND JOB SEARCHES

Most neighbours who visit and participate in Community Matters are seeking immediate employment or plan to be employed at some time in the future. As newcomers they either arrive

with employment experience from back home or quickly realize that a second income is a valuable

thing to successfully settle in Canada.

Starting in 2004 with an employment preparation course for 6 women, we now help 150 residents

annually as they return to school, volunteer, or gain employment. Jobs range from a first step at a

coffee shop to a Forestry Manager working in Northern Ontario for the provincial government and a

host of jobs in health, social services and education.

Our support has always been **anchored by a newcomer** who brings with them the same experiences, fears and frustrations experienced by the current job seekers. Our staff and volunteers see themselves in those they help. They apply their own experiences and the employment counselling training they have taken in Canada to prepare neighbours to work, help them secure their jobs and then follow them to even better employment.

Community Matters commits to a long term view in addressing the major barriers to meaningful

employment including self-confidence, Canadian experience, language, Canadian work place and

employment culture and additional training. In addition to working with those who are seeking or

need immediate jobs, we also work with those who may decide to start or add to their family before they begin work or those who take the opportunity to change their careers now they have

arrived in Canada.

Careers

I got job at Leisureworld Scarborough. It is a long term care and I got Registered Practical Nurse job.

I am so happy because this is my career's beginning point. I believe that later I will achieve my own goal.

Thank you so much for your all support, encouragement and kind help. It really gave me a huge strength to achieve my success.

Thanks again and again.....

Participant

"There is a need for home based daycare. There are women who feel that they can do that job irrespective of what their education background or training may be.

Some have raised their kids and feel like they want to do something, so they join our training, which is an eight week course with a full day training for first aid and CPR."

Mariam



6% of Immigrant Physicians Applying for Residency are Successful

CHOOSE A DIFFERENT PATH

Alternative careers for Foreign Trained Health Professionals

A 10 week course leading to meaningful alternative employment for Foreign Trained Health Professionals

Choose A Different Path a skilled trainer and job developer work actively with you weekly in a small group with similar skills and ambitions contact us to discuss your participation.

Contact Mariam or Maltia at (416) 944-9697 email

WHERE: 260 Wellesley St. E. Unit 102

When: Tuesdays starting October 13, for ten weeks
From 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

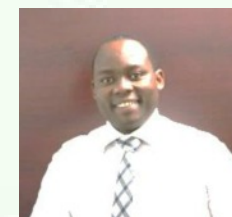
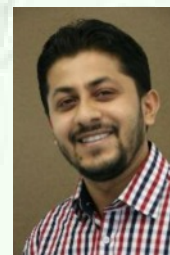
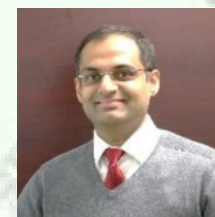
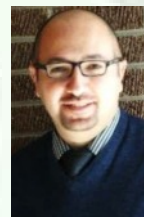
Past Team Member Successes:

- Medical research
- Health Care Business Ownership
- Registered Nurses
- Health Care Teachers
- Registered Nurses Assistant
- Nutritionist

Doctors, Nurses, Specialists, Dentists

Each year in Ontario there are 10000 Internationally Trained Doctors. Some of whom are pursuing licensing. Many are wisely considering other options which provide them the opportunity to use their exemplary skills and remain in the health care profession. **Choose a Different Path** helps guide Foreign Trained Health Professionals to create a plan recognizing and directing their unique skills towards a different and satisfying new career

a team approach

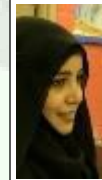


Preparing for Change.

In most cases family and employment life are different from back home. A number of steps are used to gradually work through a transition to Canadian careers. Early participation in community work-shops, celebrations and programs provide the opportunity to participate with other newcomers, learn of similar experiences, lessons and successes. This develops the confidence to participate in a different culture. We provide **post-employment services** for people who we have helped gain employment. Having “cracked the system” and gained employment we work to help to gain promotions within an organization or with others. Understanding work place culture is vital to progress. In addition, people who are employed might want to shift to another field or maintain their field in order to grow and improve, so we offer other programs for them.

WORKSHOPS are all skills based. While participating and socializing, newcomers develop, refine and practice skills later used in local volunteer opportunities. These achievements find their way onto the resume along with valuable references. Our programs and work-shops are designed to address local needs. Our 8-week **Child Minding** course meets the need for affordable, quality, local, in home, culturally appropriate babysitting. The course is for local residents who may not be quite ready to take courses offered for ECAs or ECE. From this course, residents have started their own businesses, gained knowledge as they pursue careers in Early Childhood Education and increased their networks within the community.

Mariam explains that this approach helps interested community members create opportunities for themselves even if there is no employer or job involved. “We always look at the needs of the community and what skills community members have and we try to put that together.”



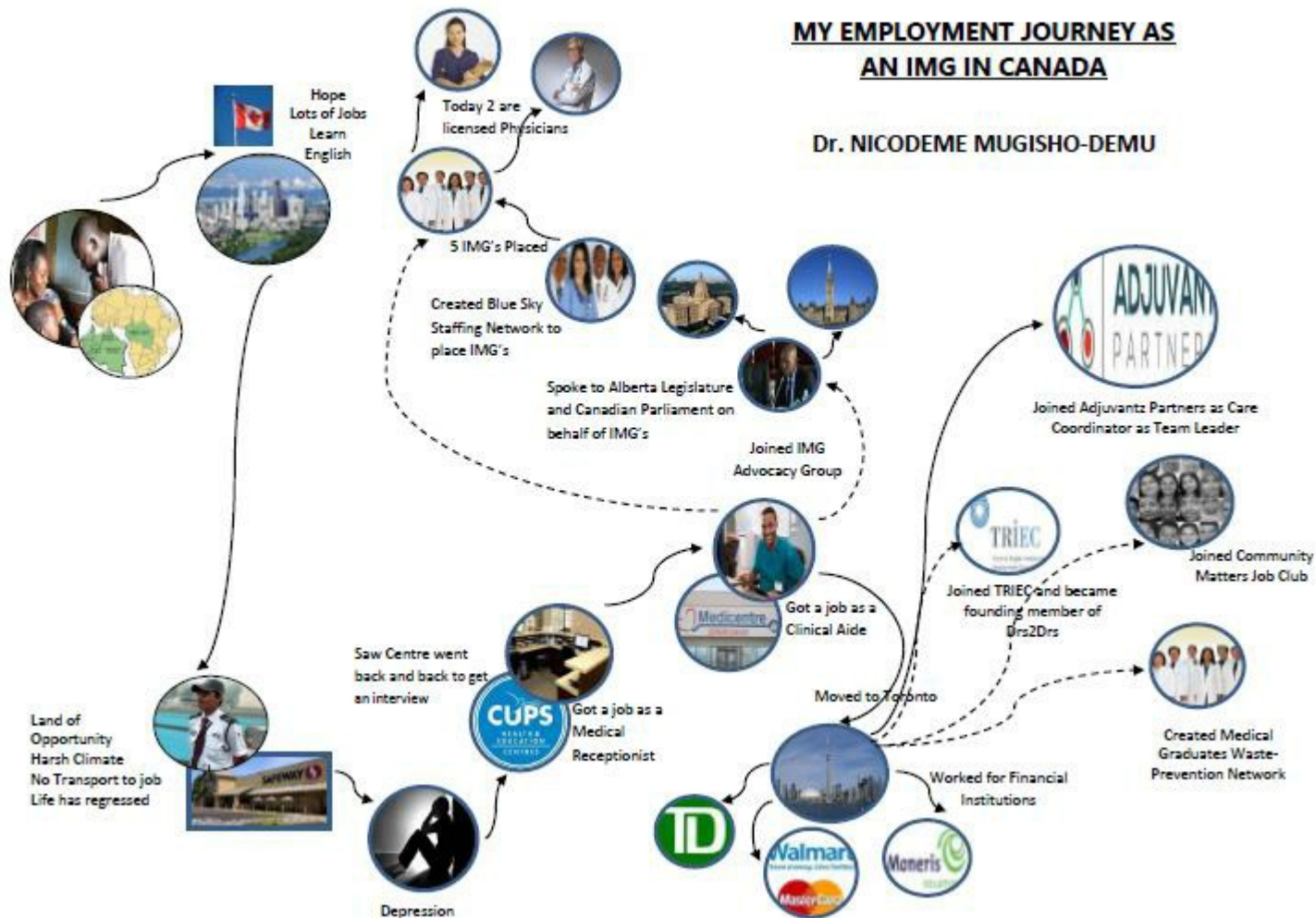
“I have been working with Community Matters since 2009 in the Job Club. Before that I went to so many organizations and attended so many workshops, which gave me the sense that I was repeating the same thing over and over again,” Mariam recalls.

“Still, I came to Community Matters because I was living in this area and it was very convenient for me. I liked that the methodology here was different and that I didn’t need to repeat the process that other organizations have.”

“When I started working at Community Matters Job Club, I kept in mind that job seeking newcomers would have likely

MY EMPLOYMENT JOURNEY AS AN IMG IN CANADA

Dr. NICODEME MUGISHO-DEMU



AFTER SCHOOL



"They know how we feel
what kids like to do"

"if you are good at something you still
Need to practice. You need to be active.
I can run forward and back, overhead
Throw. Kick the ball and balance walk"

"I made book covers"

"I like cooking pizza
Granola bars and
banana bread"

"We get to cook
good food"

English is a second
language for 85 %
of the students

Cultures live with
high risk of
developing
diabetes

10 Language
groups are spoken

Few recreation or
social facilities
available

One of the densest
communities in
North America



NUTRITION

Food Share

Canada's Food Guide

RBC Foundation

Rose Avenue School

Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport

"My Daughter taped Canada's Food Guide
On the fridge. She makes sure that we
ALL eat all the food groups and not
Miss anything"

SOCIALIZATION

Conflict
Resolution

Cultural
Adaptation



Legend:
Skills Learned
Partners
Resources
Quality Measure

"I feel good because My daughter
Is learning and physically active
Instead of sitting on the couch
At home"

RECREATION

High Five Training



I Can
Swim

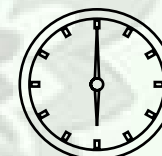


Fundamental
Movement



Volunteer Readers
Organization

Excellence in Literacy Foundation



**Family and
Community**

"The staff helped me understand
What curriculum means here
In Canada and how to talk
To the teacher"

After school hours have been shown to be particularly critical times

After School-Serving Children and their Parents

At least 1800 children from St James Town attend local grade schools.

Research shows that over 50 percent would benefit from specialized programming supporting the development of their distinct cognitive and social skills associated with their transition from early years into adolescence. After-school hours have been shown to be particularly critical times.

CMT works closely with Rose Ave Public School to provide an After School for up to 100 children in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6. More than 85% of the students in the After School have with English as their second language, and represent about 10 language groups.

We have a strong instructional focus on literacy, health and wellness, nutrition, physical activity¹

Our Community Assistants who speak their languages, interact with them and help them to learn new language and ethics in a relaxed environment with nurturing staff and friends from different culture and background

Physical Literacy- Early on, we noticed that children were not aware of their surroundings

when they ran. They often bumped into each other and were not aware how to play safely.

New research is warning that sedentary living-sitting in front of computers and TV, with little exercise is the new health challenge. In St James Town, the lack of green space and organized sports activities doesn't help.

Nutrition: When newcomers arrive, they are often overwhelmed with grocery shopping with

¹ <http://www.phecanada.ca/programs/physical-literacy/fundamental-movement-skills/active-start-and-fundamentals>

Family and Community

We believe a strong relationship with parents is important to understand the children and changes in their behaviour. Parents participate and volunteer in our weekend, and swimming program, health and wellness workshops, nutrition classes for parents to cook with their children socialize and learn new healthy recipes. We often ask parents and children for suggestion to improve and bring new idea, because it important that parents and children have sense of belonging

Partners with Rose Avenue School Some newcomer parents have challenges with their child's behaviour and some children get in trouble during recess, or they are bullied. We work with parents and teachers of Rose Avenue to

QUALITY and Celebration!

To have a successful program, evaluation is the key to success. We monitor and evaluate our program regularly and celebrate our success with parents and other CMT programs.

I Can Swim This progressive three stage program teaches swimmers 54 important swimming skills, and focuses on seven major skill

High Five ¹. training provides participants with nationally recognized certification that will assist them in working with children's programs in the sport and recreation industry. Several municipalities, non for profit

¹ <http://www.highfive.org/>

Arts and the Environment; St James Town Arts

Getting Started with the Environment 2011-13

In 2012 residents recognized and acted on the idea that the local environment, its green spaces, outdoor art and gardens were essential parts of a healthy community. The first project was a

Banner project, using local artists to submit their designs for local banners. The banner project

has since been refreshed in 2014. This in turn has led to ideas for ways to upgrade the outdoor

environments in St James Town:

- An overall plan for the neighbourhood,¹

1

<http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/ART%20PLAN%20%20%20SMART%20Development%202013.pdf>



'The efficient and smartly composed model of St James Town Arts is just not about art, but is a life grooming organization. Anyone who gets connected is preciously valued and encouraged. And for people like me, it's a real-time spiritual center that fills me with enthusiasm and fresh perspective towards life.'

CULTURALCOLLAGE2016

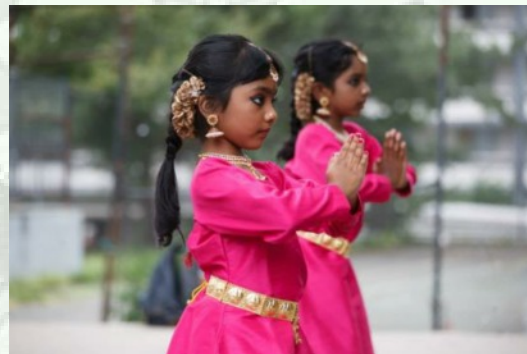
sharing a world of creativity



**Art Exhibition Games & Activities Face Painting Henna Art
Pony Rides Dance & Music Performances International Food**

St James Town Arts

COMMUNITY MATTERS TORONTO
neighbours helping neighbours



ST JAMES TOWN ARTS 2012-2016

Developing a Collective Voice: A Stronger Community Speaks

CMT first priority is to help residents 'develop their voice' through community responses using the Social Determinants of Health (Jobs, learning, health and networks).

Neighbours helping Neighbours also extends beyond individuals and involves developing the voice of the community as a whole. To have the confidence to speak in a

Canadian society, to overcome shyness, and get hired for good jobs also means learning how to make things work in this larger society.

Over the years CMT has worked on a number of community projects. As we are located in the apartment buildings CMT has been able to quickly respond to some issues and needs before these have escalated.



Loss of Services in the Neighbourhood

In 2012, the local **Jarvis Collegiate Pool** was to be closed by the Toronto District School Board. CMT worked with the Toronto Land Corporation, other parent groups and the Toronto Board to do the necessary repairs to ensure that the pool remain open. Since then, CMT has raised money to run swimming programs for children and women in the pool

CMT developed an **Advocacy Manual**: How to train community members to address community issues ¹

CMT worked with a group of internationally trained health professionals to describe the challenges and barriers to licensure and accreditation in

See No Dignity: A Fair Access Agenda for International Educated Health Professionals May 2015.²

¹ <http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/Jarvis%20Pool%20Project%20Aug'09-CMT&OISE%20Report-7.pdf>

Developing a Collective Voice: A Stronger Community Speaks

As Doug Sartell, the property manager of St. James Town complex explains, “There was a security issue a few years ago that impacted everyone. Chris and Margaret, through Community Matters, set up a community security information seminar with Toronto Police and security guards. They took these people who were essentially new here from a different part of the world, and explained to them how best to keep their family safe in this new environment.”

Doug relates that setting up a seminar and responding to an urgent need are tangible things that make a difference.

“Community Matters Toronto had an ability that I didn’t have. I could send out all the newsletters



CMT Staff are instrumental in conducting the first St. James Town Citizenship

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP: In partnership with the Institute on Canadian Citizenship, CMT sponsored a local citizenship ceremony. A guidebook was published for use by other communities who want to sponsor their own ceremonies.¹

CMT BOARD TRAINING: Participation in Community Boards is an important addition to a resume plus reflects community giving and concern for others. CMT has developed Best Practices summaries on Board governance.² New board members are paired with more senior members, so they develop their ability to speak with confidence at the Board and eventually move on to other public and private Board positions.

DESCRIBING AND PRESENTING THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SERVICES IN THE AREA: St James Town lost the services of the Wellesley Hospital a number of years ago and since then, residents have had to disperse to other primary and hospital services. Despite investment in other adjacent areas, St James Town

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mZb1p3UXFc>

² [http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/Literature%20Review%20for%20CMT%20Governance%20Review%20\(Mar%202022\).pdf](http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/Literature%20Review%20for%20CMT%20Governance%20Review%20(Mar%202022).pdf)

The Environment

In 2012 residents recognized and acted on the idea that the local environment, its green spaces, outdoor art and gardens were essential parts of a healthy community. The

first project was a **Banner project**, using local artists to submit their designs for local banners. The banner project has since been refreshed in 2014. This in turn has led to ideas

for ways to upgrade the outdoor environments in St James Town:

- **A greener St James Town: Energy Use:** Another University of Toronto team of engineering students developed a detailed report about how to conserve energy, deal with garbage and recycling in St James Town apartments ²⁰.
- An overall plan for the neighbourhood Link [STJT Art Plan](http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/stjamestowndevelopment.html)¹[Smart Development in St. James Town](http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/SMART%20Development%20St%20James%20Town%202013.pdf)²
- Planning for Green Space: [Community Charette June 2014](http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/Green%20space%20community%20charette%20June%202014.pdf)³

¹ <http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/stjamestowndevelopment.html>

² <http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/SMART%20Development%20St%20James%20Town%202013.pdf>

³ <http://www.communitymatterstoronto.org/Green%20space%20community%20charette%20June%202014.pdf>

Syrian Sanctuary

In 2015, the call for Private Sponsorships for Syrian refugees led CMT to start Syrian Sanctuary.

It has raised funds to support 5 families, and coordinates a larger network of Syrian families in the Greater Toronto Area who are in turn

Help Syrian refugees reunite
with their families in Toronto

Syrian SANCTUARY in Toronto



OUR FUTURE: Compassion from the ground up



Community grass roots groups originated with settlement houses in New York in the 1920s. This energy resurfaced in the 1970s with the rise in social awareness, cooperative housing and social justice movements.

CMT has greatly benefitted from these examples, how to look at the person and family in context, and importance of their unique neighbourhoods: a tradition that is promoted by groups such as

- Tamarack Institute Neighbourhood Centres and
- Purpose Built Communities, transforming communities through mixed income housing, job development plus neighbourhood support-

'Wealth' has been generated by St James Town residents over the past 15 years. More community participation, the growth of clubs, sports, artist networks, and local associations and festivals point to more capable and resilient residents: a wealthier neighbourhood-

'By living, working and contributing to the neighbourhood, we learn about its natural resources and structures. We know its' culture' defined by geography, shared beliefs and practices. As neighbours we work on a level playing field as participants in a process of mutual learning"

OUR FUTURE: Compassion from the ground up

EXPANDING OUR OASES OF DECENCY:

The media these days often portray Toronto as an emerging world class city. With rising house prices in the downtown core, we have to reach consensus on what world class means: like New York and London where an increasing number cannot afford to live in downtown neighbourhoods? CMT wants to work with concerned citizens who agree that world class means:

1. Equity and inclusion.

- Canada has historically taken the lead in addressing the social determinants of health (see page) and has played a leading role in promoting inclusion, diversity and human rights.

The Oases of Decency we have referred throughout this document are a metaphor for Inclusion. This moral compass reminds us that



- 2. **Ongoing innovation** As residents change, so do policies, funding and opportunities. Public sector services are consolidating and amalgamating, so smaller neighbourhood groups compete for a shrinking dollar. We must continue to reinvent ourselves to generate the community wealth referred to above, to:
- **Tap into the intrinsic strengths of our residents**, the wealth of newcomers, encouraging them to retain talents and skills they learned back home to teach their children and established Canadians
- **Self funding** Reduce our reliance on government and foundation funding. We have met our target of generating 10% of our budget, and will increase that year over year, through a greater use of volunteers, with business partners and associations and entrepreneurship.
- **Creative use of resources** In 2015, CMT invested over \$300,000 in St James Town by hiring residents as CMT Community Assistants We will continue to

OUR FUTURE: Compassion from the ground up

- Complex communities need complex but not complicated responses. We try to move beyond the idea of program funding to expand the WAY we respond: to put aside our

3. Community Assistants build a healthier community. They are an active minority who has helped the majority, built a community spirit and set a community development process in motion. They know they learn and benefit while giving back and acting as a model to others. They are the strength of CMT and by definition, a formula we will continue to develop.

4. Integration, not settlement Dr Kwame Mackenzie, in a great video exploring 'What is a Good Immigrant?' suggests that newcomers have one foot in the past and the other in the future. He suggests that successful immigrants manage to preserve the memories and traditions from back home AND

In our foundation document Oases of Decency 1. we describe a tide pool, an image that has served us well and which will carry us in

"One image is that of a tide pool, hidden in a small corner of a huge naval base. A strange place, it seems, for something of such beauty. When the tide goes out and you are very quiet, all sorts of wondrous things begin to emerge before you.

Small eyes peer out from cracks in the rocks, colourful things skip around in the pool and the sunlight plays off the water. The longer you stay, the more you see of a completely interlinked experience of which you, the watcher, are only a part. It remains only as long as the next tide."

Community is like that tide pool. To see its real potential, its real beauty, we need to

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To read this document on line go to our web site, click on the [About Us](#) tab
and follow the links

