



# COVID-19 YOUTH IMPACT REPORT

From an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lens

MARCH 2021

**YOUTH**  
CULTURE

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# INTRODUCTION

**Y**outh Culture Inc. was created to support young people by bridging the gaps between youth and industry from a lens of diversity and inclusion.

Since June 2020, Youth Culture has been connecting with diverse youth across Canada and hearing their voices and journeys throughout the pandemic. Youth Culture tracked the impact of COVID-19 on youth throughout the year of 2020. The purpose of the report is threefold:

1. Understand the pandemic from the point of view of diverse young people in Canada
2. Provide an opportunity for youth to share their voices on topics that matter
3. Share findings in order for Youth Culture and stakeholders to create meaningful and relevant support and youth engagement opportunities

As the pandemic continues, it's clear that now more than ever, we need to be resilient and open to pivoting for youth to grow and progress within the current parameters and new realities. Through quantitative and qualitative engagement and learning, we've created this report to capture authentic voices that reflect the diverse journeys experienced during these unprecedented times.

The Take Action section on page 18 suggests strategies for the sectors of government, industry, and education to support youth in meaningful and relevant ways through Youth Culture initiatives and beyond. Join us in Youth Culture's journey to evolve strategies to reach youth from an equity, diversity and inclusion lens that supports young people—our future leaders and workforce.



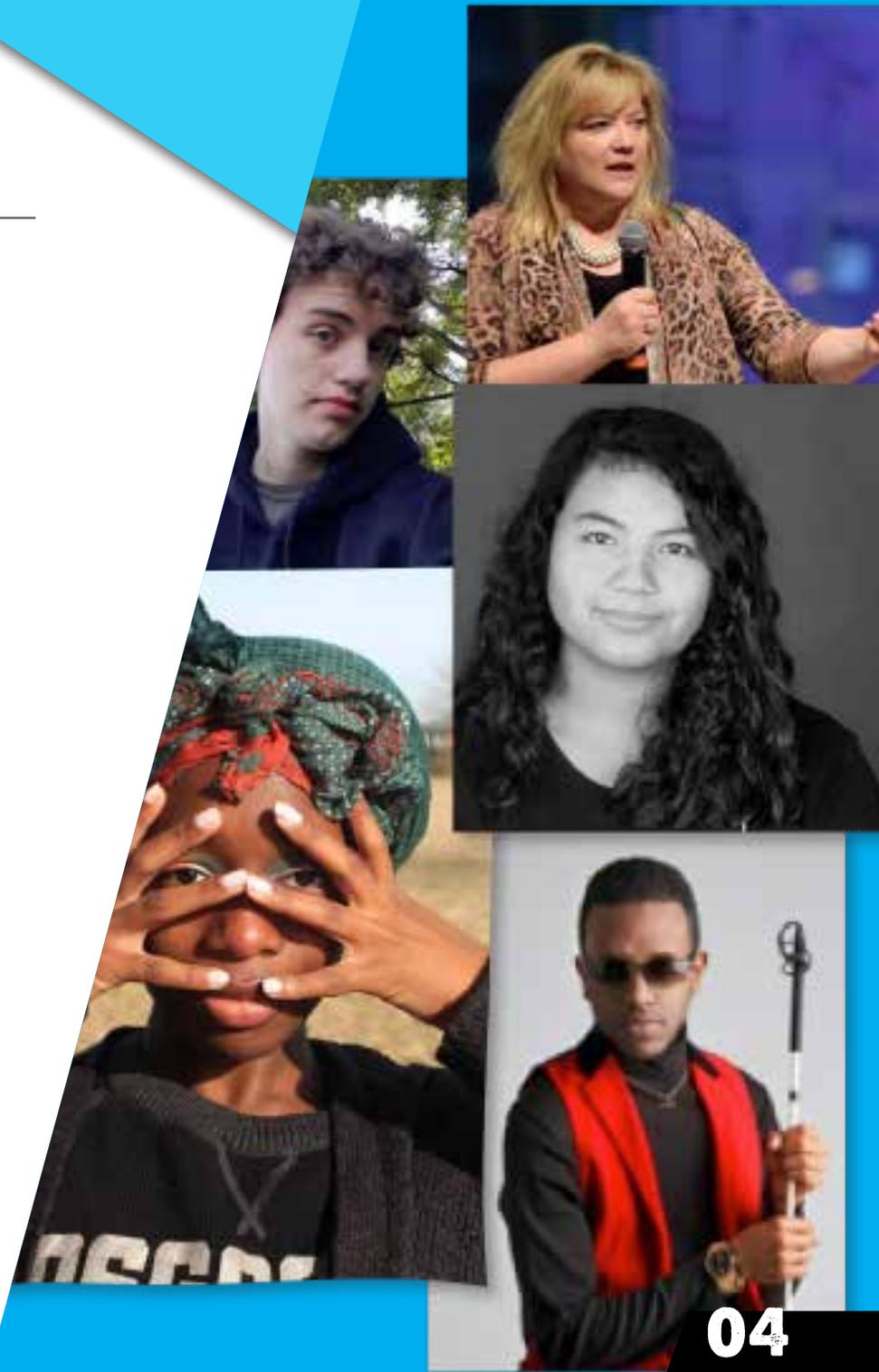


# PERSPECTIVES

From the months of June to December in 2020, Youth Culture sought out academic thought leaders and community voices to share their perspectives on the pandemic. In the pages that follow, diverse voices from academia and community are captured through interviews and insight including:

- Dr. Imogen Coe from Ryerson University offers her insight as an equity, diversity and inclusion ambassador and trusted science communicator
- Mary Pangowish shares her story from a First Nations perspective living on reserve
- Jada Wallace talks about the realities of 2020 on Black communities and People of Colour
- Nasir Khali provides insight on his experience through the pandemic as a person with a disability
- Cameron Dinner shares his take on the pandemic related to a community with external challenges

These community perspectives demonstrate the levels of resiliency and courage put forth to face adversities. Listening to the realities of the pandemic from various communities leads to authentic conversations about creating effective support strategies tailored to specific needs. The Take Action section provides ideas and strategies on how to support youth during the pandemic and beyond.



**ASK THE EXPERT FROM AN EDI LENS:**

**INTERVIEW WITH DR. IMOGEN COE**



**D**r. Imogen Coe is a powerful advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and a strong voice for those who aren't heard. Dr. Coe was the founding dean of the Faculty of Science from 2012 to 2018 and is a professor of Chemistry and Biology at Ryerson University in Toronto. She is also an affiliate scientist at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, where her research

group studies the cell biology of proteins responsible for the uptake of anti-cancer drugs. She is the incoming President of the Canadian Molecular Biosciences Society and sits on various boards including Science Rendezvous and the Michael Garron Hospital. In addition to her work as a research scientist, Dr. Coe is internationally recognized as a Canadian thought leader in how to integrate principles of EDI into science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). She has advised academia, government and industry on best practices and approaches to improve EDI and has contributed to national dialogue about these issues through various platforms. She is much in demand as a speaker and panelist and has received numerous awards for her advocacy work.

In October, 2020, Dr. Coe shared her thoughts about the impact of the pandemic on youth in the 17 to 23 age group.

**Youth Culture (YC):** What do you think were the biggest impacts of the pandemic on youth from underserved communities?

**Dr. Imogen Coe (IC):** Loss of social connections, especially with educators and support people in the community. While many youth spend a lot of time online, in person connections are also critical at this age. I worry about those who were receiving informal or ad hoc support through mentoring, tutoring, career advice, and general guidance by members of the village that is no longer accessible in the same way. Also, the ability to work and study in an online setting is very technology dependent—those in rural areas may suffer from unstable internet and/or disrupted work/study environments. I see a lot of that with my class this fall semester. I really don't know what any of them look like—they don't turn on their cameras—which I totally understand. But there is something fundamentally human about connecting to real people.

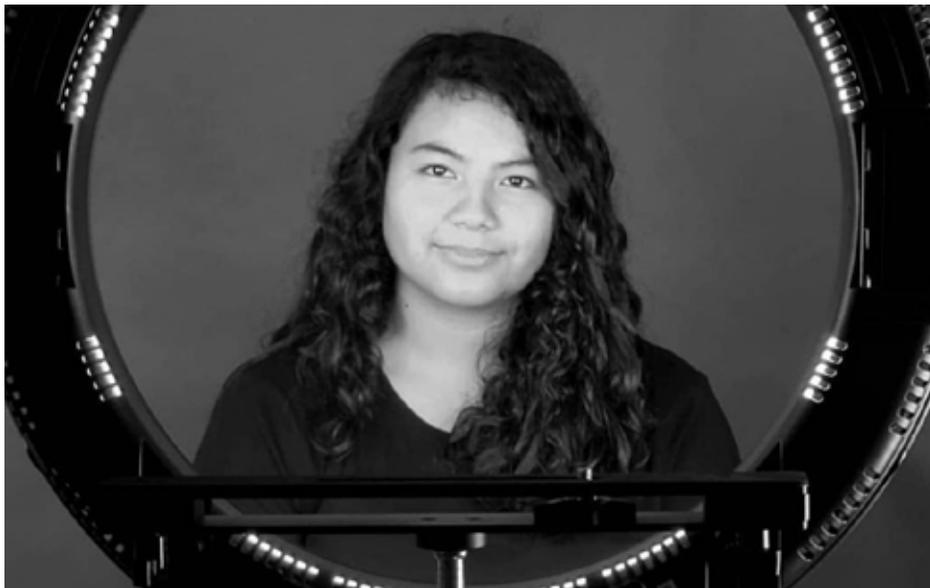
**YC:** What will the new normal look like when the pandemic is over?

**IC:** I think we'll go back to a lot of "before." I'm skeptical about a new normal. Shifting society and culture is very hard and slow. I think we have more awareness of accessibility and the way that online teaching can be leveraged to make it more available and accessible. I think we will also go back to in-classroom and "traditional" ways of teaching, learning and working.

**YC:** Are there any good things for youth about this new normal? Any concerns?

**IC:** Both opportunities and concerns. I've discovered that there is value in intentional gathering using virtual platforms. They reach further and wider and you can bring people together from around the globe in relatively cheap ways. Almost anybody can go to a conference anywhere—previously there were many exclusionary aspects to all sorts of things. Now, almost anybody can access a lecture from anywhere. I don't think we'll give up in-person events or teaching, though. Human beings are social animals and we will never get away from that—even the introverts like me!

## COVID-19 IMPACT ON A FIRST NATION COMMUNITY BY MARY PANGOWISH



**W**hen the severity of the pandemic hit, Wiikwemkoong closed the schools and limited non-essential businesses. Due to our remote location, the Wiikwemkoong border was also closed for non-essential travel for a few weeks, among other considerations made by our Chief and Council. Because of our small population, it was feasible to deliver both perishable and non-perishable food to families that did not have anyone working as a result of the pandemic, or to those that opted in, at no cost. My household had to isolate for a few weeks and while in isolation there was a service available to us that would deliver hot meals three times per day. All interactions like this were approached with appropriate safety precautions.

During the pandemic, the capable and respectful response from our Chief and Council made me even more grateful to be a part of this community. They ensured that safety of our community was their top priority. I knew that had to do with our cultural values, where the community comes first—people come first.

I would think that the Seven Grandfather Teachings were in full effect, especially the teaching of Truth, which is to accept your place in the grand scheme of things.

At the end of the day, we're all people—people who have to live in the pandemic together, and we need each other to get through this safely. Youth and mental health was a concern.

**“Most students, met with their counsellor in-person during school before the pandemic, and when it shifted to telephone sessions, it was a real challenge. Students might live with a big family where there’s no privacy to talk. It’s really putting a damper on the mental health of youth in the community.”**

I was really wary of this pandemic. During the past year, I thought a lot about how Indigenous communities are susceptible to health issues. I remembered when Health Canada sent body bags to reserves in Manitoba instead of medical supports during the H1N1 pandemic back in 2009. Later, a similar situation happened in the US. It hurts to see systemic efforts of neglect to Indigenous people. My community was very lucky to fair as well as it has and I’m very grateful.

**TAKE ACTION!**  
Turn to page 18 to find ways to support First Nations communities.

**Mary Pangowish, from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island in Ontario, has been inquisitive and curious since she was young. Her desire for extensive knowledge about the world around us has led to her love of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Over the past few years, Mary’s ambition has allowed her to take the lead role in her high school’s robotics team, gaining her proficiency in technical skills, outreach, and public speaking. One of her favourite observations is how the values of traditional Anishinaabek teachings work in tandem with the goals of STEM organizations. Mary hopes to continue into STEM in her post-secondary education and will continue her passion for sharing Anishinaabek cultural practices, and creating Indigenous appreciation with others.**

2020 REFLECTIONS BY JADA WALLACE

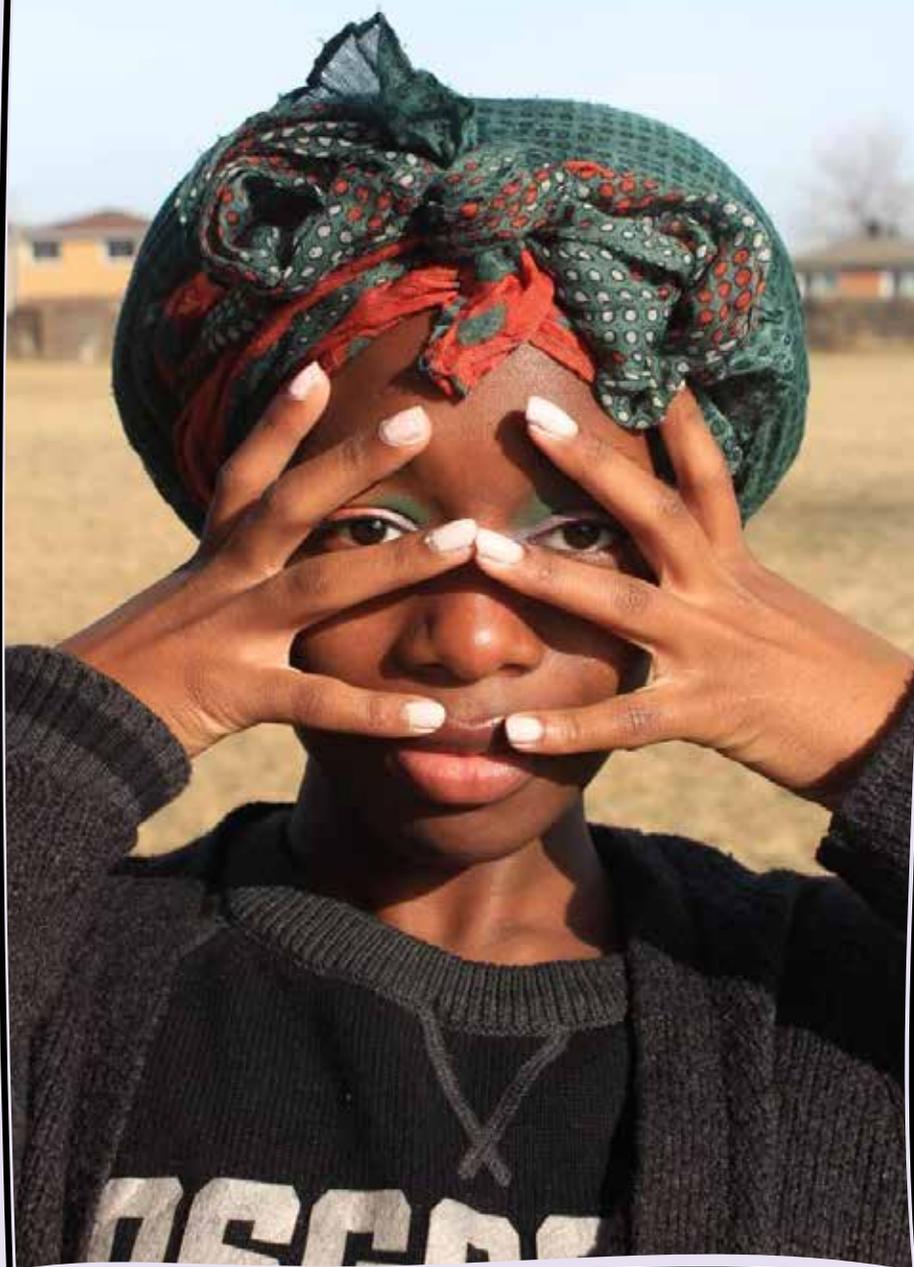


PHOTO: JORDAN DYER

In light of the new year, and the upcoming anniversary of the first lockdown due to COVID-19; everyone is reminiscing about plans they once had and how everything shifted right in front of their eyes. As a teenager, I remember emptying my locker just in case and not understanding the gravity of the situation we were in.

After everyone was home for the extended spring break, I soon realized that we would not be returning to school. The beginning was hard but it propelled me into creating a new schedule and reforming my life. I stopped watching the news because it was overwhelming, and I took social media posts in a very light manner. My daily routine consisted of praying for people affected by COVID-19, and doing various exercises like yoga and running. I was working at a local grocery store, and in the month of March we were asked not to wear masks, so the store would still look safe. Being young, I did not think much of it when my co-workers left the store and refused to work.

**“ COVID-19 really hit me when a co-worker and family friend lost both of her parents within weeks of each other. My days turned for the worst as I started to feel drained, tired, and focused on the deaths instead of the positive future I once thought I would have. ”**

As time went on, it was more apparent how race and ethnicity played a part in marginalized communities where more people tested positive for COVID-19. Black communities are more at risk because of socioeconomic status, access to health care, and exposure to the virus through certain occupations, like caregivers and nurses.

Luckily, I met many people in my community and beyond who were making positive change virtually. I joined a group named Quarantine Corner and other initiatives led by youth workers. I also began doing interviews for Youth Culture and worked with GLE (Grow, Lead, Excel) to assist with projects like providing for the homeless, promoting an active lifestyle for youth, and spreading awareness about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in Canada. My mental and physical health were impacted by COVID-19 without ever contracting the disease. I had to shift my goals, focusing on the new things that were happening in my life. I reconnected with my community in a unique way despite the challenges we faced. I discovered that online learning is beneficial for my growth and not a hindrance because I can make an even bigger difference using my new-found platform to address things I am passionate about.

**2020 REFLECTIONS BY JADA WALLACE**

The state of mental health of people in my community, and all over the world, worsened on May 25, 2020, when George Floyd was added to the list of Black people who died at the hands of the police in America, as byproduct of the systemic racism embedded into our society. This historical event was painful in the moment—and continues to leave scars until this day. Although I am thankful for the advancement in technology, I could not rationalize having a video of anyone’s death passed around the world and used to justify their killing or defend their honour and legacy. I had to begin addressing many of my emotions related to racism and how it affected me because this was a topic nobody could stop debating or talking about. The protest began, and so did the heightened violence. Built-up emotions over years of oppression could be felt in the air. The pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement weighed heavy on my community.

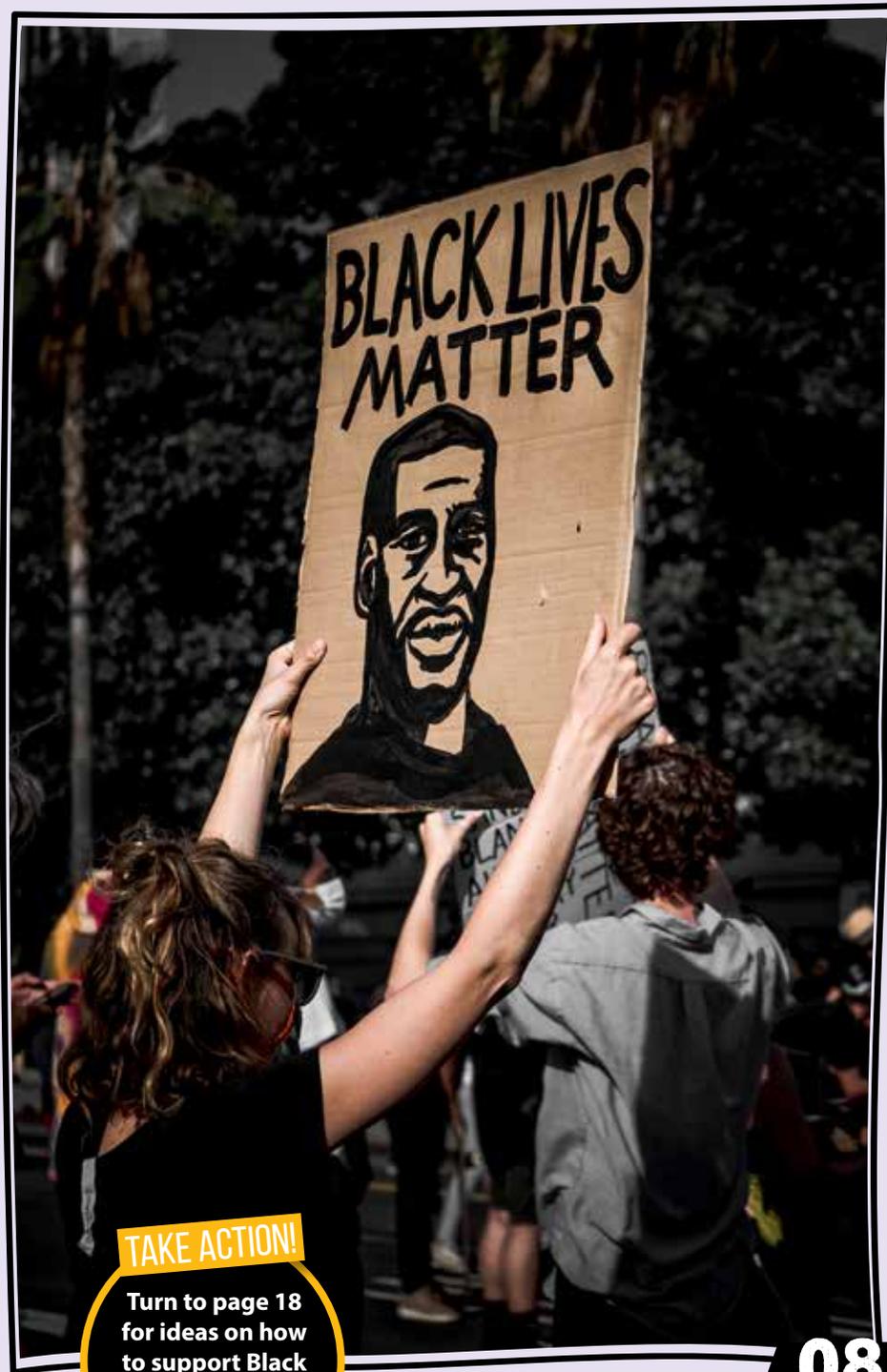
“ **The pandemic did not disappear, but it highlighted the fact that communities like mine lacked the resources and education surrounding COVID-19—causing it to disproportionately affect people of colour.** ”

It was relieving to see that a few weeks later there was a pop-up testing center in my community. Following the death of Breonna Taylor, Black women started to stand up and make demands from the governments and justice systems around the world. In my community, a similar instance of police violence happened: everyone was heartbroken but banded together to protest against the violence that had made its way to our front doors. It was uplifting to be a part of something bigger than me and my community. We have a long way to go in terms of addressing systemic racism, police brutality, and the demands of the BLM movement. The year of 2020 was not easy. My advice for everyone is to just breathe. But remember to take a few mindful breaths to be thankful that you have that ability.

Do not allow the hardships to make you pessimistic. Use everything you learned last year to make every single day count.



**Jada Wallace is a Youth Advisory Team Member at Youth Culture Inc., an advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion, and she’s following her passion of becoming a Film Director.**



**TAKE ACTION!**  
Turn to page 18 for ideas on how to support Black communities and People of Colour.

## BEYOND THE SURFACE OF ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION



**N**asir Khali is a 25-year-old musician, model, voice actor, and creative professional. Nasir (Naz) is also visually impaired. At age 9, Naz lost his sight due to a tumour caused by a condition called neurofibromatosis 1 (NF1). Losing his sight at such a young age, Naz learned to become resilient and resourceful. “When one thing goes, God blesses us with another. After I lost my sight, that’s when I connected to music,” says Naz.

In 2018, Naz moved from the UK to Canada because he heard there were opportunities for people with disabilities. He was also determined to follow his dream of producing music, as well as inspiring others who have a disability.

However, since his arrival to Canada, he has struggled to find employment. Then, when the pandemic hit in 2020, additional challenges, such as finding remote opportunities, hit a new low. Although he applied for internships and jobs online, he received little response, and when he did, the steps leading up to an interview were not necessarily accommodating.

“I was left asking myself a lot of questions, like, how do I show what I can do rather than what I can’t do when I am not even given an opportunity to prove myself? The whole process left me feeling disappointed and disheartened. I wondered whether the recruiters actually thought of the person first before the disability or did they just see the disability?” —Nasir Khali

It was during a conversation with a family friend when Naz heard about Youth Culture’s involvement with the MentorAbility program that supports youth and adults with disabilities through virtual mentorship opportunities. When Naz reached out, the team at Youth Culture immediately recognized his talent and potential to inspire others. Youth Culture’s president Kim Cooper decided to personally mentor Naz, and eventually offered him freelance consulting work to help with Youth Culture’s accessibility and inclusion initiatives, as well as utilize his passion for music to produce background tracks for Youth Culture’s video series.

Naz’s involvement with Youth Culture has brought learning about accessibility and inclusion to a deeper level. From adapting virtual meetings for the visually impaired to demonstrating how Naz can use his skills to bring the team to a new level, Naz has been able to teach others about inclusion beyond the surface level.

“While working with Naz, I have come to realize how inaccessible the world really is: how everyday tasks like grocery shopping or online meetings aren’t made for everyone even though they should be. There is so much talk about accessibility and inclusion but if everyday tasks are still inaccessible, all that talk is for nothing. If we share with youth how to make the world more inclusive, the future will be more accessible for everyone.”

—Rajosree Paul, University of Waterloo  
Co-op Student at Youth Culture

**TAKE ACTION!**

Turn to page 18  
to for ways to  
support people  
with disabilities.

## PANDEMIC PANIC BY CAMERON DINNER



**T**hey told us we'd be locked down for two weeks, maximum. For those two weeks, I sat and thought: "Hey, I'll be able to see my friends in two weeks. That's not too bad." Oh boy, how I was wrong.

The impact of the lockdown in my community was...eerily peaceful. No longer could you hear children playing outside for recess at school, or see people walking the streets or commuting anywhere. I didn't

complain, and many of the older folks in my neighborhood didn't either, they had peace and quiet to tend to their gardens. However, many of my family's close friends lost their jobs, whether it be for their safety, or due to company shutdowns.

**“The pandemic impacted my friends in a different, not so pleasant way. Especially after the summer, since we'd grown so distant. I can relate it to one of my favourite songs of 2020, “Heat Waves” by Glass Animals. The song is about how people change over the summer: whether it be for new friends they hang out with, a significant other, or even like we've experienced with the pandemic, a new normal of being locked inside and your parents telling you to stay home, unless it's for a brief walk outside.”**

Even with family, you love them to bits, but spending every minute inside with them takes a toll, sometimes for the worse. Your friends may feel down as mental health issues are at an all-time high due to the lockdowns and COVID in general. It may not mean much to you, but asking them how they are, listening and talking to them means a world of difference, and you may not even know it. I have a friend whose been going through a lot—a lot more than I have. An uncle passed away from COVID, his father lost his job, and his mother is working triple the amount of hours she normally does as a nurse. An even bigger issue, was his girlfriend left him. He's been in disarray, and I try my best to get him outside to talk to him and cheer him up. I see it makes a difference. We need friends in life, now more than ever.

My concern now, is the lack of abiding by the quarantine bylaws. People party, people don't wear masks, I even hear people who consider COVID-19 to be a hoax by the government. Trust me, I've heard it all. People need to learn that this is a serious pandemic, and we can't take this lightly. We don't have the ICU capacity to hold everyone with COVID-19 who ends up being critically ill, so the best way to keep people alive is by following the government's guidelines. Our communities may be affected, but with our willingness to abide by the rules put in place by the government, we will get through this... together!

Most importantly, we can't lose hope. For those of us who can't find a job, I urge you to volunteer. Volunteering can put a smile on someone's face, and that may just help someone from having a bad day. You never know what someone is going through. Online school may be tough, but with Zoom, at least you can hear your friends again, and even communicate in a pseudo face-to-face way. You may not always land on the moon, but you can definitely land amongst the stars.

**Cameron Dinner is an 18-year-old college student from Downsview in Toronto, Ontario, and a Youth Culture Ambassador.**

## THE REALITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

For socio-economically disadvantaged communities, the pandemic has led to struggles that are often not widely acknowledged. The Downsview area in Toronto, Ontario, is an example of a community with external challenges. According to the Toronto District School Board’s Learning Opportunity Index (LOI), Downsview Secondary School ranks in the top five schools with the greatest number of external challenges affecting student success. The LOI was created to support children who have access to fewer resources at home and in their neighbourhoods have increased access to available resources in their schools. The impact of the pandemic is complex for communities with more external challenges. Insight from the Downsview community demonstrates the unique challenges for marginalized groups.



**The biggest impacts of the pandemic on youth in Downsview, from voices in the community, include:**

- Lack of technology and equipment (laptop, Wi-Fi at home or access to high speed internet)
- Lack of knowledge and practise of how to use technology for the community’s ELL (English Language Learner) population

- Lack of communication from students and families to the school because of no cell phone response or access to technology
- A loss of money: part-time jobs were scarce for students, especially those looking for their first jobs. Many of these jobs were cancelled (ie: summer camp counsellors) and the loss of cash coupled with a loss of experience, including confidence-building that comes with early job experiences.
- A lack of drive and motivation

**“Downsview Secondary School is a real hub: students hang around after school, lunch is lively, and sports and clubs are vital to social connection. These opportunities provide a sense of belonging that some do not experience elsewhere. With extracurriculars and access to school restricted, many students no longer had those connections.”**

**“Supports could’ve looked different for single parent families where if an income was lost, it would look different than in a two-parent income household (equity vs equal).”**

**“Students’ sleep patterns were all over the map coping with this unanchored, different structure that is more self-guided and adult. For so many, though, home is not an ideal place to be, and they were there all the time.”**

**“Support for parents of multiple special needs children such as a circle of care or financial support is necessary.”**

**“A lot of families in our community live in multi-family homes that are usually in apartment buildings or basement apartments. I’m not sure people were aware if there was a need to share a device, or if students didn’t have room to have their own working space.”**

**“We need to offer more scholarships and work opportunities: practical and concrete ways to support students, especially students near graduation.”**

**“Access to food banks or resource centres that families depend on were closed and mobile set-up took time. This left some families at a loss.”**

**TAKE ACTION!**  
Turn to page 18 to read how you can support disadvantaged communities.



# INSIGHTS FROM 2020

Since June of 2020, Youth Culture has been on a mission to hear the voices of youth to understand their experiences during the pandemic. Through online surveys, virtual focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, over 200 youth representing a wide range of diversity in race, gender, socio-economic status, and other factors were surveyed. Intentional inclusion of underrepresented groups resulted in responses from young women, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour community members, and youth with disabilities. While some of the recurring themes of struggle for youth are widely known, the testimonials that follow are indicative of the complexities of the pandemic from the a lens of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Youth participation who self-identified\* as:

- Gender: Female (45%), male (32%), non-binary (4%).
- Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (62%), People with disabilities (2%)
- Age: 15-18 (68%), 19-24 (24%), 14 and under (8%)

\* Self-identification was not mandatory



## LACK OF MOTIVATION

Lack of motivation was a prevalent theme with youth at a loss for how to plan their days, and establish new structures and stability. Youth in marginalized communities find comfort and support through extracurriculars like sports and other clubs. Without this in-person socialization and hubs of belonging, lack of motivation can lead to deterioration of mental health and depression.

"I'm dealing with a lack of motivation combined with frustrations with not achieving as much as I could be."

"It has been absolutely challenging to keep up with daily habits and maintain a productive momentum. Without that stimulating environment of school and motivating friends it was very difficult to meet personal goals."

"Constantly staying at home and a sudden change in my lifestyle, was very difficult because I had no clue how to live my life. My routine was completely gone, and I had way too much flexibility to spend my time, but only access to my house and the Internet."



**43%** Struggled with a lack of motivation

"In the past, I was able to separate my school work and relaxation time at home. I used to spend most of my time at school working and learning, and recognized that when I got home, I was able to relax. This separation of home and school helped keep me productive and motivated. Now, the transition to working at my desk in my room, doing my job in my room, and relaxing in my room has caused my motivation and productivity to decline."

### IN RESPONSE

Youth Culture launched free virtual workshops on time management and self-care. [youthculturelearning.com](https://youthculturelearning.com)

## DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Comments related to the struggles of depression and mental health issues were common. Again, the loss of socialization for some communities meant that youth, particularly in disadvantaged communities, no longer had a sense of belonging. These struggles were exasperated by fear of the unknown, and feelings of being trapped.

**46%**  
Had a **fear** of  
the **unknown**

“This is hard to understand: watching others not practice social distancing on social media and trying to remember the importance of it.”

“Before the pandemic my mental health wasn't the best, but everything got worse after all the social distancing and self-isolation. All of the things that I loved were put on pause. All the things that I counted on to keep me going were taken away. I started slipping deeper into my depression and the fact that I didn't have anything to do on a day-to-day basis left me lacking motivation.”

“The pandemic feels like a simulation of captivity.”

“I became a little bit hysterical when I decide to go out, even just to accompany my parents to buy groceries. I am afraid of the possibility of catching novel coronavirus from people, in addition to myself having the virus without knowing so.”



**54%** EXPERIENCED  
LONELINESS

“For me, the worst parts of self-isolation are 1) being around the same people for too long and 2) missing the feeling of being around people. As much as I love my family, always having everyone at home at the same time, at a time when everyone is on-edge and tense, is really difficult. We all have strong and contrasting personalities, and it sounds a little dramatic, but self-isolation has made it such that we barely get a break from each other.”

### IN RESPONSE

Youth Culture launched a Just Breathe resource page with mental health resources and tips for self-care.  
[youthculture.com/justbreathe](https://youthculture.com/justbreathe)

## LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

From summer jobs to fall internships to co-op gigs, during the year of 2020, youth missed out on work experience and hands-on learning opportunities. For marginalized youth who relied on income and experience for their future, it was devastating for their personal and professional career journeys.

**81%** Felt that they could've made more of a difference during this time by expressing their voice and being a part of industry and government problem-solving initiatives.

“The worst part of self-isolation is how we are not able to get the attention we need from the outside world. We all have dreams and goals that we want to fulfill, however to do so you need experience in the outside world. You need to be able to share your voice, opinions, and beliefs to those who can help shape your future. Self-isolation has made getting experience and sharing your voice difficult.”

“How am I supposed to get any experience for my future? I have no idea where to start.”



“So many of the summer jobs/opportunities I applied for were cancelled due to COVID-19. These would have been helpful as experience to write on my resume and university applications for next year.”

**65%** Felt they had no way to connect with industry and government to problem-solve, support communities and make a difference

**IN RESPONSE** Youth Culture launched a free virtual Career Discovery & Essentials Certificate program, and Industry Learning Pods for youth to network with industry professionals. [youthculturelearning.com](https://youthculturelearning.com)

IN WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE COULD USE SUPPORT?

**42%**  
Online Education

**42%**  
Finding Opportunities to Connect with Others

**34%**  
Physical and Mental Health

**32%**  
Career Exploration and Information

**5%**  
Don't need any support

## INNOVATIVE YOUTH

Through the struggles of 2020, we were continuously inspired by youth who demonstrated resiliency and courage to push forward to build their futures and make a difference. We've spotlighted a few inspirational youth striving to make positive change.



### NAMIRAH QUADIR

Since March of 2020, Namirah has served as a capacity-building lead of a national COVID-19 response group to coordinate the manufacturing and distribution of more than 50,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to vulnerable communities across Canada. She was recently promoted to president of this organization Project Northern Lights.

### KAMALDEEP DHILLON

Since the pandemic, Kamaldeep has become more involved in supporting youth in her community through youth wellness hubs and Youth Culture initiatives. Kam also found a way to explore her passion for the environment by taking a leadership position in her school's eco-club.



### NUBIA THOMAS

Nubia attended Youth Culture's Be Your Own Boss Entrepreneurship Workshop presented by TD. It was there that Nubia shared her passion for art and business. Nubia has been drawing since she was young and she enjoys both digital and traditional art. Nubia recently opened her own shop on RedBubble and was commissioned by Youth Culture to illustrate their holiday card in 2020.



### JAIMIL DALWADI

By summer 2020, Jaimil realized that he would need to make the most of self-isolation. He decided to take his love for technology to the next level and he became president of his school's Hack Club. He also started building new connections for his career aspirations in quantum computing. He has become a Tech Blogger at Youth Culture and regularly interviews industry professionals for their podcast.



**TAKE ACTION!**

Turn to page 18 to find ways to inspire youth.

## FUTURE CONCERNS

After one year following the outbreak of COVID-19, the roll-out of the vaccine continues and a new fear arises of the highly contagious variants. Young people shared their voice and concerns about the new normal.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

**"THERE WILL BE A TON OF WASTE PRODUCED BY ALL OF THE PPE."**

**"Climate change will be at an all-time high."**

### SOCIAL IMPACT

**"I AM CONCERNED ABOUT HOW THE WORLD WILL WORK WITH THE CONFLICTED MINDSETS OF THE PEOPLE WHO TAKE THE VACCINES AND THOSE WHO DON'T."**

"Because social distancing rules would be over, more people would be leaving their homes more often, and that could promote illegal activities and cause more legal problems with the police and minorities as well."

### ONLINE EDUCATION

**"We need more support if online school continues. Not everyone has their own computer or access to WiFi."**

**"ONLINE SCHOOL NEEDS TO BE ONLY A TEMPORARY FIX WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, IT CANNOT BE THE NEW DEFAULT OPTION."**

**TAKE ACTION!**

Turn to page 18 to find ways to support youth during the pandemic and beyond.



# TAKE ACTION

The time is now to get involved and engaged in the conversation to support youth. There are turn-key strategies and initiatives that government, industry and education sectors can be a part of that will result in impactful change. **Take Action Now** outlines how stakeholders and communities can get involved to support our future leaders.



## TAKE ACTION NOW

Government, Industry and Education sectors all have a part to play engaging young people to build systems of support for mental health and wellness, future skill development, and career opportunities and experience. Community-focused strategies should be tailored to communities including Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, Socio-economically Disadvantaged, Youth with Disabilities, and other underrepresented groups.

COMMUNITY	GOVERNMENT	INDUSTRY	EDUCATION
<b>Black Youth and People of Colour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the establishment of a Youth Hub that showcases virtual volunteering, internships, and job opportunities.</li> <li>• Track the impact of digital skills programs on Black youth and ensure that organizations catering to marginalized Black youth can continue delivering coding and STEM education in pandemic-proof ways.</li> <li>• Participate in Youth Culture's Youth Consortium to connect directly with Black youth, industry, community navigators, and Youth Culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create internship programs through Youth Culture to support Black youth and People of Colour.</li> <li>• Create roles for Black youth representatives on adult committees and advisory boards.</li> <li>• Engage Youth Culture to mobilize focus groups from Black communities for insight on company culture, employee engagement, and product and service initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish new college, university and trade scholarships for Black communities significantly impacted by the pandemic.</li> <li>• Establish connection between school boards in predominantly Black communities in order to provide opportunities and support.</li> <li>• Share relevant and updated resources for a range of support initiatives in consultation with community navigators.</li> </ul>
<b>Indigenous Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Youth Consortium consisting of government, industry, stakeholders, community navigators, and Youth Culture to work with Indigenous people to solidify consistent and reliable supply chains for health and safety, education, and industry.</li> <li>• Establish programs that tap into, and learn from, entrepreneurs in First Nations communities. Many First Nations entrepreneurs have developed their businesses under challenging circumstances and have traditional and innovative strategies for success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in the economy in First Nations communities. For example, in Wiikwemkoong, traditionally the big drivers are sectors like police, education, health, and tourism. Wiikwemkoong's newly-developed light industrial park could be a segue into Canada's Advanced Manufacturing Innovation.</li> <li>• Create a role for Indigenous youth representatives on adult committees and advisory boards.</li> <li>• Engage Youth Culture to mobilize focus groups from Indigenous communities for insight on company culture, employee engagement, and product and service initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the growth of community capacity and implement remote programs to teach youth the skills in technology and app development specific to their needs.</li> <li>• Promote the education of Indigenous ways of teaching and principles to spark inspiration and new ways of innovating through the learnings of traditional culture.</li> <li>• Establish connection between Chiefs, Councils and schools in Indigenous communities in order to establish relationships and connections.</li> <li>• Share relevant and updated resources for a range of support initiatives in consultation with community navigators.</li> </ul>

## TAKE ACTION NOW CONTINUED

COMMUNITY	GOVERNMENT	INDUSTRY	EDUCATION
<b>Socio-economically Disadvantaged Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Youth Ambassador programs with representatives from marginalized communities.</li> <li>Support the establishment of a Youth Hub that showcases virtual volunteering, internships, and job opportunities.</li> <li>Engage Youth Culture to track disadvantaged communities for the purpose of understanding the needs, and mobilizing partnerships to deliver support in food, technology and equipment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in a multi-year community matching program to track the impact of support in a specific community.</li> <li>Create roles for youth from disadvantaged communities to participate as representatives on adult committees and advisory boards.</li> <li>Engage Youth Culture to mobilize focus groups from marginalized communities for future career opportunities and insight on company culture, employee engagement, and product and service initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with community navigators and Youth Culture in order to understand the needs and provide opportunities and support.</li> <li>Establish sponsorship programs that include laptops, food resources and short and long-term educational options for disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>Establish connections between school boards in disadvantaged communities and Youth Culture to provide opportunities and support.</li> </ul>
<b>Youth with Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of mentorship programs like MentorAbility.</li> <li>Support for programs like Humber College's Community Integration through Co-operative Education (CICE) certificate program designed to engage adults with developmental disabilities.</li> <li>Establish entrepreneurial programs to bring together business owners and people with disabilities interested in entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn more about Accessible Workplaces and supported employment through the Canadian Association of Supported Employment (CASE).</li> <li>Schedule a lunch and learn session from Youth Culture about Unconscious Bias from a Youth Lens to Build High Performing Teams.</li> <li>Create roles for youth with disabilities to be representatives on adult committees and advisory boards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share career success stories highlighting people with disabilities in the workforce, particularly stories that promote relevant and potential job opportunities and entrepreneurship. For example, Good Foot Delivery provides meaningful employment for the neurodiverse community through a professional courier service developed via public transit and on foot.</li> <li>Share relevant and updated resources for a range of support initiatives in consultation with organizations for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>

Contact Youth Culture to develop support strategies tailored to your sector. [youthculture.com](https://youthculture.com)

## YOUTH STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT IN 2021

Youth Culture is committed to continuing and enhancing support for youth in 2021 and beyond.

### CAREER DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION

- Free Certificate Program in Career Discovery & Essentials available online for participation in Youth Culture workshops and Industry Learning Pods.
- Virtual meetups with Industry Professionals.
- Development of a career portal to highlight career paths and future industries with employment opportunities.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND UPSKILLING OPPORTUNITIES

- Free workshops to develop in-demand skills through Youth Culture and our partners.
- Free professional development for youth on writing resumes, practicing for interviews, time management, and networking.
- Tailored professional development sessions for newcomers and youth with disabilities.

### YOUTH CONSORTIUM

- Establishment of a Youth Consortium to align support initiatives through bringing together community navigators, government, industry, education, organizations and youth.
- Launch pilot project of pre-teen Youth Council to interact with existing Youth Advisory Council to understand needs of Gen Alpha.

### ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES

- Increased participation in the MentorAbility program to match youth with disabilities to industry professionals.
- Deliver Unconscious Bias workshops to Industry.
- Share accessibility best practices from a workforce onboarding perspective.

### INDUSTRY CLIENTS

- Continue virtual events and workshops highlighting diversity and inclusion in partnership with TD.
- Launch monthly Industry Learning Pods to highlight innovative projects in the Advanced Manufacturing sector and Canada's Superclusters in partnership with NGen.
- Establish frequent networking opportunities with industry experts including Lakeside and MNP.

### EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Support coding workshop delivery to at-risk youth through Mind Fuel partnership.
- Continue outreach to school boards (TDSB partnership confirmed for spring 2021).
- Through partnership with Project Northern Lights (PNL), deliver professional development workshops to newcomers and underrepresented youth
- Continue to promote diverse authors through Celebrating Diversity Book Club in partnership with Anansi Press and Groundwood Books.

Contact [kim.cooper@youthculture.com](mailto:kim.cooper@youthculture.com) to get involved.



# CONCLUSION

**A**s we evolve into the next stage of our journey with the pandemic, it's critical that we listen to the voices of young people from diverse communities and backgrounds. Understanding their experience provides an opportunity to create new and improved support networks and initiatives that will enable students to build resilience, thrive in the new normal, and prepare them for the future.

With great struggle comes a gift of opportunity to help those around us. There's no better time than the present to embark on a journey of change to support the next generation in the facets of mental health and wellness, social connection, future skills development, and career opportunities and networking.

Youth Culture will continue to create meaningful engagement opportunities for young people from the lens of diversity and inclusion. It's never too late to make a difference and support youth in relevant and impactful ways. Youth Culture is proud to be working with TD to find innovative ways to reach and understand youth during these unprecedented times.

Reach out to Youth Culture to discuss how you can play a part in supporting our next generation of leaders and future workforce from an equity, diversity and inclusion lens.

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**To view the digital whitepaper of this report, visit [youthimpactreport.com](https://youthimpactreport.com).**



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**YOUTH**  
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