

Community Development & Social Action **UPDATE**

SUMMER / FALL 2025

My name is Ashionyedue JoyGold Goodluck and I am a Queen's University, first year student. This summer I had the incredible opportunity to work with TNGCS as a Canada Summer Jobs participant, and was able to develop this newsletter. Through my interviews with program staff at TNGCS, I was able to observe the diversity of programs offered and their impact on community. Additionally, I had the opportunity to work at the 1280 Finch Ave. West site, which is a dedicated youth space. This experience allowed me to gain the perspectives and stories of youth that use the site. Additionally, I provided my perspective as a youth at community meetings like the Downsview Community Resource Group, informing the Downsview Park Development. This experience allowed me to reflect on the importance of youth voices, within change making spaces. I plan to portray the qualities that TNGCS instilled in me this summer as I enter my new community at Queen's University.



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Kensington Legal Clinic Update

Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal services is funded by Legal Aid Ontario to provide free legal services. They support community members with legal support on housing law, social assistance law, and immigration law to name a few. KBCLS legal services emphasizes the importance of community legal education as a key tool towards poverty reduction. This helps individuals know their rights and navigate their journey towards attaining justice. They also assist other programs at TNGCS with building their awareness of legal issues, with eviction protection being their busiest and most in demand service.

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION SESSION



Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services

***"People are only as strong as their
knowledge of what their rights are."***
- Elsie Dickson

This year, the KBCLS team focused on engaging youth to equip them with valuable knowledge on law. This was done through high school visits, working with ESL classes and training agency staff. A total of 26 students took part. The KBCLS Team also gives high school students, paralegal and law students a chance to do co-op placements to learn more about legal issues.

PRO BONO STUDENT SERVICES CANADA

This year Chief Justice Richard Wagner observed the work students did in partnership with KBCLS. The clinic, hosted by KBCLS, involved volunteers from Pro Bono Students Canada, which provides free legal support to people facing barriers. Chief Justice Wagner reviewed projects worked on in real time by students, providing feedback and engagement. He presented to 50 students about how access to Pro Bono legal services helps improve access to justice within the community.



Photo credit: Hugo Tavera

DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Disability Support program was started to increase accessibility to financial benefits for people living with physical and mental health disabilities. It promotes access to income maintenance and the Canada Pension Plan and supports the appeal process when people's claims are denied. When asked how KBCLS impacts poverty reduction in communities, Director Elsie Dickson states:

"TNG has no wrong door policy, regardless of your needs, when you connect with TNG and it is identified that you need support, you will get the support you need. From getting individuals to access as much funds as they are entitled to, to educating people on their rights, and supporting tenants facing eviction, it is all part of the work to help folks out of poverty".

Elsie Dickson

Update from Harm Reduction Services

TNGCS's supervised consumption site, located in Kensington Market, works to protect people using drugs from overdose. The goal is to create a space where people using drugs are able to use in a safe and secure environment. The program was started in 2017, when harm reduction activists set up a tent in Moss Park, to supervise injections in the community. Provincial funding was obtained but withdrawn by the Conservative government in 2019. The Province required all the Supervised Consumption sites to reapply for funding under a new name, Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS). TNGCS applied for funding but were not successful. At that time, a commitment was made to continue running the sites with donations to TNGCS, for as long as the community can raise funds. A team of part-time staff with lived experience of drug use now works to engage, empathize and respond to users in times of crisis in a safe environment.



Kensington Market Overdose Prevention Site (KMOPS)

LEGAL ACTION AGAINST BILL 223

On December 10th, 2024 The Neighbourhood Group Community Services (TNGCS) started legal action against Bill 223, the Community Care and Recovery Act, which was recently passed in the Ontario Legislature. The act demands forced closures of supervised consumption sites which would result in an increase in drug related deaths. The bill, passed without debate, enabled the closure of Kensington Market Overdose Prevention Site (KMOPS), which is currently run by TNGCS. The Act prohibits such sites from operating within 200 metres of schools and childcare centres.

TNGCS created an application debating the bill's violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, stating that it is unconstitutional as it intrudes on the rights of individuals within Canada's exclusive jurisdiction over criminal law. This resulted in an injunction as on March 28th, 2025 the court granted the order that would allow all ten supervised consumption sites slated to close on March 31, to remain open until a final decision is given by the court.



For more information on the Kensington Market Overdose Prevention Site (KMOPS) and updates about our charter challenge, visit our website at <https://tngcommunityto.org/>

Update From Community Support Services

Independent Living

For over 55 years, the community support/independent living sector of TNG has engaged with seniors of diverse Toronto communities through different clinics and supports. The work also expands to operate many types of care facilities that support wellness needs that the seniors may have.

SENIORS ON THE GO

TNGCS continues the work in partnership with Toronto Ride to provide transportation for seniors to go out, attend medical appointments, shop and do banking. This initiative is a client fee based service with clients paying a fee per kilometer travelled. They are invoiced by one of the 14 agency partners, with subsidies provided if needed.



AIR CONDITIONING PROJECT

In the summer, the City of Toronto ran a lottery air conditioning pilot program designed for low income seniors to ensure a healthier indoor environment. Seniors were able to enter a draw to win an air conditioner. Toronto recorded six heat waves, and 14 days of temperatures over 32 degrees celsius this summer. TNGCS worked to sign up clients for the city-led initiative and congratulated the winning seniors on their new air conditioners.



INCOME TAX CLINIC

In 2025 our Income Tax Clinic served approximately 100 seniors. The clinic helped seniors access the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). When seniors do not file their taxes, they are at risk of losing the benefits of the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) and Guaranteed Income Supplement, causing detrimental financial impact.



FUNDS FOR FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity continues to rise for seniors due to rising inflation. TNGCS gave out grocery cards and cleaning products to ease financial stress. These supports also enable the maintenance of senior wellness and health.



SENIORS CASE MANAGEMENT

TNGCS works with East Toronto Health Partnership, Michael Garron Hospital, other clinical providers and the community to navigate pathways to care for clients with complex health issues. The Community Support/Independent Living team is comprised of one Assessment and Outreach Worker, a Complex Care Coordinator, two Intensive Case Managers and three Community Workers Together, the team works to provide accessible health and wellness support for seniors in the community.



IMPACT ON POVERTY REDUCTION

When seniors have access to supports such as housing, transportation, meals, and personal administration they are more likely to have stable and adequate incomes and live independently.

“TNG is aware of the issues that affect seniors regularly and the team is always looking for grants and opportunities to advocate with the city of Toronto and MPPs to provide services and lift people up”

Joselen Liguori

Community Support/Independent Living

Update from Settlement LGBTQ+ Newcomer Program: Rainbow Connect

RAINBOW CONNECT



Rainbow Connect provides dedicated support to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Many program participants are refugee claimants or newcomers who have fled their home countries due to the homophobic culture, brutal violence and psychological violence that they've experienced because of their sexual orientation. Rainbow Connect strives to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive space where individuals can access the service that they need. The program also promotes access to housing, jobs, resume support, work permits, connections, and referrals to food banks.

As well as Rainbow Connect, Newcomer Services offers many other services – TNGCS offers 12 English Classes every week for newcomers. Our Women's Program bi-lingual staff support multicultural women to maintain their cultures and religion while getting support to succeed in Canada. Our Perinatal Settlement Program supports hundreds of pregnant women starting their families in Canada."



FRIDAY WORKSHOPS

The Friday workshops in the Rainbow Connect program support newcomers to connect, learn about a variety of topics including employment; rights as LGBTQ+ newcomers; the refugee claim process; physical, mental and sexual health services and much more. The program invites workers from different fields to bring information on their careers and their field of work, thereby encouraging newcomers in their journey. Furthermore, the structure of the program aims to provide a reliable source of support and information.



PRIDE

In June 2025 more than 190 staff and participants from TNGCS attending the Pride Parade held in downtown Toronto. This event encourages the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to express themselves within Canada. Many people carried banners and posters to further express themselves with words of motivation, solidarity and hope. The Pride Parade helps to create an environment that promotes empowerment and joy for all participants. It is a very meaningful event for members of the Rainbow Connect community to celebrate their sexual orientation and gender diversity, after many experienced abuse and oppression in their country of origin.



IMPACT ON POVERTY REDUCTION

“By supporting newcomers and giving them reliable information they can settle more quickly and be independent in their needs. With the support of food, shelter and clothing it is much easier to go back to school and study, which also makes it easier to find work and get on track. Poverty is reduced when individuals can afford their place, afford food and give back to their community”.

Josie Ngwachi

Community Worker, Settlement – LGBTQ+

MEMBER ADVOCACY COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Member Advocacy Committee (MAC), operating out of TNGCS's Corner Drop In, is a group composed of people with lived experience of homelessness, poverty, and disability who work together to advocate for social change. They are able to apply their lived experience, alongside knowledge gained from interactions with people who share their lived experience to advocate for increased community services and supports. MAC takes action through advocacy to all levels of government, and have recently spoke out to City committees about poverty, policing, shelters, housing and harm reduction.

This summer MAC members engaged in community outreach, welcomed a new member and prepared to engage in the upcoming City budget community input process for the 2026 budget. They also wrote two grant applications to support community art making projects in Kensington Market.

Corner Drop-In Coordinator Jules Montgomery supported the MAC this summer. She joined Roberta from the MAC to attend a housing and renters summit organized by local Member of Provincial Parliament Jessica Bell. They strategized about rental housing solutions with tenant association advocates and others, determining ways to fight unfare rent hikes and evictions.

Photo below is of Roberta Taylor of the MAC and Catherine Feldman Axford who heads up our TNGCS Eviction Prevention in the Community program. They took part in an eviction prevention summit at Queen's Park.



Youth Employment Post Card Report Launch

TNGCS launched the Toronto Youth Employment Post Card Report at City Hall on August 7th, 2025. This took place following the success of the Toronto City Council motion to create 10,000 additional youth jobs by Summer 2026. The August event was attended by 100 people including stakeholders and youth. The program included a press conference, a report share back session with an opportunity for youth to share feedback as well as a Policy Panel/Roundtable and Community Call-to-Action.

BACKGROUND

Based on the feedback from 7,265 youth who submitted postcards outlining their need for summer employment, the findings highlighted the importance of accessible, growth oriented job opportunities. The report made clear that young people want to work, grow, and contribute, but they need a system that sees their potential and sets them up to succeed.

With the increase in youth violence, and the growing rates of youth unemployment rising 3.2 percentage points since May 2024, this report calls attention to the impact of unemployment and its effects on youths and communities. It highlights impacts that specifically affect Black, Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+, disabled, low-income, and justice-involved youth; along with those living in Toronto Community Housing and Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.



Heather Macdonald, CEO United Way of GTA



Youth stand behind report findings

Zero Waste Women's Project Empowers Community Leaders

The Zero Waste Women's Project showcases strong leadership of women from diverse cultural backgrounds. Led by five women from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and China, the initiative involves independent planning and delivery of a series of workshops focused on zero-waste gardening. The women educate the community on practical ways to reduce emissions.

With support from TNGCS, the group successfully secured a Neighbourhood Climate Action Grant from the City of Toronto. The project officially launched on April 28th, 2025 with an introductory discussion on zero waste gardening. Participants learned about seed starting, composting and hydroponic gardening. A hydroponic gardening kit was purchased, allowing participants to grow a variety of vegetables. The women showcased alternative food growing methods suitable for small spaces, an approach to combat climate change by producing minimal greenhouse gas emissions. The hydroponic garden plants are now thriving, reflecting the dedication, care, and hard work of the women behind the project. A field trip was also organized to Allan Gardens, where participants were fascinated to discover plants that are over 100 years old.

The Zero Waste project is more than just an initiative. It serves as a platform to empower and cultivate new community leaders. TNGCS is proud to support these women who were able to share their traditional knowledge.

