



## **Youth Voices Matter in North Oakville – a youth collective impact project**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY - January 2017**

#### **Background**

Our research tells us that meaningful relationships between youth and adults and youth and their peers is the key to promoting child and youth positive development, fostering assets and well-being, as well as protecting from at-risk behaviours like bullying.

Our goal in North Oakville\* is to increase mental well-being and decrease at-risk behaviour in youth (Gr. 7 – 10) by increasing meaningful relationship assets by 10% in their North Oakville neighborhood by June 2020.

In the Spring of 2015, the North Oakville\* neighbourhood was identified by a committee of regional professionals\*\* as a vulnerable neighbourhood with great opportunities. Some concerns about the community included high social risk index, high bullying and low social cohesion, high interaction between youth and police, high number of CAS calls, and high referrals for mental health.

Some opportunities in North Oakville included that both the Oakville YMCA and Halton Region have identified this neighbourhood as high needs, lots of development opportunities by Town, professionals are community minded, neighbourhood has representation by both school boards, and the ability to access youth. Most recently, part of this neighbourhood was selected by a separate OKN work group to target Early Years development.

In the summer of 2016, youth focus groups were conducted by Our Kids Network, Oakville YMCA and Community Action for Youth to elicit their voice about the neighbourhood. Approximately, 75 youth were engaged in the focus groups. Three themes emerged:

- 1. Need space for unstructured hang out time**
- 2. Value meaningful relationships with adults but don't feel valued by community**
- 3. Need help connecting to community and to resources**

We have received Ontario Trillium funding to hire a project coordinator for one year to collaborate with community stakeholders in the development of an action plan.

Key areas of work will also include a fulsome youth engagement strategy and an evaluation plan.

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\* North Oakville is defined by the neighbourhood South of Dundas, North of QEW, West of Trafalgar Rd. and East of Neyagawa Blvd.

\*\* Committee includes OKN, Halton Region, Halton Police, ROCK, HDSB, HCDSB, Halton CAS and youth. Once North Oakville was identified, Town of Oakville, Oakville YMCA, Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre and Community Youth Action Network joined.