



CENTRE DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE  
**BLACK CREEK**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

# High Priority Community Strategy: A community-led response to COVID-19 in Northwest Toronto (NWT)

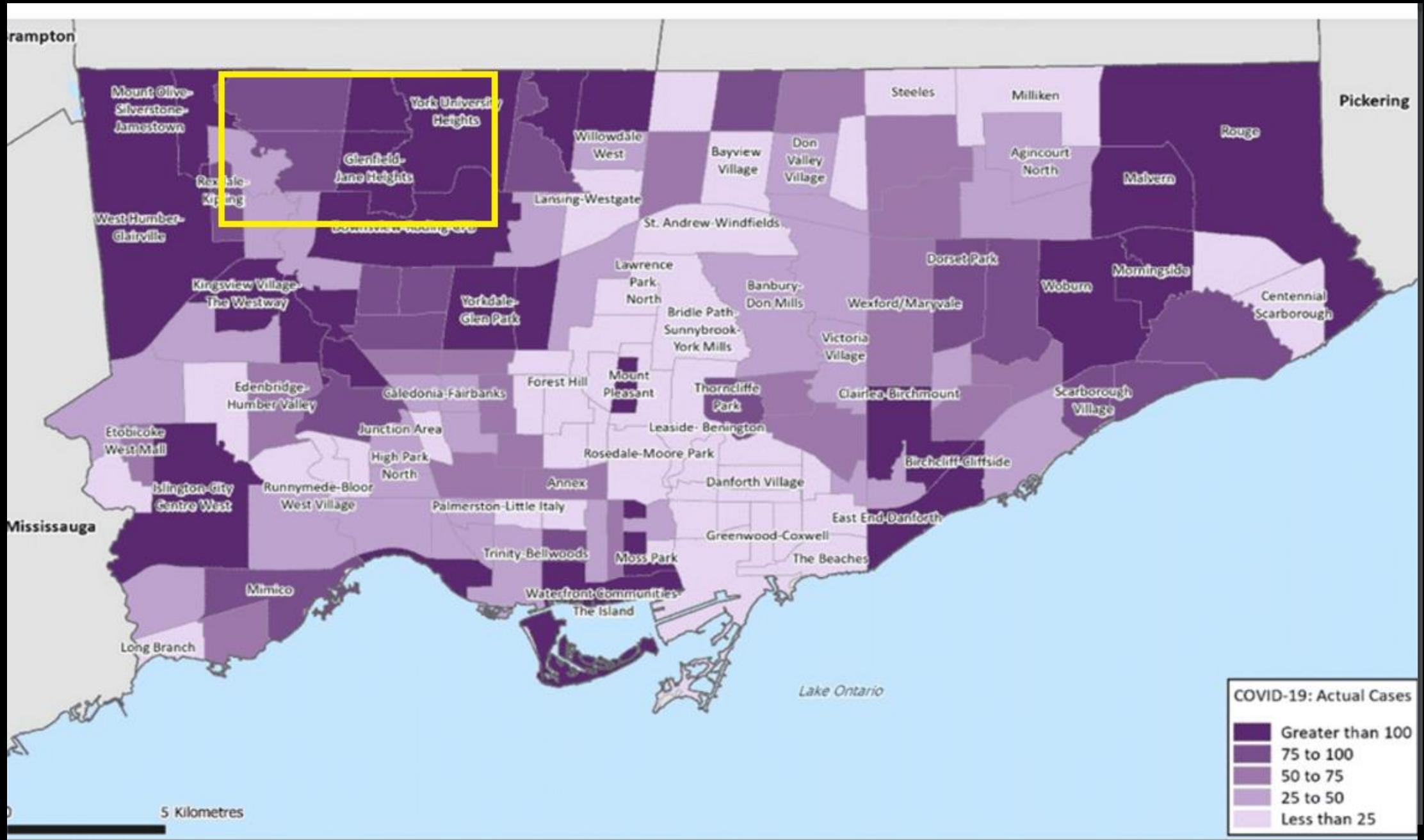
Building More Equitable Communities:  
Moving Ontario's HPCS From the Margins to the Mainstream  
Toronto Metropolitan University  
May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

**Cheryl Prescod**  
**Executive Director**  
**Black Creek Community Health Centre**

# COVID-19 Pandemic: Early Warning signs in NWT

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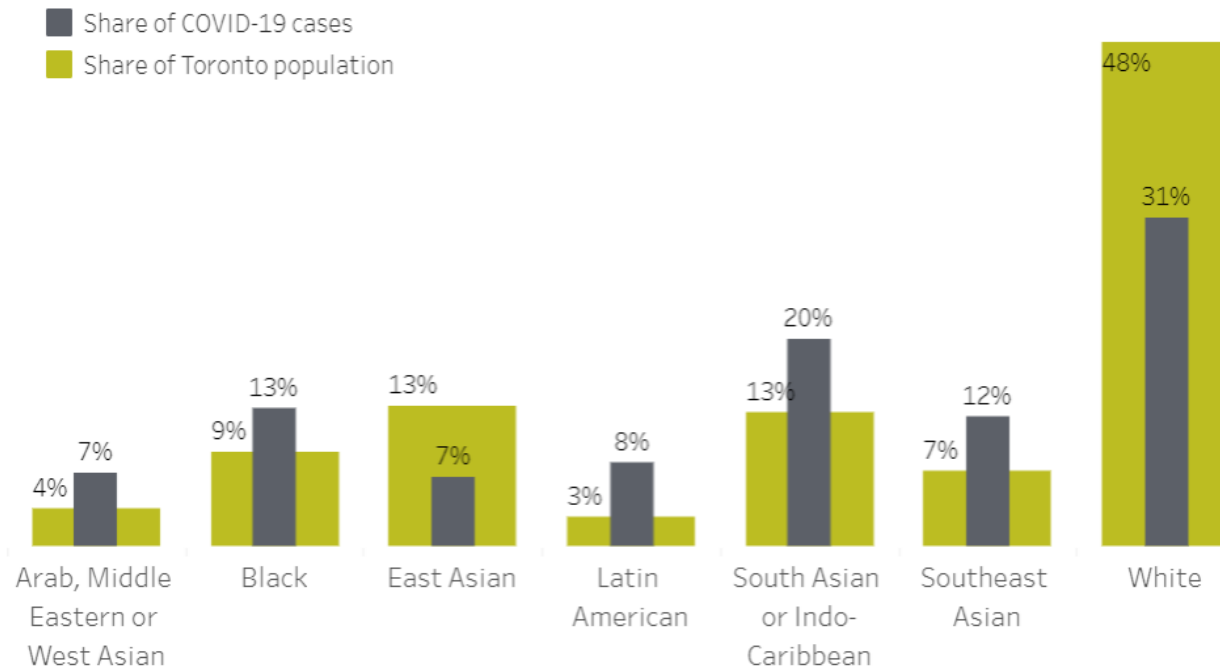


# Population characteristics



- Based on risk-factors for virus transmission, no surprise COVID-19 disproportionately impacted NWT area: high number of low income, Black and racialized populations.
- High material deprivation levels = High COVID-19 rates.

Share of COVID-19 cases among ethno-racial groups compared to the share of people living in Toronto, with valid data up to December 31, 2021 (N=139,965)



## Toronto's COVID-19 divide: The city's northwest corner has been 'failed by the system'

We take a deep dive into the neighbourhoods hardest hit by the coronavirus — where community advocates say officials should have acted faster on evidence suggesting they would be vulnerable.

By [Jennifer Yang](#) Investigative Reporter  
[Kate Allen](#) Climate Change Reporter  
[Rachel Mendleson](#) Staff Reporter  
[Andrew Bailey](#) Data Analyst  
 Sun., June 28, 2020 | 15 min. read

Article was updated Dec. 22, 2021



# COVID-19 Pandemic Response in NWT

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**Community Engagement and Ambassador Program**



**Access to Vaccines and Testing**

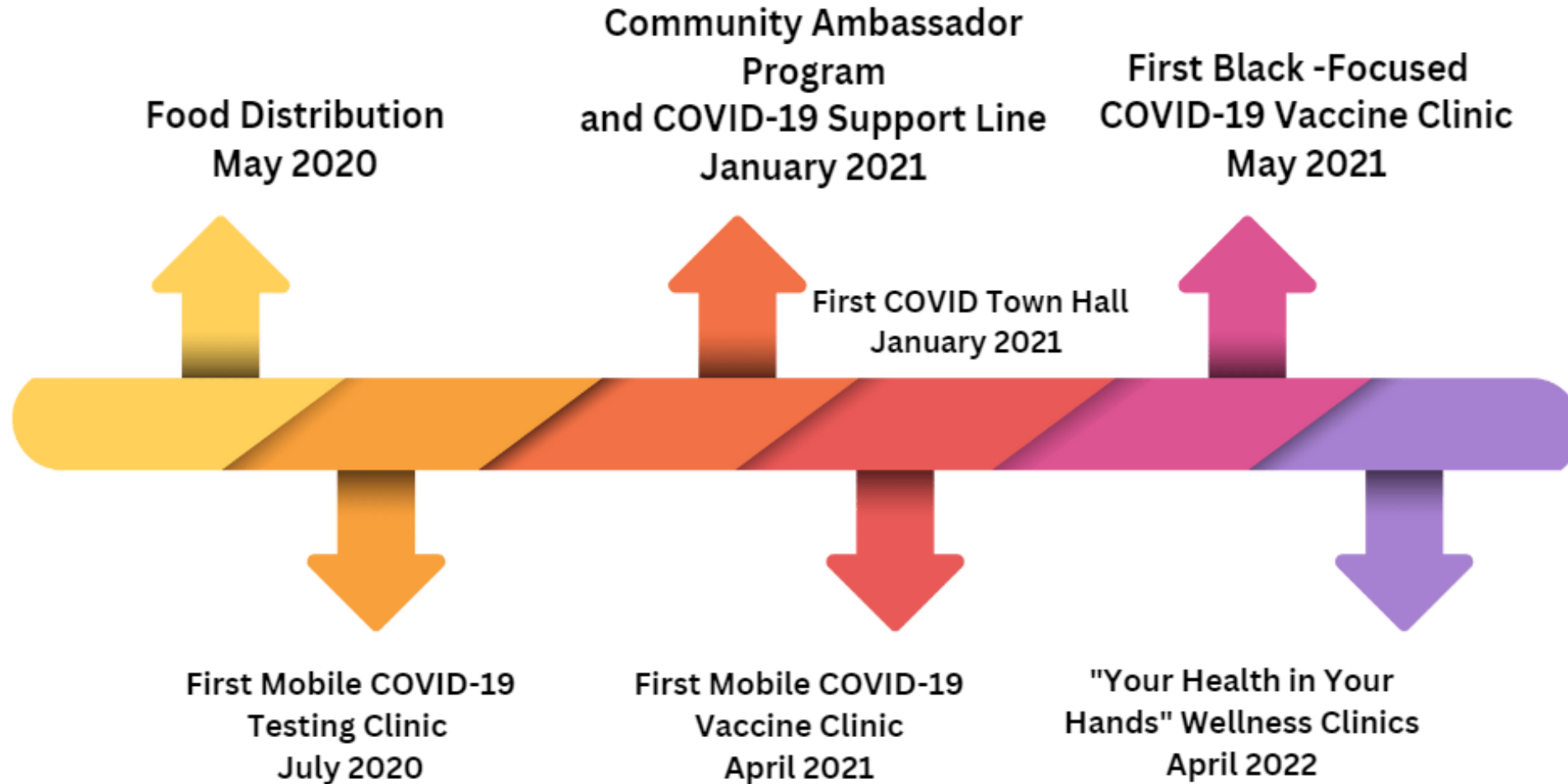


**Wrap-around Supports and Preventative Screening**



**Applying an Equity Lens to a hyper-local COVID-19 Response Strategy**

# Community-led Strategy built to Address Inequities



# Strong Community Engagement

- Community Ambassadors as Trust-builders
- Existing social and relational networks utilized to engage with community members and reduce stigma associated with COVID-19 Vaccines and Testing
- Trends identified in community to support planning and implementation of local clinic activities, outreach and engagement



**35**  
COMMUNITY  
AMBASSADORS  
**8** SPOKEN  
LANGUAGES

**5038**  
COMMUNITY  
AMBASSADORS  
HOURS



# Community-led Testing & Vaccine Clinics

## Vax The Northwest

at  York University

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 2022  
11 A.M. - 7 P.M.



Protect our community - get the COVID-19 vaccine.

For adults and kids over 5.

>700 mobile & pop-up community clinics working with >35 partners





# Black focused clinics & community health fairs

**BLACK CREEK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE CELEBRATES**

All COVID-19 safety protocols will be in effect - please remember to maintain social distance, wash/sanitize hands frequently & wear a mask for your protection & others. This event catered to children, youth, & student-athletes.

**BLACK HISTORY & YOUTH HEALTH**

**\*COVID Vaccine Clinic\***  
**\*Rapid Testing Kits\***  
**\*COVID Information\***

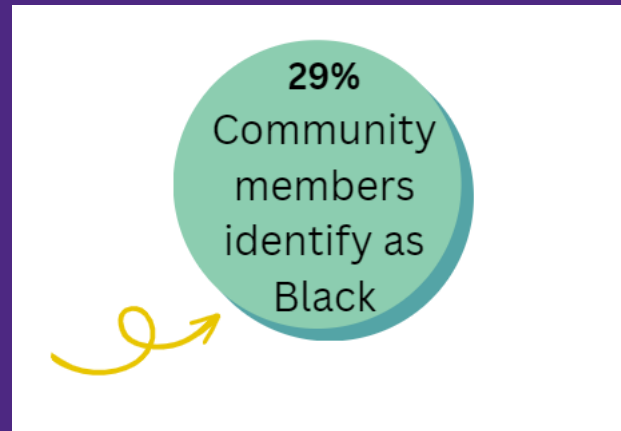
**\*Live Podcast on the Impact of the Pandemic on Youth & Student Athletes\***

**\*Hair Cuts\***  
**\*Simple Braids\***  
 (arrive early w/ clean & detangled hair)

**\*Business Booths\***  
**\*Health Exhibits\***  
**\*Gifts & Giveaways\***

**Location: Black Creek Community Health Centre, 1 Yorkgate Blvd. (Yorkgate Mall)**  
**Date: Feb. 26th 2022 | Time: 12 PM to 6 PM**

Logos: UHN, Black Creek Community Health Centre, BPAO, Afri-Can FoodBasket



> 100 Community health fairs & townhall sessions

**EMANCIPATION WEEKEND HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC**

FOR THE BLACK, AFRICAN & CARIBBEAN COMMUNITIES

**JULY 31st & AUGUST 1st**  
**10 a - 6 p**  
 FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED

**SPECIAL COMMEMORATION of EMANCIPATION DAY**  
 August 1st, 2021  
 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm EST

**LIVE MUSIC STEELPAN DRUMMING**

**SERVICES INCLUDE:**

- **COVID-19 INFO & VACCINE CLINIC**  
 1ST & 2ND DOSES AVAILABLE OF PFIZER & MODERNA WHILE SUPPLIES LAST  
 12+ YEARS OF AGE
- **BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS**
- **BLOOD GLUCOSE TESTING**
- **COVID-19 TESTING**

OHIP NOT REQUIRED, BRING ID

**JAMAICAN CANADIAN CENTRE**  
**995 ARROW ROAD**  
 FINCH & HWY 400

FOR MORE INFORMATION: **CAFCAN**

Logos: UHN, Black Creek Community Health Centre, BPAO, Afri-Can FoodBasket, CAFCAN, JCA Ontario, JCA Toronto

# Wrap-around supports



**17357**  
CALLS AND  
MESSAGES TO  
COVID-19 SUPPORT  
LINE

**> 8 000**  
PCR TESTS AND  
REFERRALS TO  
TESTING

**> 150 000**  
PPE AND RATS  
DISTRIBUTED



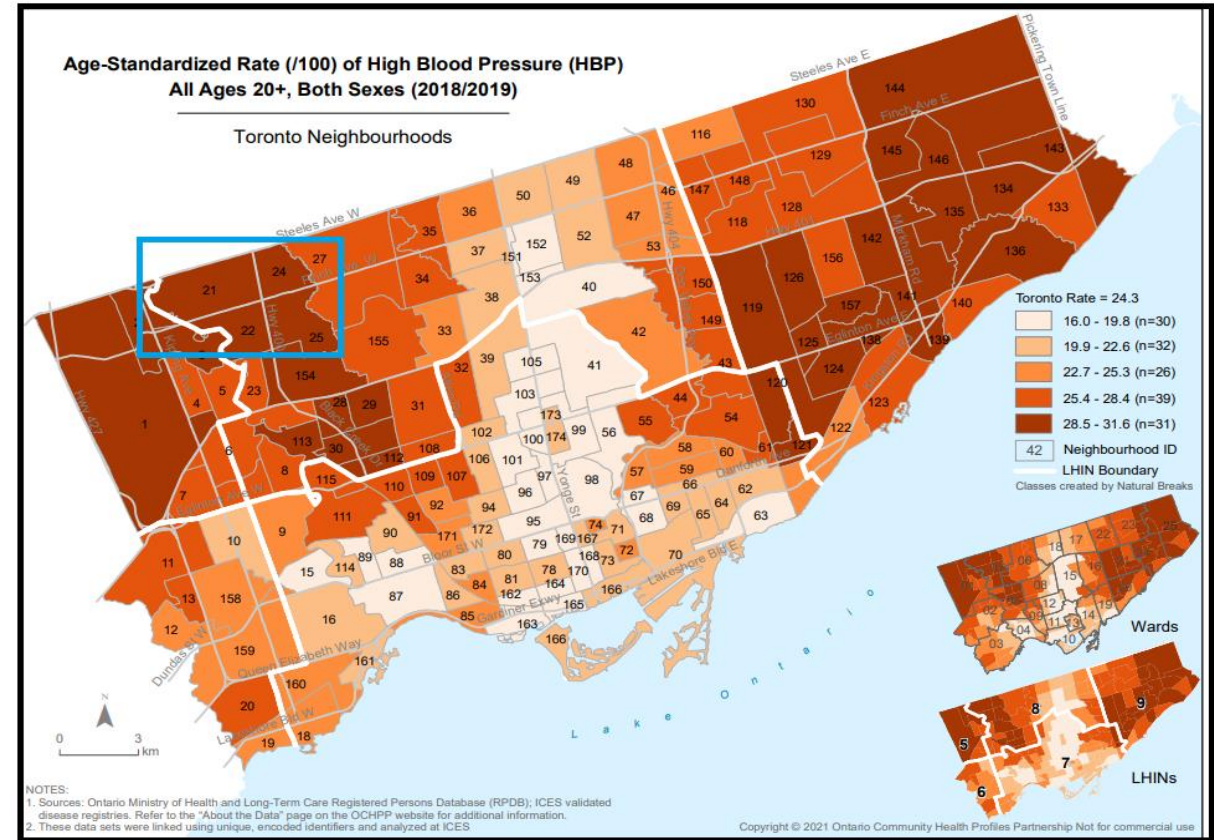
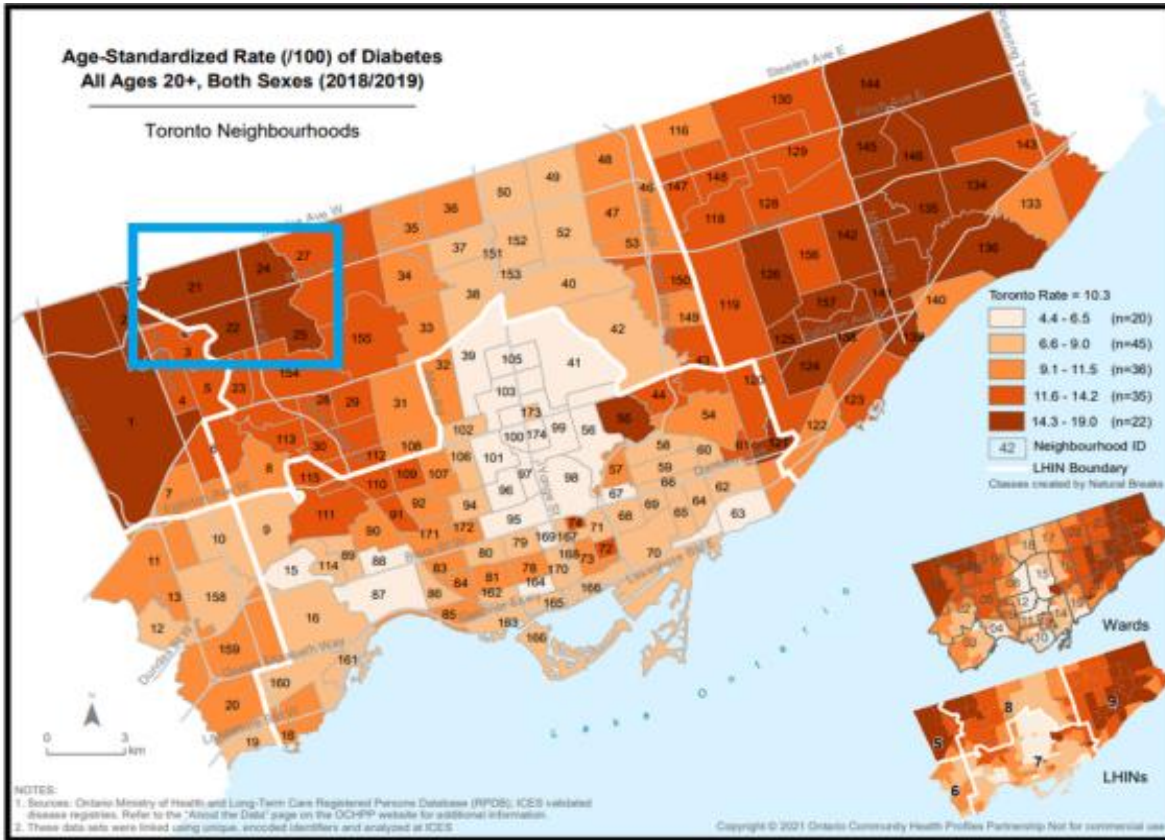
**>100 000**  
VACCINATIONS

**33 436**  
HOT MEALS,  
GROCERIES  
AND FOOD  
VOUCHERS  
DISTRIBUTED





# Preventative Health Screenings



**1743**  
**BLOOD SUGAR**  
**CHECKS**

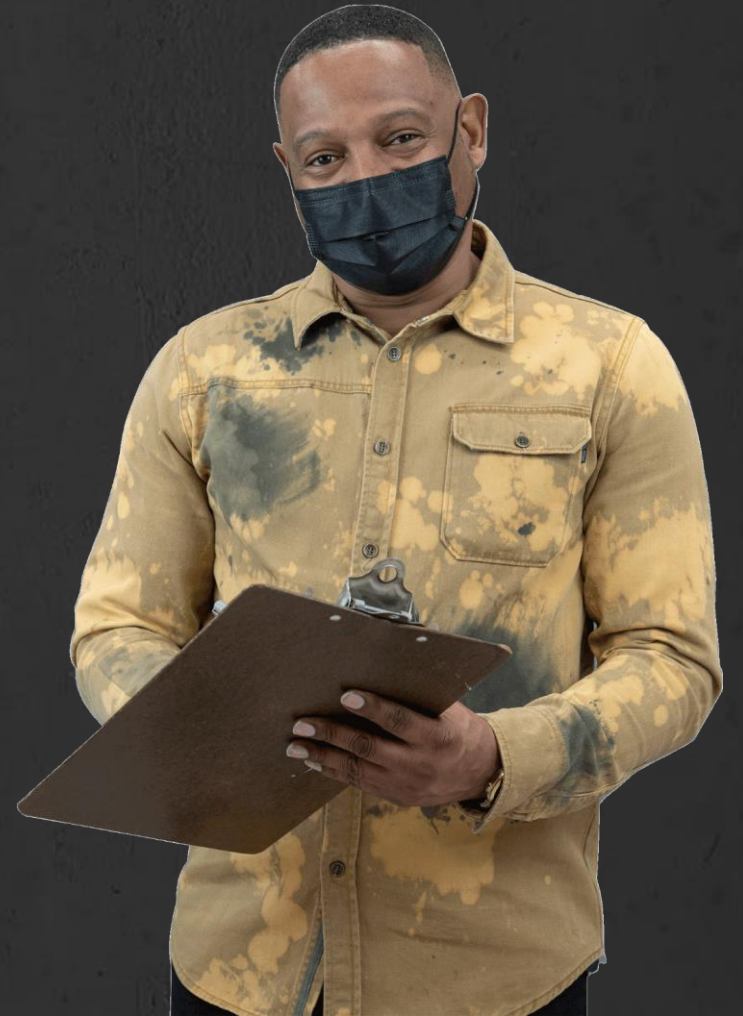
**Your Health In Your  
Hands Wellness Clinics**  
> 60 Health workshops  
& training sessions held

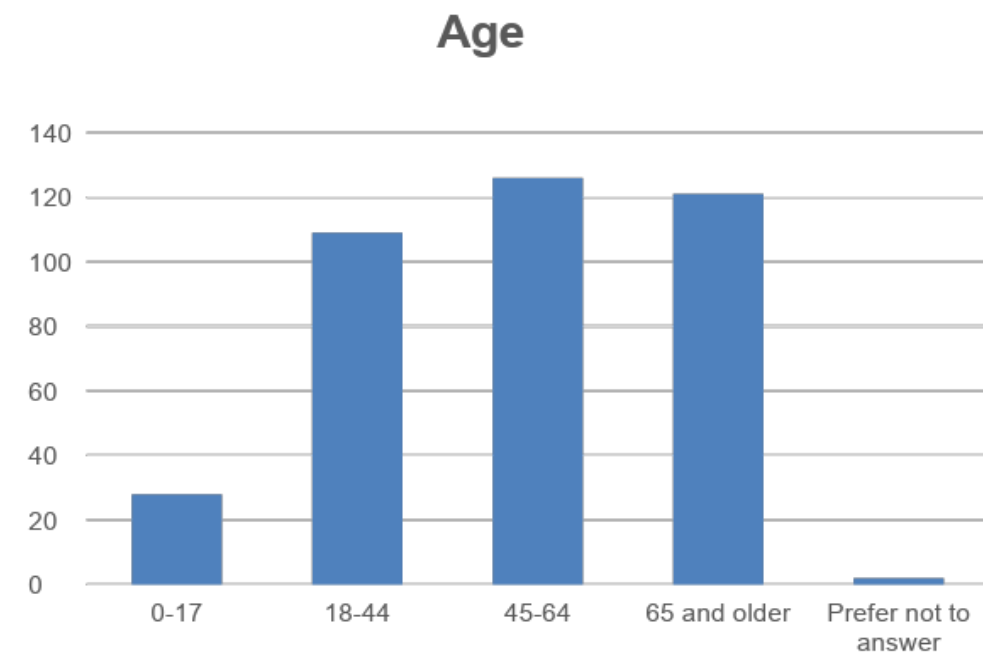
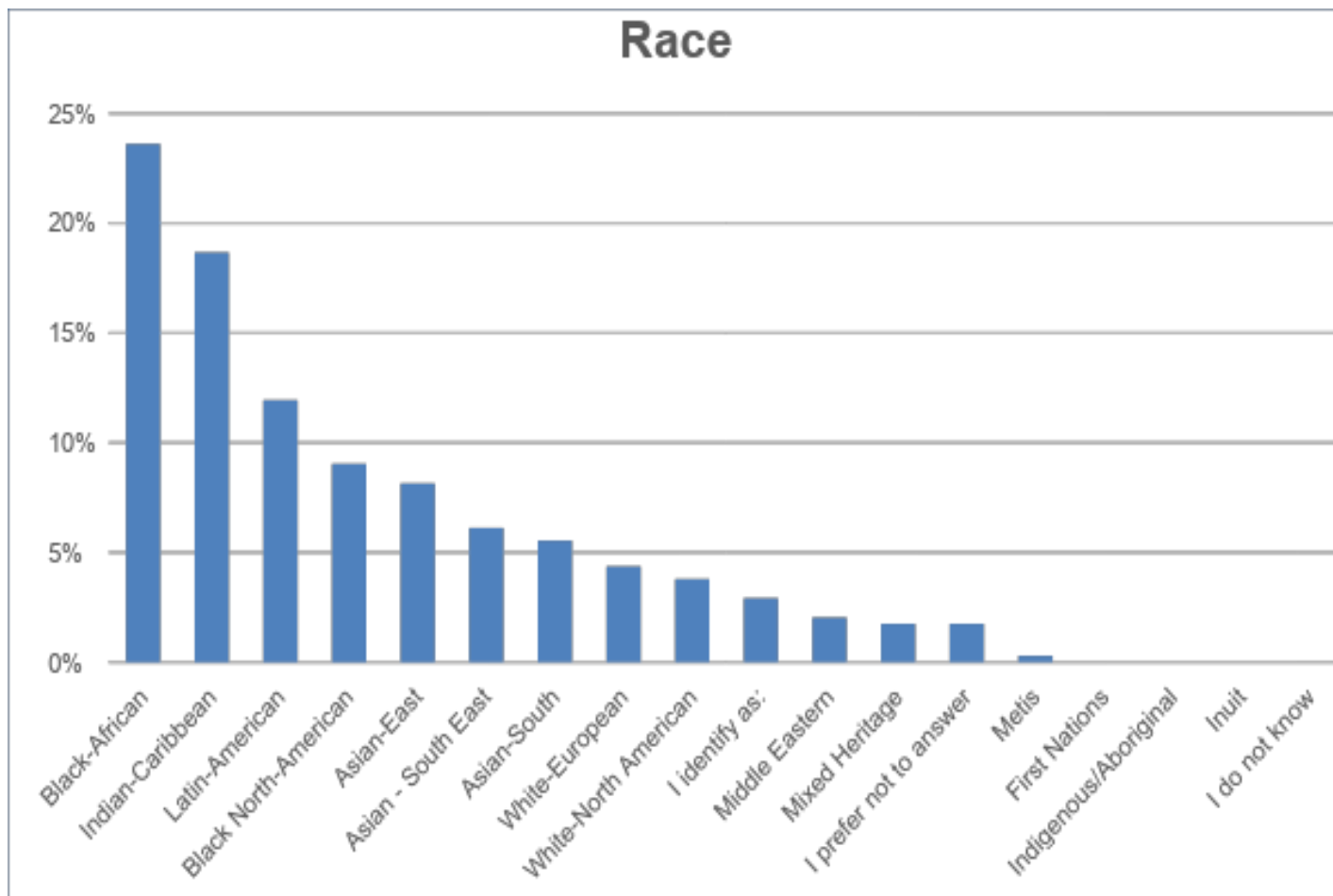


**2126**  
**BLOOD PRESSURE**  
**CHECKS**

# Measuring access through data collection

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# Some Lessons Learned from Pandemic Response in NWT



# 1

Important to understand health care access barriers during public health emergencies and how to provide adequate resources for vulnerable populations (especially in under-resourced neighbourhoods – achieved through OH's HPCS)



# 2

Populations have good knowledge of COVID-19 infection risks and safety measures (masks, hand washing) BUT their living conditions hindered their ability to isolate – Referrals to isolation hotels were useful

# 3

Many deterred from going to hospitals due to long wait times (no paid sick time) and fear of contracting infection – community clinics and care options utilized

# 4

Mental health worsened during pandemic for those with increased psychological vulnerability – based on interrelationships between MH & discrimination, prior trauma, poor housing, lower employment options, fewer social networks

# 5

Barriers to chronic disease management – due to poor health literacy, lack of trust in healthcare providers, improper medication usage



# How can lessons learned inform health service delivery in NWT?

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# 1

Continue to address challenges encountered during the pandemic that were compounded in certain population groups and communities: strained workforce (burnout & illnesses), inadequate virtual care infrastructure (affected both providers and clients)

# 2

Prioritize communities dealing with low income, racialized and uninsured individuals whose poor health outcomes resulted in higher COVID-19 infection and mortality rates

# 3

Resource HSPs in under-resourced areas that were stretched thin but rose to challenge (used to working with lean resources but resulted in increased staff burnout)



# 4

Incentivize community healthcare agencies that displayed innovation through community engagement and partnerships to address health inequities

# 5

Embed Community Health Ambassadors in care model as key enablers of health service delivery in underserved communities. They can spearhead efforts to prevent, screen, and manage Chronic Diseases through “high touch care”, improving adherence to care plans and public health measures





# *Thanks to our Community Health Ambassadors & Partners in Care “nothing for us without us”*

Asante Soccer Club

BPAO

CAFCAN

Brothers & Sisters Keepers

Caribbean Island Food

City of Toronto

CMHA Toronto

Community Health Ambassadors

Emery Keelesdale NPLC

Epiphany Foods

Greenwin Property Management

Humber River FHT

Humber River Hospital

Imdadul Mosque

Jamaican Canadian Association

Jane Finch Centre

Latin American COVID Taskforce

LOFT

Lumacare

Parrot Nest

San Romanoway Revitalization Association

SCAGO

Shoreham Community Activities

St. Stephen’s Church of Downsview

Tobermory Community Activities

Toronto Catholic District School Board

Toronto Community Housing

Toronto District School Board

Toronto Parks Forestry & Recreation

Toronto Public Health

UHN

Unison Community services

Thank You

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Care We  
Deserve

