

OCTOBER 2021

ARTWORK: Onika Datta, *Girl empowered*



turning points

IMPACT
REPORT

LET'S
START UP!

LIFE THROUGH
A LENS



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.





A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Heather M. McGregor

Heather M. McGregor,
YWCA Toronto Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the fall edition of *Turning Points*. As 2021 draws to a close, YWCA Toronto continues to ensure that we build back better for the women, girls and gender diverse people in our communities who have been most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know that the journey to an equitable recovery is a long one, but there are reasons to be hopeful—some of which you will read about in this issue.

In September we launched a promising new entrepreneurship program, in collaboration with the Lise Watier Foundation, which will support women's economic recovery from the pandemic. Meanwhile, our Girls' Centre continues to be a lifeline for girls in Scarborough. You will see from the photography created during a recent project, *Point of View*, that these young leaders and talented artists give us much to be optimistic about.

Perhaps most encouraging of all has been the incredible show of support from our community at the 40th **Women of Distinction Awards Gala**, which we held virtually this year. The event was an opportunity to connect with joy and appreciate one another, as well as a chance to honour the contributions of this year's recipients

We do appreciate you, so much. It is your deep care and commitment that fills us with hope even in the most challenging of times. All of your generous contributions, at the Women of Distinction Awards and throughout the year, enable us to continue empowering and equipping women, girls and gender diverse people to recover from this pandemic in the months to come. Thank you for your support.

TURNING POINTS NEWSLETTER

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LIFE THROUGH A LENS:

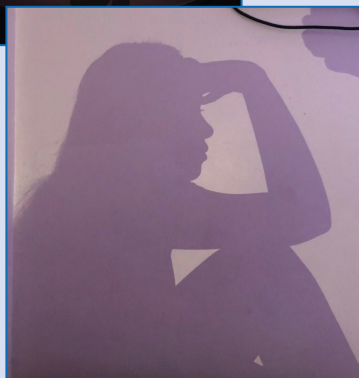
POWERFUL YOUNG VOICES AT YWCA TORONTO'S GIRLS' CENTRE

For the girls who come to YWCA Toronto's Girls' Centre, it has been a tough year.

Thanks to our donors, we have been able to provide online programming and support to more than 150

First, their lives were turned upside down by the pandemic, which cancelled school and social activities, blanked out milestones like prom and graduation, and left girls isolated at home. Then, when the bigger social reckoning with anti-Black racism began, many of our participants identified, painfully, with the stories of systemic racism and discrimination that were told, and experienced a second wave of trauma.

Through it all, our Girls' Centre has offered a place to be heard, safe spaces to socialize and connect, and chances to continue growing and learning when, for many girls, it feels like their world and opportunities are shrinking.



girls over the past 18 months, even extending programs into the school vacation to help bridge the gap of isolation in a far-from-normal summer.

One of the highlights of our programming this year has been our *Point of View* project, which allowed participants to reflect on this strange period through a different lens, turning to photography as a way to explore issues impacting their lives and express their unique perspectives. The resulting images are compelling and showcase the immensely powerful voices of these incredible young women.



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Nominate her for a
Woman of Distinction
award.



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YWCA
Women of Distinction
TORONTO

NOMINATION DEADLINE:
Monday, November 1, 2021

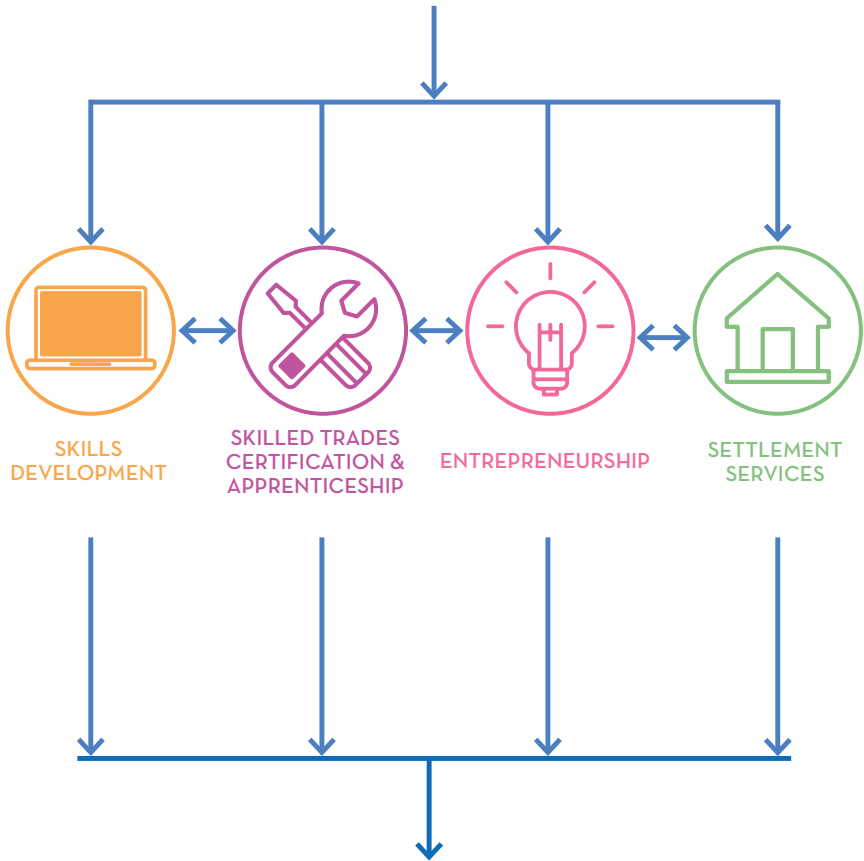
Nominate a
Woman of Distinction
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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN & WORK

From March 2020 to February 2021, women accounted for more than half (53.7%) of year-over-year job losses.

By December 2020, single-parent mothers with children under age 6 were working -38.5% fewer hours than they were in February 2020.

Of the women healthcare workers in Ontario who contracted COVID in 2020, 45% were immigrants and refugees.



Each year, YWCA Toronto's comprehensive range of employment and training programs help more than 7,000 women and gender diverse people find their path into work and economic security. We could not do this vital work without the support of our donors. **Thank you!**



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
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LET'S START UP!

In the wake of a devastating year for women in the labour market, YWCA Toronto has teamed up with the Lise Watier Foundation to boost women's re-entry into the workforce.

We are thrilled to launch the *Let's Start Up* program, which will provide training and individual coaching to aspiring entrepreneurs interested in establishing a business.

During the pandemic, thousands of women in Toronto have been pushed out of the workforce as they lost their jobs, had their hours reduced, or took on additional child care and household responsibilities.

The *Let's Start Up* program responds directly to the challenges created by the pandemic, by giving women more sustainable pathways back into employment and allowing them the flexibility to balance

economic security with the realities of raising a family or pursuing further education.

While participating in the program, women will be supported to grow their networks, expand their entrepreneurial and professional skills, and build their confidence—with the ultimate goal of achieving financial independence.

Let's Start Up first launched in Quebec four years ago and has since helped more than 500 women develop their skills through training, individual coaching and financial support. Our partnership with the Lise Watier Foundation will bring this innovative program to women in Ontario for the first time and will add to YWCA Toronto's expansive suite of employment and training opportunities for women and gender diverse people.

"Our innovative program supports women's professional development to help them regain confidence in their capacities and reach financial independence. We strongly believe that teaming up with YWCA Toronto will make a significant difference in empowering women in the community."

—Marie-Lise Andrade, President and Executive Director



A VIRTUAL TRIUMPH:

WOMEN OF DISTINCTION AWARDS GALA 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to reimagine many things and our **Women of Distinction Awards Gala** is no exception.

On June 3, our incredible community came together virtually to celebrate seven truly outstanding feminist leaders from diverse sectors, ranging from health to entrepreneurship to social justice. Seeing familiar faces from our donor community, after so many months apart, was an occasion for hope and celebration.

This year's **Women of Distinction Awards Gala** was dedicated to YWCA Toronto's frontline workers, who were invited to attend as our honoured guests as a small token of our gratitude for their brave dedication to helping the lives of others during COVID. The event also aimed to shed light on the "shadow pandemic"—the disturbing massive increase in gender-based violence due to the pandemic.

The awards show was hosted by Emily Mills of 'How She Hustles,' while Layne the Auctionista led an exciting live fundraising segment. Many of our past awards recipients shared special messages of congratulations to commemorate

the 40th anniversary of the Awards, including world-famous author Margaret Atwood, ground-breaking film director Deepa Mehta, and Indigenous icon and activist Roberta Jamieson.

At the end of the evening, after opportunities to mix and mingle in the virtual ballroom, the audience was treated to live performances from award-winning Canadian artist Molly Johnson and DJ Lissa Monet.

This was our first virtual event on this scale, and thanks to your support, it was a resounding success! More than 500 people attended, and we raised almost \$500,000 towards our life-changing gender-responsive programs and services.

We are also grateful for the support of our generous sponsors and the important role they played in transforming the lives of women and girls.

We are now accepting nominations for our 41st **Women of Distinction Awards**—we hope to see you there! Visit www.ywcatoronto.org for nomination details.

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