



Thank You for Building Futures



Transforming Our Community Together Through
The Bill Graham Youth Centre



DIXON HALL

Dear Friends and Community Partners,

As CEO of Dixon Hall, I want to personally thank you for your incredible support of the Bill Graham Youth Centre at 51 Wyatt Avenue.

First, I want to apologize for our silence over the past year regarding our Youth Centre at 51 Wyatt Avenue. The pandemic greatly affected our community and our ability to deliver services. Many of our staff at the Centre were directly impacted by COVID-19, which challenged our capacity to maintain our usual levels of support.

As we cautiously navigated these difficult times, we began to reintroduce our programs and services, always prioritizing the safety and well-being of everyone involved. I know it took us some time to reach out to you, as we wanted to complete a full cycle of programming, and truly demonstrate how you have been instrumental in building a community, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential, free from barriers and inequities.

Thanks to your contributions, our Music School and Children and Youth department have flourished – empowering our youth to discover their talents, build friendships, and develop a sense of belonging.

Your support has enabled us to offer a diverse array of programs. We've seen young musicians grow in skill and confidence, experiencing the joy and discipline that come with mastering an instrument or finding their voice. Through our various youth programs, children have gained new skills, built resilience, and engaged more deeply with their community. We've witnessed remarkable transformations in the lives of the youth who walk through our doors. They are not only gaining skills and knowledge but also finding mentors and creating bonds that will support them throughout their lives.



Your generosity has created a lasting legacy that will benefit generations to come. The report below from the Children and Youth department titled, “Transforming Lives at The Bill Graham Youth Centre: A Legacy of Community Impact”, and our Music School titled, “Resilient Harmony: The Inspiring Evolution of our Dixon Hall Music School at 51 Wyatt Avenue” will illustrate the difference your support has made in our community. We are grateful to have you as a valued partner in this journey.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Mina Mawani
Chief Executive Officer
Dixon Hall

Transforming Lives at The Bill Graham Youth Centre: A Legacy of Community Impact

The move to The Bill Graham Youth Centre at 51 Wyatt Avenue has marked a pivotal moment in Dixon Hall's commitment to enriching the lives of children, youth and families in Downtown East Toronto.

While the pandemic caused an unavoidable delay, once we initiated our programming, The Bill Graham Youth Centre quickly exceeded all expectations, becoming a lively hub for connection, learning, and growth. Our community BBQs, orchestrated by our dedicated staff, volunteers and committee members have deeply impacted over 2,000 families annually and serving as the cornerstone of community life.

Our kitchen has become a cultural hotspot – hosting evening dinners and Black History Month events that celebrate and honour our rich heritage of diversity and inclusion.



The second floor of the centre is a versatile space, from family information sessions and mental health workshops to open mic nights and youth group events, this space has been instrumental in fostering dialogue, personal growth, and community engagement.

Our recreational area regularly hosts chess tournaments, homework support sessions, community group meetings, and creative writing groups. These activities provide young people and community members with opportunities to challenge themselves, explore their talents, and find their voices.

Several standout programs have flourished within the centre:

- **The Education and Community Partnership Program (ECP):** This initiative provides youth struggling with the traditional school structure or involved in the justice system a chance to complete their high school credits in collaboration with the TDSB. It is a lifeline for academic achievement and personal growth.
- **Baking with Sakinah:** This program blends baking skills with entrepreneurship workshops, empowering young individuals to turn their passions into potential careers.
- **Girls Group and Girls Committee:** Tailored for different age groups—12-15 years in the Girls Group and 16-18 years in the Girls Committee—these programs offer essential support and mentorship for young women navigating their formative years.

- **The STOP (Supper Talks Open Perspective):** This monthly program fosters mentorship and dialogue between youth, community members, and parents, creating a space for shared learning and perspective.
- **Tutoring Program & Homework Club:** These vital programs provide academic support, ensuring students have the resources they need to succeed in their educational journey and key partnerships to support them in school.

The incredible progress we've made would not have been possible without you, and for that, we are forever grateful. Your support has allowed us to transform The Bill Graham Youth Centre into a dynamic and supportive environment where children and families can thrive.



"The Bill Graham Youth Centre has been nothing short of transformative. It has provided a nurturing space where our programs can flourish and where the community can come together. Seeing the tangible effects of our work – whether it's a young person finding their voice at an open mic night or a student thriving in our academic support programs – reaffirms the importance of this centre. Our heartfelt thanks go to the donors whose generosity has made this all possible. Your support has turned a vision into a vibrant reality."

- **Christine Chow, Director, Children and Youth Services**



Resilient Harmony:

The Inspiring Evolution of our Dixon Hall Music School



In February 2020, Dixon Hall Music School proudly moved into its new home – The Bill Graham Youth Centre at 51 Wyatt Avenue, marking the beginning of an exciting new chapter. Our state-of-the-art facility provided the perfect setting to inspire and nurture the musical talents of our community's youth. Lessons began with great enthusiasm, and our students and instructors alike were eager to take advantage of the new space.

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 brought unexpected challenges. With safety and the well-being of staff and students as our top priority, we swiftly transitioned to online lessons. Despite the abrupt change, our commitment to our students never wavered. During the lockdown, we delivered an impressive 15,000 lessons, maintaining a remarkable attendance rate of 90%. This achievement was made possible thanks to the dedication of our staff, the resilience of our students, and the unwavering support of our donors.

Recognizing the additional hardships faced by our community, we organized weekly fruit and vegetable drop-offs for over 20 multi-generational families, helping them cope with rising food costs. To maintain a sense of connection and community, we held virtual recitals, providing our students with a platform to showcase their progress and stay engaged. Our office remained active, offering resources such as books and instrument repairs to ensure continuity in our students' musical education.

Today, the Dixon Hall Music School offers weekly lessons to nearly 300 students, 44 weeks a year. Our lessons, which range from \$4 to \$22 per session based on family income, cover 22 different disciplines, including piano, violin, guitar, songwriting, and recording. Most of our classes are one-on-one, allowing for personalized instruction and attention to each student's unique needs and goals.



Our program has not only revived the joy of overnight camps but also includes day camps during the summer and March break. Through these programs, children develop their musical talents, learn to play instruments, and find a creative outlet to cope with current challenges and traumas in their lives. The skills they acquire lay a strong foundation for academic success, enhance their reasoning abilities, and foster self-expression.

The impact of our music school extends beyond musical education. Of our Grade 12 students, 100% graduate, and 99% go on to pursue post-secondary education. The cost to provide these invaluable lessons is \$1,623 per student per year, an investment that yields incredible returns. Former students have gone on to careers in nursing, tech, business and commerce, harm reduction, law, and teaching, among others.

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We are also excited to introduce new programs, including three early childhood music classes tailored for children 18 months and up and expanded times for adapted lessons and music therapy. These initiatives ensure that our music education remains inclusive and accessible to all.





A significant milestone in our Dixon Hall Music School's journey was our first in-person event after the pandemic, "Music and Mingle," held at the center. This event marked more than just a return to face-to-face interactions; it was a powerful symbol of our commitment to community engagement. The fundraiser was a resounding success, bringing together students, families, and supporters in a celebration of music and unity.

"Music and Mingle" not only exceeded our expectations but also served as a crucial proof of concept, showcasing the immense potential for future events. The enthusiasm and support we witnessed during this event reinforced our belief in the power of community and the vital role of music in bringing people together. This trailblazing fundraiser provided us with valuable insights and strategies that has helped us to shape our fundraisers and galas. It demonstrated that, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our community's spirit and dedication remain stronger than ever. None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our donors.

Your contributions have enabled us to adapt, grow, and continue to provide high-quality music education, even in the face of unprecedented challenges.



You have helped us create a nurturing environment where young musicians can thrive, build resilience, and achieve their dreams.



"The unwavering support from our donors has been instrumental in transforming our Dixon Hall Music School into a beacon of hope and creativity. Since our move to 51 Wyatt Avenue, we have faced unprecedented challenges, yet our community has remained strong and resilient. Together, we have not only nurtured musical talent but also built a thriving environment where students can express themselves, overcome personal challenges, and lay a strong foundation for their future. Your generosity has made all the difference, enabling us to adapt, grow, and continue providing high-quality music education to every student who walks through our doors."

- **Bob McKittrick, Director, Music School**

Where Music Meets Mentorship: A Collaboration in Creativity

The collaboration between the Children and Youth department and the Music School at Dixon Hall has unlocked new opportunities for innovative programming. A prime example of this is the recent robotic workshop, which brought together students from the Music School in an engaging and educational experience. This kind of cross-departmental initiative is made possible by the shared space at the Bill Graham Youth Centre, where both departments are housed. Without this proximity, such a dynamic and creative workshop might not have been possible, demonstrating the power of collaboration within Dixon Hall.

We're excited to share that we're creating a video to showcase the work at the Bill Graham Youth Centre, featuring testimonies from youth, staff, and volunteers. We look forward to sharing it with you this fall.





About Us

Dixon Hall is a multi-service agency, and serves more than 10,000 people annually, impacting the lives of the most vulnerable and the most at-risk members of our community. We work with children, youth, seniors, adults with physical and health disabilities, people who need housing, individuals searching for employment, those with mental health issues, and newly immigrated individuals and their families.

Our Mission

We create lasting solutions to end poverty, social injustices, and isolation in Toronto.

Our Vision

A city where everyone thrives.

Our Values

Respect – We believe that everyone has qualities and value worthy of admiration.

Diversity – We believe in an inclusive culture of diverse thought, experience, and background.

Integrity – Commitments we make will be commitments kept.

Care and Compassion – We live out our commitment for social justice through thoughtful action.

Accountability – We are responsible for our actions, and inaction.

Mina Mawani

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