



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



Hailey Lewis (L) and Alten Wilmot (R) in a workshop performance for *Is This of Any Value For You?* as part of Phase 2 of our Proximity Lab. Photograph by Drew Berry

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PH 1:1 mentee Sarah at our *(en)compass* art exhibit.

# From the Executive Team



## Daniel Chapman Smith Executive Director

This was our second year navigating the major restrictions due to COVID-19. On one hand, the wellbeing of our communities continued to fluctuate. On the other hand, forms of resilience and innovation took hold. Our commitment to theatrical experimentation, the Proximity Lab, saw an extensive, sophisticated crescendo from last year's hopeful beginnings. We sustained our PH 1:1 mentorship program at an impressive scale while learning about what makes it work so well and what it needs to be viable moving forward. That lemonade was sweet and I am very grateful for it. Still, this was a challenging year. Growing during a pandemic is a lopsided venture and we have our work cut out for us as we cement this growth. We're up for the task. I am excited to share our past year with you and hope our story will remind you that through the challenges, there have been remarkable gains for Project: Humanity and the communities we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan".



## Andrew Kushnir Artistic Director

At the end of her introduction in *Hope in a Collapsing World*, Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, long-time collaborator and friend to Project: Humanity, writes: "...there is urgency and hope for the idea that present generations have certain duties towards future generations, and one of them is to guard and protect young people's unalienable right to imagine." As Project: Humanity continues to adjust and adapt to the times, I've grown increasingly convinced that intergenerational dialogue and exchange reside at the heart of so-called 'coming back better' — and it's at the heart of what we do as a company. The 2021-22 season is one that I'm very proud of — our PH 1:1 mentorship program reached new heights and we dreamed big about the future of verbatim theatre. I'm grateful to every member of our community — artists, youth, educators, audiences, donors — who have helped us stay curious, consequential and imaginative.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew".

# Our Mission and Key Values

We've observed how the social fabric is frayed, how many are pushed towards the edge, experiencing feelings of **isolation** and **disconnection**. Project: Humanity is leaning into the power of **real-life stories** and **the arts** to help build up **community** and **compassion** in our society as a whole.



Hailey Lewis (L) and Alten Wilmot (R) in a workshop performance for *Is This of Any Value For You?* Photograph by Drew Berry

**AS A COMPANY, KEY VALUES WE PRACTICE ARE:**

To favour **process** over **product**

To actively **resist** binaries and **binary-thinking**

To centre **wonder** as an **antidote** to **reactivity** and rushing to conclusions

To examine **power structures** in our work and work culture and to **actively challenge** the **inequities** that they may perpetuate

# About PH

Since 2008, Project: Humanity has worked to build connections between artistic excellence and community engagement. We have been long-committed to nurturing creativity and creative relationships that activate the conscience and imagination simultaneously. This work is organized into two arms, PH: THEATRE and PH: YOUTH.

## PH: YOUTH provides innovative arts programming to youth in shelters and schools across the GTA



A youth dramaturgy Session for PH and Crow's Theatre's *Chew*

Project: Humanity believes access to arts education is an essential need for youth, which is why we bring programs to shelters, providing opportunities for young people to express themselves, explore social issues and break down social barriers in their communities. Since 2008, we've led hundreds of workshops reaching over 1000 youth in 9 shelters across the GTA and dozens of schools.

## PH: THEATRE brings our groundbreaking documentary theatre productions to audiences nationwide.

Project: Humanity sees theatre as an opportunity to open people up to voices and opinions they are otherwise closed to or unaware of. This, combined with our commitment to centering stories that have traditionally been pushed to the margins, has led us to become one of the country's leading developers of Verbatim Theatre, a journalistic form of theatre that involves transforming original interview transcripts into 'live documentaries' for audiences. Our work includes *The Middle Place*, *Small Axe*, *Freedom Singer*, *Towards Youth*, and most recently 4 new commissions through our Proximity Lab.



The ensemble for the first public reading of *Chew*.

# New to the PH Team



## Adam Chen, Communications and Development Coordinator

Adam (he/him) is a storyteller and communications specialist who's always seeking new ways to connect audiences with non-fiction storytelling. As a graduate of TMU's Master of Journalism program, his focus was on researching and developing documentary productions for the stage. Adam is also the founder of Talk Media, a Toronto-based journalism events company.

## Rachel Stableford, PH 1:1 Program Associate

Rachel (she/her) is a Canadian visual artist specializing in painting and sculpture. She studied visual art at York University in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program as well as the Arts Management Program at Centennial College. She has shown in galleries across Ontario and her work can be found in private and commercial collections across Canada. As an educator and arts manager she has worked with marginalized youth for over fifteen years.



## Elida Dizon, Administrator

Elida (she/her) is a freelance researcher/writer/creator for the Toronto Ward Museum and The Asian Canadian Living Archive, and aims to continue working towards uplifting the voices of the underrepresented. As a graduate of the BA Psychology program at McMaster University, Elida has had experience working within many social service settings and has an affection towards understanding and listening to the life stories of everyone she meets.

# Our Board of Directors

**BOARD CHAIR**

CATHERINE  
FOWLER

**BOARD  
MEMBER**

ANJA ZELJKOVIC

**BOARD  
MEMBER**

CARLA O'BRIEN

**BOARD  
MEMBER**

RIAZ SHAIKH

## New to the Board



### Carla O'Brien, Board Member

Carla (she/hers) has been working for the city of Toronto for over 23 years, starting as a frontline worker in Seaton House. Working in the shelter system and navigating the issues her clients face is her passion. She's been a Program Coordinator, Policy Development Officer and most recently a Manager of Homelessness Initiatives. She's spent a rewarding two years at Family Residence doing programming for youth and families. Carla is also a teacher in Sheridan and Centennial College.

### Riaz Shaikh\*

*\*officially joined the board after the end of the 2021-2022 fiscal year*

Riaz (he/him) has 25 years of combined industry experience in the design and construction of Institutional, Commercial and Industrial (ICI) projects, along with public sector strategic and operational building. In 2004, Riaz began his public sector career at the City of Toronto and since 2007, has worked with the Long-Term Care Homes & Services division. He is an active member of the Program Advisory Committee (PAC) at Centennial College.



# PH: YOUTH

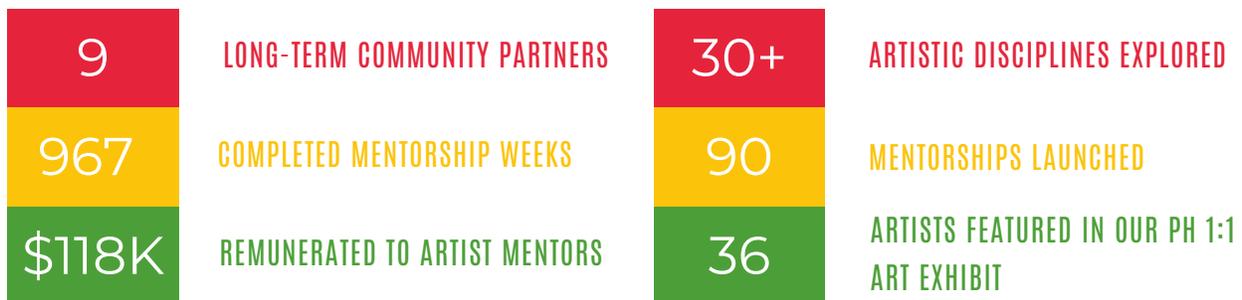


*"More than anything, I've wanted a space where [my mentee] feels this is a genuine and supportive space. I want to be another human in this world that will give them time without judgment."*

– PH 1:1 Artist Mentor

In May 2020, 84.5% of youth in shelters were experiencing high symptoms of distress and isolation. This is a population where 39% struggle with their mental health, and due to the pandemic lockdowns, were unable to access the regular support essential to their social and emotional wellbeing. It was under these circumstances that we created PH 1:1, a 12-week online arts mentorship program, which allowed us to sustain our arts programming for youth-on-the-margins while providing meaningful employment to artists.

## PH 1:1 Numbers to Date



PH 1:1 provides an opportunity for young people to be mentored by a professional artist in any artistic practice they choose: drama, creative writing, a new musical instrument, photography, etc. Over the past two years, PH 1:1 has evolved into the GTA shelter system's most robust and accessible arts-based mentorship program. And this last year, the program transitioned from an emergency response to a permanent offering in our city.

For an extensive analysis of PH 1:1, you can read our [2021-22 Impact Report](#).

# PH: YOUTH

## Stories from PH 1:1

### Noah, a PH 1:1 Youth Participant

*“During my first two opportunities with the PH 1:1 program, I was able to meet incredible coaches with different experiences in the acting field and I was able to learn a lot from both the theatrical and media side of acting. Through the pandemic, it also opened my eyes a lot on what acting is about. I am extremely grateful to have been part of this program, as I was able to even book some roles. I learned that it’s not just important to read who the character is, but also to convey the relationship this character has with other people around them. That helped me through a lot of auditions.”*



PH 1:1 mentee Noah



PH 1:1 mentee Robyn, Photo by German Prieto

### Robyn, a PH 1:1 Youth Participant

*“Since mentoring with PH, I believe I have developed the skill of resilience. The willingness to follow through on my creations (when before it seemed so far out of reach) was fostered and*

*held by my mentors. The PH team as a whole supported me in navigating blocks that emerging artists might encounter... one of them for me was learning how to write and submit a grant. I feel that I have the confidence to approach projects without expectations now, so that I can share more of my art in the world with ease and appreciation.”*



PH 1:1 mentorship pair Mikaela Davies and Joy

### Mikaela and Joy, a PH 1:1 Mentorship Spotlight

Mikaela was exactly what Joy was looking for in a mentor for her writing: passionate, very active in their field, and open to letting her learn in a way that works for her. As Mikaela, explained, *“Project: Humanity offered excellent training in letting the youth guide the mentorship... and the more I let go, and the more I ease into it, the more Joy shows up.”*

# PH: YOUTH (en)compass

art from the PH 1:1 mentorship program

A partnership with:

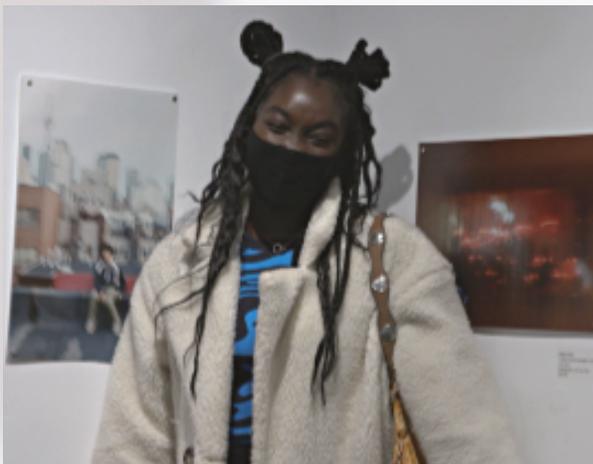


In December 2021, Project: Humanity partnered with Propeller Art Gallery to produce a week-long exhibit titled (en)compass: art from the PH 1:1 mentorship program. Sixteen PH 1:1 graduates had their work displayed on a professional gallery wall for the first time. Their paintings, photographs, sculptures and short films were presented alongside the work of their respective mentors.



From left to right: *kokal hermit* by majnus (IG: @majnus666), *untitled* by Cela,

Propeller donated their space for the 4-day run, which garnered over \$1,000 in sales, for the youth and artists. One youth participant, emerging photographer Sarah Okello, was offered a fully sponsored membership at the gallery. This gave her access to the gallery's resources as well as the opportunity to hold further exhibitions in the future.



PH 1:1 mentee Sarah at our (en)compass art exhibit.

*"I would describe [PH 1:1] as a beautiful, comforting, encouraging, motivating experience that I think is changing my life in a way, to be honest."*

**- PH 1:1 Youth Participant Sarah Okello**

# The Proximity Lab Phase 1



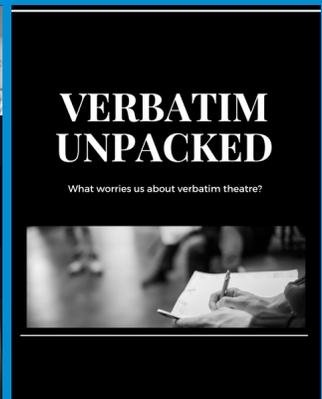
## proximity lab

developing **verbatim theatre** presentation models  
for a post-pandemic world

The heartbeat of the PH: THEATRE work in 2021-22 was our Proximity Lab – an initiative that continued to resource artist-researchers in their exploration of verbatim theatre. In March 2022, we released a 48-page e-magazine that shared their findings and how they have considered and developed forms of “pandemic-proof” theatre. The cohort of racialized, white, white-passing and queer stakeholders asked themselves: what new shapes can verbatim theatre take while maintaining PH’s ethics of care, compassion and multiplicity of voice? Ontario Arts Council funding fuelled the first phase of this inquiry followed by a significant Canada Council Digital Now grant to fund an extensive second phase.

As articulated in the magazine by the lab’s director, Andrew Kushnir: “Above all, I hope [the Proximity Lab] inspires some wonder in you... and provides some window onto how artist-researchers in our modest sphere capitalized on our sectoral upheaval, and uncovered new ways of connecting and creating. A drawing together in the face of those winds that so often disperse us.”

The follow images are excerpts from the Proximity Lab E-Magazine. Read the magazine [here](#).



# The Proximity Lab Phase 1

Phase 1 of the Proximity Lab had our artist-researchers Alten Wilmot, Katey Wattam, Richard Lam and Lucy Coren engaging with 6 other artists working in live documentary forms who present their work outside of traditional theatre venues. These ranged from Camille Turner, whose Afronautics framework aims to centre Blackness in our engagement with space and time, to Alex Bulmer and Tristan R. Whiston’s work around disability and accessibility, and dislodging sight as the primary access to a story.

In the Lab’s e-magazine, a summary of findings can be found on page 38: “What We Can’t Unlearn.”

## The Contract of Care

A key output of the Lab was further formalizing a process that Andrew Kushnir had been developing in other creative spaces called a Contract of Care. Its key concern is to help artists show up maximally in the spaces they’re creating in. What are the barriers to/enablers of creativity? How can these be named as a way of creating a living policy for authentically collaborative environments. Some tenets that emerged from the lab: “Let’s privilege practice over product” and “Let’s challenge binaries and binary-thinking. Let’s make space for plurality, the chance to say ‘and at the same time.’”

The Contract of Care, and the rest of the work that came out of our Proximity Lab Phase, can be found in our [Proximity Lab e-magazine](#).

### THE CONTRACT OF CARE

ORIENTING QUESTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CREATE A WORK ENVIRONMENT THAT HAS THOUGHT ABOUT AND WORKS PRIMARILY THROUGH CARE?

Let’s resist Perfectionism: resisting the pursuit of the ‘right answer’, winning over losing, better over worse. Let’s recognize that Perfectionism reinforces scarcity thinking and feelings of lack. Nothing can be perfect. In the spirit of this: let’s endeavour to normalize mistakes.

Let’s collectively create a critical but non-judgmental space, one that makes room for disagreement while still sustaining respect and care.

# The Proximity Lab Phase 2

Each of our artist-researchers produced an étude in the summer of 2021 which was then moved into a more intense development workshop in the winter/spring of 2022.

## *The Candlemaker's Game* by Richard Lam

*The Candlemaker's Game* is a solitaire-like verbatim theatre experience that invites audiences to reconsider a conflict from their real life. Participants are able to explore the labyrinths they have built from their own stories.



A workshop performance of *The Candlemaker's Game*

## *It's a Shame* by Lucy Rose Coren

*It's a Shame* is an online verbatim theatre experience co-created with sex workers that reflects on their lived realities vs. how they are frequently perceived. The work explores the complexity of community members telling their own stories within a digital theatre aesthetic.

## *Is This of Any Value to You?* by Alten Wilmot

What happens to the soul of an artist within a capitalist system? Using dance as a way of exploring interview transcripts, *Is This of Any Value to You?* moves verbatim theatre into a wildly embodied mode.

# THE RHIZOME

In June 2022, the work of all four Proximity Lab artist-researchers was showcased in *The Rhizome*, a digital festival using the Gather platform, funded by the Canada Council's Digital Now program.

***"If the Rhizome Festival is anything like the future of verbatim theatre, then it seems to be a rich and enticing one."***

**— CRJU.ca**

# THE RHIZOME (Continued)

Why "The Rhizome"? Like a ginger root – which stems and shoots out in an unpredictable patter – the festival echoed the Proximity Lab’s dynamic and non-linear approaches. Attendees could move through a reimagined Toronto landscape and enter environments wherein our artist-researchers shared their central questions, offered excerpts from their public workshops, devised interactive games and generously provided access to how their imaginations fared during the pandemic.



Screenshots from our Proximity Lab festival, *The Rhizome*

## Hope In A Collapsing World

Our 2021-22 season saw the release of a new publication co-authored by our long-time collaborator Dr. Kathleen Gallagher and our artistic director, Andrew Kushnir. *Hope In A Collapsing World* features the full script of our acclaimed 2019 production *Towards Youth: a Play on Radical Hope* alongside some extensive reflections from Andrew about how the piece was created.



Andrew Kushnir holding a copy of *Hope in a Collapsing World*

In her wonderful foreword to the book, author Ann-Marie MacDonald writes: “My colleague Andrew Kushnir’s verbatim play greets readers like a magic spell at the end of the book; at that point, we have learned so much about the education of the imagination, so much about the barriers and portals to it; have come to know so intimately the voices of young people across the globe, along with those of the adults who battle great odds in nurturing them; and suddenly there they are before us, “in the flesh”! ...Together, Kathleen Gallagher’s book and Andrew Kushnir’s play are like a double rainbow.”

In May 2022, we had the great privilege of holding a book launch for this new publication at Crow’s Theatre, where *Towards Youth* had its premiere.

# Wenonah Cares



## An Inaugural Partnership

Our Executive Director Dan Chapman-Smith is a proud alumni of Camp Wenonah, a family-owned, community-focused summer camp near Bracebridge, Ontario. To mark the camp's 25th anniversary in operation, they announced *Wenonah Cares* — a new initiative to support some of the meaningful work taking place in our communities. For their inaugural partnership, they have chosen Project: Humanity as their charitable partner from 2022-2024. In addition to raising funds for PH, they are connecting the company with myriad experts in their alumni group, Friends of Wenonah (FOW). In June 2022, they invited the PH team up for a weekend of team-building and camp activities.



(Clockwise from top) The PH team up at camp, Dan Chapman-Smith making pizza, the new PH and *Wenonah Cares* plaque



PH 1:1 Mentee Deborah (center) with other campers at Camp Wenonah

## PH: YOUTH at Camp Wenonah

One PH 1:1 youth participant, Deborah, was invited to Camp Wenonah to take part in the *Wenonah Counselling & Instructor Training (WCIT)* program. Over a month in the summer this group of youth focus on the development and enhancement of individual leadership skills. Deborah speaks of her experience:

*"Being at Wenonah was all about defining myself.*

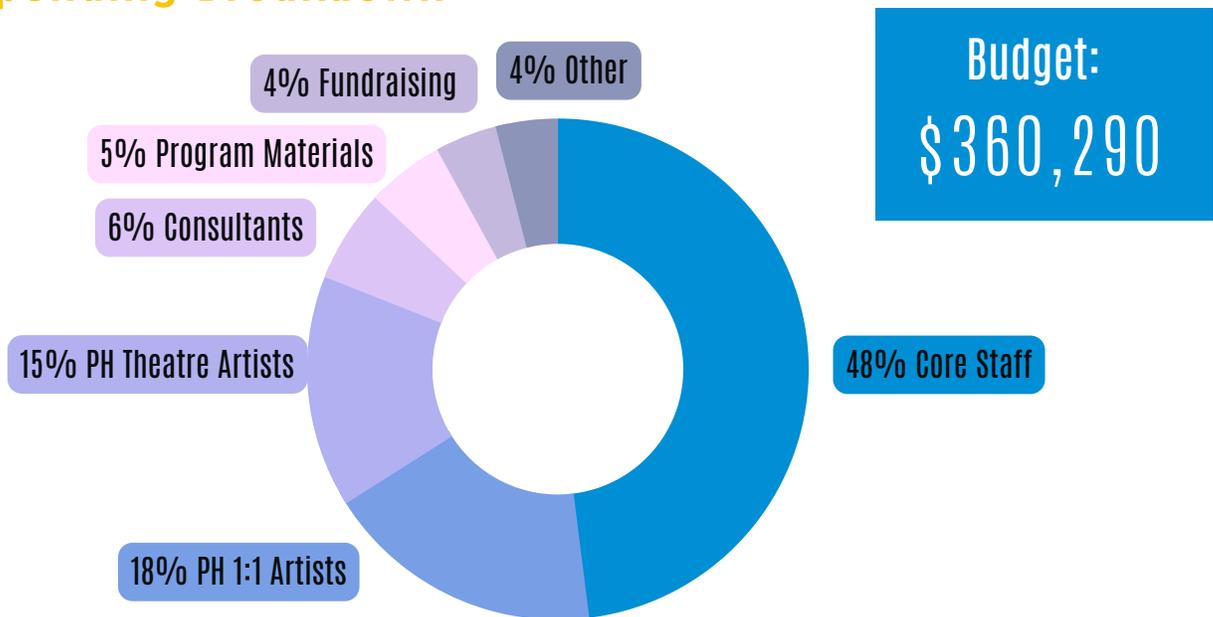
*Camp helped me realize I am my own person. It challenged me mentally, physically and socially - and it gave me confidence and helped me understand other people. In my final two weeks of WCIT training, our training was put to the test with campers. My kids loved me, and I loved them. You wouldn't believe it - they were so unique! They would come and carry me up and make me feel better. Getting to impact them — I'm grateful for that opportunity. "*

# Financial Overview

Over our fiscal year (July 2021 - June 2022) Project: Humanity managed an overall budget of **\$360,290** - more than doubling our budget of **\$142,553** in our previous fiscal year. Arts council funding for Proximity Lab (\$106,725) created a large annual budget akin to years when we're producing and touring full shows. There was also substantial COVID-19 relief funding for our PH 1:1 program (\$71,044).

The coming year will present the challenge of replacing this relief funding with sustainable sources. With our growing community of support, that work is well under way.

## Spending Breakdown



## Revenues



# Looking Ahead

Over the past year, we've made huge strides towards developing pandemic-proof solutions for both our youth and theatre work through our PH 1:1 program and Proximity Lab. With the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we also completed a year-long program with the Fundraising Lab — a consultant that helped us expand our base of support and organizational infrastructure, thereby setting PH up for a more sustainable future.



Hailey Lewis & Alten Wilmot, Jillian Rees-Brown and Richard Lam

## PH: THEATRE

PH will continue to seek out support and development opportunities for our Proximity Lab projects, with a focus in the coming year of Katey Wattam's investigation of how Indigenous ways of working (and knowing) can intersect with verbatim theatre. We'll also continue the development of our

first ever verbatim musical, *Chew* - a co-commission with Crow's Theatre. We have started to integrate "youth dramaturgy sessions" into our new play development – a formalized opportunity for young people to respond to the stories we're sharing and for them to have a hand in their evolution.

## PH: YOUTH

In the coming year, we are stepping back to step forward. The scale of our PH 1:1 program in its first two years was astonishing, and it was possible due to several special funds that were available as a short-term response to COVID-19. In the coming year, we will reduce the number of partnerships while we build up sustainable funding for the program's future. At the same time we will be preparing to return to shelters in-person with our signature Drama Drop-In. Finally, we are seeking more opportunities to partner with arts communities like we have done with the Propeller Gallery. The potential to increasingly connect youth-on-the-margins to broader artistic communities remains a key horizon for PH: YOUTH.



PH 1:1 Mentee Tasnim with her artwork

# Thanks to our Incredible Partners and Supporters

Anonymous (4)  
Adam Chen  
Allison Cormie-Bowins  
Amaka Umeh  
Andrew Kushnir  
Andrew Gillespie  
Anja Zeljkovic  
Anne Fleming  
Arianne Shaffer  
Ashlie Corcoran  
Barbara Fingerote  
Betty Moulton  
Bohdan Wasyleczko  
Brigit Wilson  
Catherine Fowler  
Cathy Mann  
Chris Cowperthwaite  
Damien Atkins  
Dan Fournier  
Daniel Chapman-Smith  
Danielle Bourgon & Gareth Simpson  
Darlene O'Donnell  
David Chapman-Smith  
David Sculthorpe  
Debashis Sinha  
Doreen Fumia  
Ellora Patnaik  
Elly Daniels  
Ethan and Ariel Siller  
Eve-Lynn Stein  
Franca Gucciardi  
Gavin Wimalasena  
Gwendolyne Tooth  
Hayley & Luke Gilgan  
Hugh Brewster  
James O'Connor  
James and Diane King  
Janet Mairs  
Jeff Bradshaw  
Jim & Donna Simpson  
Joanna Ebbutt  
John Fraser  
John Jarvis  
Joshua Levite  
Julie King  
Justin Kelly  
Karen Robinson  
Kate Bishop & Doug Gerhart

# Thanks to our Incredible Partners and Supporters

Kathleen Gallagher

Kathleen Richardson-Scott

Kim Evans

Laura Dinner

Leonie Christiani

Libby (Elizabeth) Bandeen

Lisa Douglas

Liza Balkan

Lois Adamson

Lorraine Kirchmann

Malia Rogers

Margaret Almack

Margaret Evans

Margaret McCain

Mark Wasyleczko

Mark Pawlowsky

Marni Jackson

Mary Goldman

Mary Owens

Matthew McEvoy

Matthew Jocelyn

Micah Richardson

Michael Spencer-Davis

Michael Warner

Mike Schwindt

Nana aba Duncan

Natasha Sawh

Nolan Bryant

Noni (Annette) Kirby

Owais Lightwala

Peter Fletcher

Peter Friedrichsen

Pritesh Patel

Ralph Dopping

Robyn Noftall

Ross Stuart

Sarah Deakins

Sarah Mcvie

Shannon Charnock-Davis

Sharyn Sutherland

Stephanie Morgenstern

Thomas Appleyard

Timothy Watson

Timothy O'Leary

Valerie Hussey

Voy Stelmaszynski

Yolanda Ferrato

Zara Jestadt

# Thanks to Our Incredible Partners and Supporters



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



PH 1:1 is supported by the Government of Canada's Healthy Communities Initiative



The Murray Frum Foundation



Johansen Larsen Foundation

The Acapella Foundation



## Project: Humanity's Multi-Year Supporters & Partners



Simpson Youth & Family Fund at the Calgary Foundation



Quilin  
See the whole picture

# How to Get Involved!

## Donate



**A Financial Gift:** A \$50 donation is enough to purchase all the supplies needed for a youth's 12-week painting mentorship, whereas a \$100 donation covers a youth's first week of professional mentorship in their new art form.



**Donate Goods:** Our youth programs often require arts materials or electronic equipment. Commonly needed items: laptops, tablets, microphones, DSLR cameras, and painting supplies.

## Volunteer



**Join our Board:** Are you ready to step up and join our growing Board of Directors? Although we actively searching of a Board Treasurer, we're open to candidates from a variety of backgrounds.



**Volunteer Your Time:** Our PH 1:1 program relies on the support of dedicated volunteers, who donate their time - primarily as equipment delivery drivers within the GTA.



**Donate Your Expertise:** Can you offer any pro-bono services that could support our small organization and the work with do with youth-on-the-margins? We're looking for support in legal, accounting, bookkeeping, and other professional service areas.

## Join our community

Don't be a stranger! Follow us online, sign up for our newsletter, or contact us at: [info@projecthumanity.ca](mailto:info@projecthumanity.ca)



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