

Building Community Through Hyper-local Journalism



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FOCUS Media Arts Centre - A Platform for Local Voices

FOCUS Media Arts Centre (FOCUS) is a not-for-profit organization and registered charity committed to media literacy and participatory media practices. Founded in 1990 to counter harmful negative stereotypes of Regent Park perpetuated by mainstream media, FOCUS now operates:

- Radio Regent, a 24-hour volunteer-run internet radio station,
- Catch da Flava, a journalistic e-newsletter serving the community,
- Regent Park TV, a youth-led film-making program and YouTube channel.

One of Regent Park TV's cornerstone initiatives is the Regent Park TV News, which includes both long-form journalistic videos and until recently a biweekly news broadcast known as Regent Park TV Weekly News, or RPTV Weekly.

RPTV Weekly: Journalism for the Community, by the Community

The RPTV weekly news project ran from December of 2022 to December of 2025 through funding support from the City of Toronto's Social Development Fund and the United Way's Social Impact Fund.

The funding was developed to resource projects that strengthen social cohesion and inclusion between and among, rent-geared-to-income tenants and newly arrived market rental residents and condominium owners.

RPTV Weekly News was a 45- to 60-minute news cast that provided residents with regular, accessible coverage of the local events, stories, and issues impacting on Regent Park and the surrounding area. A dedicated team of four full-time journalists — two of whom were long-time residents with no prior media training — led production.

They handled researching, reporting, interviewing, filming, editing, and scriptwriting, while also training, mentoring and working alongside local volunteers.

Reporters, anchors, and editors were often youth interns from local high schools or adult residents of Regent Park. Volunteers were encouraged to pitch and produce stories reflecting their lived experiences and interests.

One standout contributor was Thundercloud, an Indigenous resident who regularly produced segments highlighting Indigenous culture and perspectives within the neighbourhood.

Celebrating Community Culture and Identity

Grounded in principles of accessibility, representation, and grassroots storytelling, RPTV Weekly provided a platform for agencies, grassroots groups, and residents to showcase their events, festivals, and activities.

Regular coverage featured events such as:

Sunday in the Park, Moss Park Festival, Cultural Bazaar, Moonlight Market, Taste of Regent Park, Black History Month celebrations, the Regent

Park Film Festival, Journey Home musical, United Football League, Show Love Festival, Ramadan and Eid celebrations, and an annual youth pow wow.

In the words of one community member FOCUS puts out a lot of material that many in the community turn to for information about the neighbourhood.

By consistently profiling the rich cultural life of Regent Park — its people, customs, art, music, food, and dance — RPTV Weekly served as a cultural bridge – connecting residents of diverse faiths and backgrounds, and fostering understanding among social housing tenants, market renters, and condo owners alike. The newscasts became a weekly reminder of the vibrant, multilingual, and multicultural fabric that defines Regent Park.

A Tool for Civic Engagement

Beyond cultural storytelling, RPTV Weekly played a crucial civic role. Every episode included summaries of local meetings and decisions made by key stakeholders.





Welcome to the **Community Civic Engagement Collaborative (CCEC)**

A grassroots collective of agencies and residents in Regent Park, Moss Park, St. James Town and Corktown neighbourhoods, working to increase civic engagement in elections and beyond, through non-partisan community organizing.

Canada Elections 2025: Toronto Centre Candidates and Community Decisions Ahead

RPTV April 2025

Canada Elections 2025: Toronto Centre Candidates and Community Decisions Ahead

These included:

Toronto Community Housing (which acts as both landlord and Master Developer for the area);
 City development staff working in the area;
 the City Councillor and other elected representatives at all levels of government;
 the Regent Park Social Development Plan working groups;
 the Executive Directors Network representing senior management of agencies in the area;
 the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association.

The newscast also tackled pressing issues such as:

the ongoing revitalization of Regent Park,
 community safety,
 food insecurity,
 homelessness,
 harm reduction,
 Black Lives Matter,
 Indigenous rights & concerns,

These stories often featured interviews with city staff, political representatives, community leaders, and activists. For viewers seeking more in-depth coverage, long-form video features were made available on the Regent Park TV YouTube channel.

Building Connection and Opportunity
 Each episode of RPTV Weekly concluded with announcements about job and training opportunities and upcoming community events. These listings served as a vital resource for newcomers, job seekers, seniors, single parents, and others seeking to break isolation and build connections.

Community Impact

Over its three-year run, RPTV Weekly:

- Engaged 45 volunteers
- Produced 101 biweekly news segments
- Featured over 600 news stories
- Promoted over 400 community events
- Reached 2,000+ YouTube subscribers

A Final Reflection

By amplifying resident voices, documenting local events, and reporting on governance and policy, RPTV Weekly strengthened civic engagement and deepened residents' sense of ownership and belonging. RPTV Weekly, along with the long-form news shows, was a trusted platform for advocacy, storytelling and empowerment.

Although RPTV Weekly is currently on pause due to a lapse in funding, long-form news coverage on Regent Park TV continues. In a city where most neighbourhoods lack any local journalism, Regent Park TV offers a powerful model of how hyper-local media can empower communities, foster inclusion, and hold local power to account.

What would our cities look like if every neighbourhood had the tools to tell its own story?

Regent Park has shown us what's possible. The next step is to ensure these models of grassroots media aren't the exception — but the norm.

**You can view all past episodes
of RPTV Weekly News by
scanning the QR Code**

