

It's a Movement

MICHAËLLE JEAN FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



Message from the Co-Founders + Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation's board of directors, as well as our team, partners and friends, I would like to thank each and every one of you for contributing to what has been a remarkable year of inspiration and action. We could never have achieved so much without your support.

Across Canada – and around the world – young people are courageously speaking up and taking bold actions that have a significant impact and promote positive social change. It is our duty to support them. In fact, at the Foundation, that is the mission we are embracing with constantly renewed fervor focussed on the future.

Everywhere young people are advocating for greater freedom of thought, greater respect for their choices, for their fundamental rights and much more. And yet, discrimination of all kinds continues to plague our world, driven by ignorance, inertia and greed. At the Foundation we are determined to fight these regressive forces by investing in young people from all walks of life, who are diverse, creative and visionary, and committed to building a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable world.

The year 2021-22 was the culmination of five years of an extraordinary adventure for our Foundation, during which we demonstrated ambitious leadership, brought people together, served as a catalyst and created a long-awaited platform for Black communities in Canada had been waiting for and longing for. We created and produced the National Black Canadians Summits, the last of which was held at a large gathering in Halifax in July 2022. We brought together thousands of talented, articulate, highly dedicated and committed women, men and young people with expertise in different fields and backgrounds. They came from every corner of this country and we created countless connections and bridges, opportunities for personal, professional and community collaboration and growth.

We invested significantly in building a better future not only for Black communities, but also for Canada as a whole. These events, including the virtual series, raised difficult issues relating to discrimination and marginalization, and provided bold and courageous spaces to discuss them in the open, including with decision makers from the public, private and institutional sectors. We are particularly proud to have succeeded in bringing about so many constructive and promising synergies.

The Summit provides a valuable opportunity to share even sensitive issues. This brave and safe space where Black communities will come to share their stories and do so with a concern for truth is a powerful circle of speech, pride, awareness and mobilization. We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go."

- THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MICHAËLLE JEAN

Our first two Summits, in 2017 in Toronto and 2019 in Ottawa, followed by four virtual summits, addressed justice, education, entrepreneurship and health from the perspective of Black communities. Our latest and most resounding Summit brought together more than 1,200 people in Halifax and hundreds more online as well, for important exchanges on a wide range of topics. It was held from July 29 to 31, 2022, the day before Emancipation Day. This unprecedented event also led to the Halifax Declaration, an extremely powerful statement that was produced collectively, calling for a new, inclusive national strategy to eradicate systemic racial discrimination which must be defined and built with the full participation of Black communities.

The Halifax Declaration is not simply a vision, but a roadmap, with detailed evidence-based recommendations addressing



critically important areas of Canadian social, economic and political life. The Halifax Declaration, which has been carefully polished since the Halifax Summit, will be a truly landmark document for all Canadians, male and female. It will be published in its final form in the Spring of 2023. Once it has been released, we invite you to read it, share it, and apply it in whatever ways you can. The Halifax Declaration is meant to be understood and adopted in part or in whole by business, media, government, educational institutions, institutions and civil society organizations. Wherever it is embraced the Halifax Declaration will help to build a more just and equitable Canada.

At the same time, in addition to the enormous effort we undertook to bring the Summit to life, the Foundation team has been engaged in a deep strategic reflection to define the next programs it will develop. This has been a tremen-

dously exciting process and it has led us to equally exciting conclusions. Starting with all that we achieved in the fight against exclusion and systemic racism, drawing on all the vibrant strengths of Black communities, and all the needs that have been expressed, we hope now to strengthen our commitment to the most under-resourced youth in our country, and focus our efforts on enriching their socio-economic opportunities, their capacities in the areas of social and creative entrepreneurship. For, as always, young people are part of the solution, both for the present and the future. We believe that they represent an invaluable human capital to be invested in, a source of leadership that

it is crucial to encourage and develop for our common good, in the general interest. This is what we intend to do through a wide range of dynamic programs, some new and some that will be reintroduced.

Once again, please join us. Every support is crucial. Your ideas and contributions will make a difference. Let's break new ground and continue working together in this beautiful and most rewarding collective adventure.

The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Jean-Daniel Lafond

Message from the Executive Director

I often find myself marveling at the sheer scope of our accomplishments, especially when I reflect on the size of our team, which – dedicated and passionate though we may be – is small. In those moments, I am also filled with gratitude for the wonderful people and partners with whom we are fortunate enough to work, and without whom we could never hope to have the impact we have across Canada. We are truly stronger together.

I stand in awe of the energy and creativity of these remarkable young people who are drawn to our youth-focussed programs and who seek opportunities for their voices to be heard. It becomes clear that the vitality and talent of young Canadians, are a precious and crucial resource - one that we are exceptionally proud to grow and nurture through strong partnerships with philanthropists and organizations across Canada. Whether it is the creation of socially-minded businesses and podcasts like the youth-led 20Today20Tomorrow or experiential arts education that allows young people facing financial and social barriers to benefit from the Youth Art Connection, I am thrilled that the Michaëlle Jean Foundation is playing a role in supporting this driving force for change.

I have always believed in the power of collaboration, in building bridges and promoting common and shared actions for greater impact and more tangible successes that are so important in complex multi-stakeholder settings. Since taking on the role of Executive Director of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation in 2020, my appreciation for these collaborative values has deepened immeasurably. I have seen firsthand the remarkable results of working together with partners big and small, with world-class leaders, and with young people taking their first steps as committed activists and artists. In each of these partnerships I have found that our greatest success has come from our ability to serve as a lever and catalyst. Our ability to leverage our network to make innovative, vital and synergistic connections across the country is truly one of our "super-powers".

The National Black Canadians Summit is the most obvious example of our strong capacity to bring people together. Our call for community participation resonated across all sectors and regions, bringing together thousands of people and organizations, many of whom had not only never met, but were often unaware of each other's existence and of so many initiatives underway in the field. Yet members of Black communities had a great deal in common, including discriminatory experiences, family histories, professional paths, socio-economic obstacles, and community dynamics, to name just a few. Meeting and discovering each other, sharing stories, making connections, and developing networks, has been of profound importance. These encounters have led to collaborations, funding, friendships, job opportunities, knowledge-sharing and progress in so many other ways, too numerous to list.

While busy with preparing the 2022 Summit, we were also able to create a new strategic plan, with an updated mission:

The Michaëlle Jean Foundation supports the mobilization of young people for inclusion, social and racial justice through creative and innovative citizens' initiatives."

The Foundation has always focused on young people as a priority, and our mission now explicitly reflects that they are at the centre of everything we do. Everything we will do, every partnership, every opportunity we will develop in the coming years will be focused on the needs of the underserved youth in our country. We look forward to the upcoming launch of the Halifax Declaration, and at that momentous occasion, we will also be launching a new youth-empowerment initiative called Power of Youth. This is just one of the many projects we are currently working on to inspire young people to fulfill their potential, be they



aspiring artists, entrepreneurs or community leaders. I wish to express my gratitude to our Co-Founders, The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Mr. Jean-Daniel Lafond, who made all of this possible. Their vision and open mind have connected many young people and society leaders including decision-makers from the private and public sectors, over the past year, creating spaces for an open dialogue on important topics and bold paths towards mobilization and change.

Transforming lives is what we do. It is our fundamental purpose, and I am happy to say that with your help we are succeeding. I can't wait to see what we will achieve together

in the coming years as we connect more and more passionate and talented Canadians, with one another, and place the power and potential of youth at the centre of our shared efforts to build a better Canada.

Sincerely,

Tara Lapointe, Executive Director

It's Not a Moment, It's a Movement

This year, the most high-profile and prolific gathering on anti-racism and exclusion of African-descendant people in Canada took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was the third in a series of the National Black Canadians Summits produced, organized and coordinated by the Michaëlle Jean Foundation. This momentous conference boldly examined what it means to be Black in Canada today, what the conditions and standard of living are for the majority of African-descendant people, what the issues are, what the distressing factors are, and what impact racism has on all aspects of their lives. The aim was a massive mobilization for what needs to be done and what needs to change in order to eradicate systemic racial discrimination in all our institutions, all practices and policies, all services, but also all attitudes.

These summits, including Halifax and a virtual series during the pandemic, have been broadly open and inclusive. We have ensured that Black communities have a platform, a national space in which to speak out, to express their experiences, their hardships, their aspirations, their expectations and demands, and to articulate their perspectives and their efforts. We succeeded in bringing decision-makers from the public, private and institutional sectors, parliamentarians, local and national organizations, and even the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with a delegation to hear, understand and participate. The Summit brought together over 1200 delegates including 435 young people from every province in Canada. The result was a powerful call to action, the Halifax Declaration for the Eradication of Racial Discrimination, a powerful and ambitious reference document, a guide for developing roadmaps.





Answering the Call: Creating an Inclusive Community with Young People Living the Power of Art

The Foundation's focus on engaging our youth, recognizing and strengthening their leadership as they emancipate, was obvious at the *National Black Canadian Community Summit* in Halifax. 435 young delegates from across Canada were able to attend free of charge, thanks to our *Youth Delegate Champion*, John Beck, a seasoned business leader and believer in the social responsibility of giving back to our communities, who very generously answered the call. The interventions of the young people allowed us to appreciate their strong, eloquent and inspiring voices on all the important issues that were discussed.

Young people were also able to express themselves in a writing, poetry and public speaking workshop. Their talents were on display and emotions were very strong. During these two days we saw and experienced the power of art in its most inspiring and vibrant expression. Striking and interactive installations by visual artists brought back memories. Unforgettable musical performances set the tone at the opening ceremony where the intermingling of song and rhythms of Mi'Kmaq and African drums evoking a shared condition and the richness of deep ties, people to people, in a common humanity. The spiritual tones of gospel music also filled the space and transported the audience with the incomparable voice and presence of artist Measha Brueggergosman accompanied by her musicians and choir members, as well as the Black Choir of Halifax. Other artists were present for various musical interludes. The Halifax Declaration was unveiled with the triumph of art, with youth and elders together on stage to deliver powerful excerpts.

Taking A Stand

The Halifax Declaration for the Eradication of Racial Discrimination was therefore issued at the close of the Summit on July 31st, the day before Emancipation Day, which was celebrated in the streets of Halifax. This coherence is based on the recognition of this vast popular social movement, this vigorous proliferation of organizations and groups,

• • • • • • It's Not a Moment, It's a Movement

these thousands of activists from Black communities, who, with the support of unwavering allies of the cause, form a solid chain in Canada to set the course for significant and lasting change:

As the UN Decade for People of African
Descent draws to a close, we renew our calls
for justice, equality and dignity. Our history is
full of broken promises, yet we remain steadfast.
We have been called every name but our own.
We come from a history of being silenced,
yet we continue to speak out."

The Afro-Nova Scotian experience was the beating heart of the meeting and we would like to thank all of the leaders. activists, and generations, for proudly telling and sharing such a courageous story of resistance that continues from yesterday to today with equal determination. From the memory of Africville, as well as through all the other stories, artifacts and archives collected by the Black Cultural Centre, directed by Russell Grosse, as well as all the writings, research, studies and works produced and collected by the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute, directed by Sylvia Parris or listening to the compelling poet, teacher, writer and historian Afua Cooper, delegates from across Canada were able to discover, feel, learn and appreciate the full extent of this exceptional heritage /of hardship and accomplishment. Special thanks also to our two Summit co-chairs, Vanessa Fells and DeRico Symonds, who demonstrated great professionalism and poise.



different backgrounds, living in two different parts of the country, brought together by their African ancestry at the Halifax Summit.

Not forgetting all the expertise provided

by the facilitators, moderators and speakers who, inspired by the strength of this place and its history, came to the Summit to enrich the discussions and reflections, accompany and underscore the testimonies, and support and contextualize the ideas and arguments put forth. So many factual elements and data were presented and shared, making the Summit a platform for exchange, learning, and reinforcing the strategies to be

go t

Broadening the Conversation:
Nova Scotia's African
experience and the world
The third and largest gathering of the National Black Canadian

The list goes of Robinson and co-hosted the closing cerem our gratitude

Community Summit in 2022 was rooted in the history of this iconic location, the maritime city of Halifax, which was one of Canada's transatlantic slave trading posts for African slaves and where, as a result, the Black presence in Nova Scotia dates back over 400 years.

The list goes on and on from poet El Jones to Andreas Robinson and Omayra Issa who graciously and eloquently co-hosted the entire Summit from the opening night to the closing ceremony. We are indebted to them and express our gratitude to both of them for their hard work, patience, spontaneity, and professionalism in their interventions. Omayra Issa is an award-winning bilingual journalist who has worked on a wide range of media platforms. Andreas Robinson is the Founder of Infinitus Academy and a Community Builder and Omayra were a dynamic duo from

deployed and the actions to be taken.

Virtual Summits

The COVID-19 pandemic and strict lockdown times prevented us from meeting physically, but we mobilized without faltering. The Foundation, with the support of the Halifax Summit Coordinating Committee and many other partners,

produced a series of highly successful virtual gatherings that explored the various themes of the *National Black Canadians Summit*, continuing the exchange around the issues, the significant challenges, the solutions, the initiatives underway internationally and what is being accomplished. The live broadcasts of the Summit went beyond Canada's borders, reaching a large audience as far as the United States, and testimonies and reactions were received from several African countries, including Gambia, Uganda, Kenya, Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

During the virtual event *Entrepreneurship and Employment Redefined by Black Communities* raised with several experts and with supporting data, the serious obstacles as well as the proven racist prejudices in the business world. The participants were able to benefit greatly from the opinions and testimonies of a group of successful entrepreneurs from Black communities, but not without having had to face a number of unfortunately recurrent and distressing difficulties. Lessons of perseverance and tenacity were learned from each shared experience as well as strategies to adopt, not the least of which are in the workplace.



The **Let's Talk Black Health** virtual event provided another powerful and engaging national exchange on health. The event brought together speakers who addressed the social determinants of health including effects on the mental health of many young people due to the stresses of exclusion and racism, taboos and prejudices within the health care system, and difficulties of access. There were disturbing accounts of humiliating, disgraceful and profoundly inequitable differential practices and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Black communities.

Young People's Perspectives

We place great importance not only on the full participation of young people, but on their ability to co-create. At the Summit, young people were actively involved in all aspects, including the design, planning, promotion and delivery of these events, alongside community and educational leaders, but also alongside subject matter experts, in full reciprocity. This process provided young people with important leadership skills that they can use to effect change in their respective communities and gave them confidence in their ability to express their views on social and political issues that affect them.

It was a pleasure to see young people among the speakers, presenters, moderators, volunteers, artists, entrepreneurs,

interviewers, videographers, facilitators, photographers, authors of the Halifax Declaration, and more. The Foundation and its many regional partners supported the hundreds of young people who attended the event from across the country, including Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

It Takes a Village

This year, our work was supported by a plethora of amazing sponsors and partners without whom the impact of our endeavors would have been greatly diminished. We are proud to have brought together so many caring leaders, organizations and communities. For example, a National Canadian group of community leaders, academics, youth representatives, artists, and more provided guidance to the third National Black Canadians Summit, ensuring that the work and expertise of every province were fully represented. Community leaders Vanessa Fells and DeRico Symonds, of the African Nova Scotian community, also co-chaired the Summit planning committee with strong leadership, connecting key community and government leaders, stakeholders and youth across the province and beyond.

Additionally, the Summit boasted the presence of a UN

mayors, members of Parliaments, members of the Legislative Assembly and representatives of the Halifax Police Department.

HALIFAX CONVENTION CENTRE

"The Summit was a life-changing experience for me. It opened my eyes to the effect I have on others and how

much of a difference I can make -

we can all make, one together"

-ALISHA, YOUTH DELEGATE, 21

We are grateful to our civil society partners and stakeholders including CCUNESCO, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Federation of Black Canadians, Black Chamber Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Dream Legacy Foundation, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, and Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute. We also thank the many sponsors who supported the

Summit, especially TD Bank and Enbridge. Their investments have been vital catalysts for learning, connecting, advocacy and growth opportunities that will have an impact far beyond the three days of the Summit.

We are moving confidently towards the change we want for a better future: more recognition, more justice and more human, economic, inclusive, shared, responsible and sustainable development. Eradicating racism and overcoming exclusion are the only ways to achieve this.

The Halifax Summit Report is available on our website at www.blackcanadiansummit.com.

of Commerce, Black Business Initiative, Export Development

delegation, three Federal cabinet ministers, four senators,

10 | Michalëlle Jean Foundation 2021/2022 Annual Report I 11 **Amplifying Youth Voices**

The Foundation proudly supports young people in Canada. We are committed to creating, producing and supporting youth-oriented programs, especially those who are most under-resourced, in precarious situations, facing exclusion and discrimination. We believe in the need and responsibility to invest in the capacities of all these young people, their emancipation, their fulfillment, their leadership today and for a better future.

We value involving young people which is why this year, we successfully hosted *Take Your Kid to Work Day* and welcomed three dynamic young people into our office; high school co-op student Hakim Foyn, and Victoria Rose King and Elodie Amoussougbo who were hired by the Foundation last summer. We made the most of their ideas, enthusiasm and energy.

We also support youth-led mobilization towards inclusion, social and racial justice through highly inclusive initiatives based on innovation and creativity through artistic events. These initiatives include:

- the development of a Creative youth entrepreneurship program in Ottawa
- teaching digital art skills with the Landscape of Hope Program at Concordia University created with the help of the Foundation
- celebrating exceptional young people by partnering with RBC's Spirit of the Capital Youth Awards
- supporting indigenous youth during the celebration of the *National Day of Truth and Reconciliation*
- funding the Ottawa Community Housing Foundation's *Hop on Bikes* Youth Mural Project
- sponsoring a delegation of hundreds of young people to the National Black Canadians Summit
- contributing to the development of the 20Today20Tomorrow's Inspire the Next podcast for youth by youth



As we approach 2022-23, we are committed to maximizing our initiatives for and with Canadian youth in a manner that is always constructive and inclusive, by increasing the impact of citizen and collective initiatives, which are formative, preventative, transformational, artistic, entrepreneurial, and most importantly, connecting.

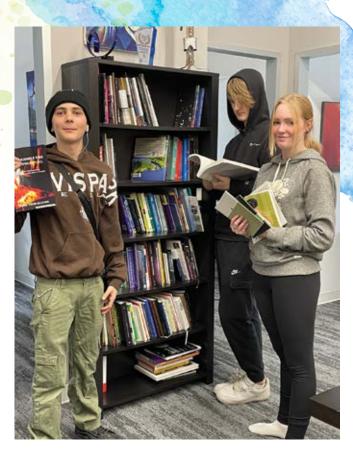
Landscape of Hope

We continue to support youth-focused and co-creative arts initiatives. Last year, we partnered with the *Landscape* of *Hope* project, a program of sound re-mixing, music creation and texts, on the theme of the fight against hate speech and prejudice, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia, misogyny, all forms of discrimination and cyber-bullying. This program is both a creation and training for reflection, creative writing, digital production, and multimedia performance of self-expression. It took place at

Concordia University's 4th SPACE in Montreal, with the participation of university students facing exclusion. Their open and creative discourse and multimedia stories accurately portrayed the realities of young people who are strongly confronted with hate, discrimination and cyberbullying. We continue to encourage this project, supporting the team that coordinates it and making connections for future initiatives. The Foundation coordinated a successful collaboration between the Landscape of Hope and two other Halifax initiatives, Youth Art Connection and iMove, at the National Black Canadians Summit, in Halifax 2022.

September 30

Remember Me, the second annual National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, celebrated on September 30 in Canada, was again an important and moving gathering to which all Canadians, male and female, were invited. Ceremonies across the country highlighted the growing public awareness of the need for greater recognition of Aboriginal people in Canada and their harrowing experiences, such as the confinement in residential schools, the violence that these institutions harboured, and the secret child burial sites, the number and horror of which has been discovered in recent years. Invited to Parliament Hill in Ottawa by the women artists and activists of the Indigenous Arts Collective of Canada, The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean did not fail to show her continued support and active advocacy for the rights of Aboriginal people in Canada, for memory, for truth, for the courage to say and hear in order to better act and meet.



Creative Entrepreneurship Program for Youth

The Foundation is working on implementing an Entrepreneurship Program for young creators, first in Ottawa and then replicated and adapted elsewhere across Canada. The goal is to prepare them for success with the right skills and a well-constructed business and development plan. The program will be launched in 2023 and will include a six-month mentoring process for these young people, aged 17 to 30, who identify themselves as entrepreneurs and are involved in creative and/or social entrepreneurial practices. Participants will benefit from an ongoing mentoring structure and sessions taught by some of the program's partners, including financial literacy, and visual branding, cooperative

Amplifying Youth Voices



work and networking. At the end of the six-month process and evaluation of their business project, participants will also have access to start-up funding.

The desired impact and benchmark for success is that each participant will emerge from this program equipped with a valuable set of entrepreneurial skills that are well thought out in relation to artistic practices or community services. The emphasis will be on social and civic commitment, strong connections with other entrepreneurs in the same field, organizations serving youth in Ottawa and, for newcomers, we will want to ensure that they are well equipped for optimal integration and familiarity with the community.

This year, we met with potential partners, researched creative and social entrepreneurship initiatives in Ottawa, and successfully developed the program structure. We also worked with young people to develop its logo. This logo, designed in collaboration with the Association of Registered Graphic Designers and a selection of design students and other young designers, sets an example by putting youth in the driver's seat.

Youth Ottawa

Too often in our society, investment in youth leadership is completely overlooked. That's why we are proud to support the RBC Spirit and the Capital Award, an annual event organized by Youth Ottawa that honors outstanding young people who are working to serve, strengthen and enrich their communities. The Foundation sponsors the Arts and Culture Award, won this year by student actors and activists Jaden Croucher and Nick Gray.

Jaden Croucher (she/they), a student who participated in the *National Improv Games* as well as the *Youth Infringement Festival*, advocates for equal rights and mental health awareness in the theatre community.

University student Nick Gray (he/him) works to subvert theatrical norms and diversify Ottawa's theatre community, vigorously supporting the inclusion of roles for all marginalized groups, whether it be racial, sexual, gender, or neuro-diversity. His play GOREgeous ignores discriminatory stereotypes to include nuanced collaborative roles for multiple marginalized performers.



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Governance

During the year, the Foundation welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors:

- Larissa Crawford
- Dave D'Oyen

As well, the Foundation welcomed three new associate members:

- John Beck
- Steven Watson
- Julie Segal

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Co-Founders and Co-Presidents

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The Foundation Team

Tara Lapointe, Executive Director Edward Matwawana, Program Director Kadé Rémy, Communications Advisor Jordan Banyan, Program Coordinator (until September 2022) Caroline Kayll, Administrative and Operations Coordinator





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