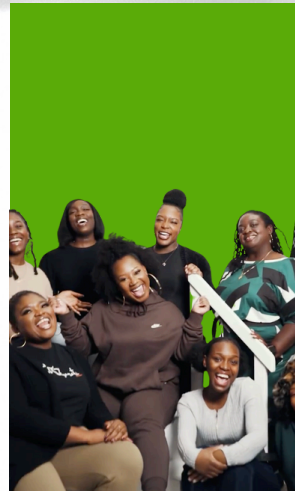




FONDATION
michaëlle jean
FOUNDATION



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT

Highlighting achievements, growth, and progress through a comprehensive annual report that reflects our commitment to excellence and transparency

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THE MICHAËLLE JEAN FOUNDATION'S MISSION

As the mandate of the 27th Governor General of Canada (2005-2010) ended, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation (FMJF) was established with the support of the Government of Canada. The Michaëlle Jean Foundation is the continuation of all the actions carried out during the 5 years of the Governor General's mandate with the contributions of her husband Jean-Daniel Lafond. It responds to the request of marginalized and underserved young Canadians and their communities with the support of many relevant organizations and institutions across the country.

The vision of the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Jean-Daniel Lafond is to offer programs and platforms to underserved youth across the country that are active participants in developing and implementing solutions to challenges in their communities. Headquartered in Ottawa, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation catalyzes social change. Through its programs, FMJF supports inclusive youth initiatives and organizations nationwide, leveraging arts, education and entrepreneurship as tools to create new solutions to pressing social issues and create opportunities for inclusive and constructive dialogues. The Foundation regularly partners with youth-led and youth-driven grassroots organizations to understand their needs and identify the areas in which FMJF can support and accompany them. The Michaëlle Jean Foundation has supported 1,000,000+ youth to date through its programs, partnerships and initiatives.



MESSAGE FROM THE CO-FOUNDERS AND CO-CHAIRS

A Year of Deep Engagement and Transformative Action

As Co-Founders and Co-Chairs of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, Jean-Daniel and I are pleased to share with you this report, which outlines the unwavering commitments and growing impact of our organization across Canada throughout the 2023–2024 year.

Time and again, we have had the privilege of being present to celebrate the power of the arts, creativity, and innovation as catalysts for social change—bringing people together, raising awareness, and mobilizing communities.

We have supported with tangible means and empowered numerous creators whose talents flourish across the country, including creative and social entrepreneurs whose initiatives have had direct, lasting impact in their communities.

The launch of our flagship Power of Youth program marked a significant milestone. It provided direct funding to a first cohort of 35 inspiring youth-led projects—an investment that has been instrumental in anchoring the sustainability of their new ventures. We are profoundly grateful to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Definity, CMHC and the Vancouver Foundation for their generous support in making this possible.

Several partner and allied organizations turned to the Michaëlle Jean Foundation to amplify the visibility of their missions, programs, and events, while also recognizing our expertise and shared vision for a more inclusive Canada.

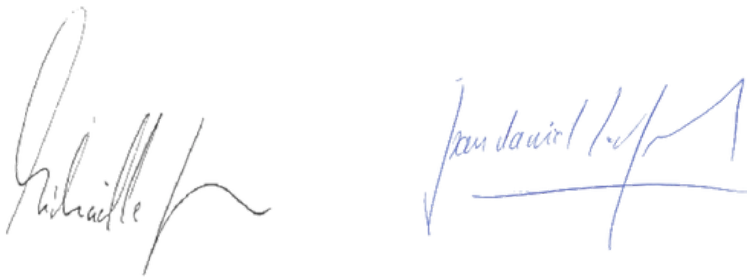
The Foundation also engaged with leading institutions such as the Supreme Court of Canada, the Senate, and numerous universities across the country. At major cultural gatherings, we formally presented and submitted the Manifesto for the Eradication of Racial Discrimination / Halifax Declaration, while advancing the powerful movement rooted in the National Black Canadians Summit.

The planning of the fourth edition of the Summit—originally scheduled for September 2024 and postponed to early 2025—was a major focus for our Foundation team throughout the year. In the process, we deepened our collaborations with partners from the public, private, financial, and social sectors, while also laying the groundwork for the fifth Summit, to be hosted in Winnipeg in 2026.

An internal restructuring of our executive leadership has been most beneficial, with renewed leadership strongly supported by the Board of Directors. The team has also grown, welcoming several dynamic and talented young recruits.

To all those who have journeyed with us this year, we offer our heartfelt thanks. Your trust and dedication continue to propel our work forward, strengthening a shared vision of equity, creativity, and lasting change across Canada.

With gratitude and conviction,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. On the left is the signature of Michaëlle Jean, and on the right is the signature of Jean-Daniel Lafond. Both signatures are fluid and cursive.

The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Jean-Daniel Lafond
Co-Founders and Co-Chairs



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Resilience and Progress through turbulence

It has been said before that the only thing which is constant and guaranteed in life is change. This past year, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation was faced with several transitional moments, which allowed creativity, innovation and determination. The unwavering commitment of our co-founders, board members and staff helped navigate through all the challenges with courage and forward-thinking, transforming them into opportunities for growth. The transition also provided an opportunity to evaluate our strategic direction, make human resources adjustments, identify areas that allowed savings and with the support of the Board of directors, implement strategies to stabilize our financial status.


The planning of the 4th National Black Canadians Summit continued, and tremendous efforts were made to develop and nurture new relationships with community leaders and other stakeholders in the Montreal region. Mayor Valerie Plante endorsed the Summit and made a firm commitment to support the event with human and financial resources. Several meetings were held with city of Montreal staff, who assisted us in navigating many logistical issues.



Sponsorship from Toronto Dominion Bank and Canadian Race Relations Foundation, as well as the generous support from the federal government through Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, provided funding towards the organization of the Montreal Summit. These contributions would help create a platform for dialogue and collaboration, empowering leaders young and old, to address pressing issues facing Black communities across the country.

Due to force majeure, the Montreal Summit was postponed to January 31, 2025. This postponement was unfortunate, but it also became an opportunity, as it allowed the Foundation to properly prepare a new and young staff team while we strengthened ties with the Black community in Montreal.

This situation also provided time to find additional sponsors, continue to develop new partnerships, evaluate agreements with suppliers and assess the level of marketing and promotion, to guarantee the success of the Summit.



The Halifax Declaration remained the guiding force for community mobilization and collaborative leadership. All sessions retained for the Montreal Summit were expected to focus on issues addressed in the Halifax Declaration. After its acceptance as a working document in New York by the Permanent Forum the previous year, the Foundation with Madame Jean's leadership presented the manifesto to the Supreme Court of Canada in 2024.

The youth were constantly at the centre of the work of the foundation, as they continued to be catalysts for positive change, demonstrating remarkable dedication to civic engagement. They inspired us with their community projects through Power of Youth, made possible with the support of our partners: Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation, Vancouver Foundation and Definity. The Power of Youth 1st Cohort grants recipients were able to finalize their projects which they would present and discuss at the Montreal Summit. This initiative continued to inspire our stakeholders, attracting additional funding from the federal government to deliver a second cohort of Power of Youth. Furthermore, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation continued to conduct discussions with Desjardins for the establishment of the entrepreneurship stream of Power of Youth, scheduled to begin during the next fiscal year.

In 2023-2024, we supported many community partners through collaboration, co-creation and the sharing of resources. We attended several partners' events such as the Black North Initiative Gala (Toronto), Gala Dynastie (Montreal), African Nova Scotian Music Awards (Halifax), Catholic Centre for Immigrants' 75th Anniversary (Ottawa), Gala Idée (Montreal), Sommet Socio-Economique Afro (Gatineau), Graffiti Gallery's 25th Anniversary (Winnipeg), Funeral Services Association of Canada Summit (Winnipeg) and more. Similarly, we organized a second Youth Arts Community Mixer in collaboration with the Rideau-Rockcliffe Community and Resources Centre.

New initiatives were also developed during this past year, which saw the co-creation of the Ottawa Newcomer Youth Music Awards event. This award evening, now an annual event, is a collaboration between the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, Dominion Chalmers Church and the Catholic Centre for Immigrants. The Foundation also participated in a collaboration with Luminato Festival and the Global Coalition against Systemic Racism and for Reparations to organize the 3rd International Concert Against Racism, in Toronto, as a prelude to the Montreal Summit.

As we envision next year, we plan to maximize our efforts to further strengthen our partnerships with government, the private sector and communities across the country. We will also work tirelessly to deliver a highly successful Summit in Montreal, where the youth will play a significant role.



**Edward Matwawana,
Executive Director**

FROM VISION TO ACTION: YOUTH POWERING THE HALIFAX DECLARATION

The Power of Youth Initiative

The Power of Youth has emerged as a flagship program of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, born out of powerful calls to action from young leaders at the 3rd National Black Canadians Summit in Halifax (2022).

This national initiative supported 35 youth-led projects that brought the Halifax Declaration to life—transforming it from vision to action. Framed as a living blueprint for racial equity, the Halifax Declaration calls for a collective, national response to dismantle racial discrimination in Canada. It builds on the momentum of previous Summits organized by the Foundation during the UN’s International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024).

We are thrilled to introduce the latest cohort of the Power of Youth Initiative, dynamic youth-led projects from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, each working towards a more equitable and inclusive future in their own unique way.

This new group of changemakers are thinking and acting creatively, tackling issues affecting their communities, amplifying marginalized voices, fostering community-driven solutions, and creating spaces for dialogue and healing.



POWER OF YOUTH

35 YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

Afro-cr atif Magazine

Meet Carmelle Freudlyne Amoussou, a talented creative communicator originally from Benin and currently residing in Gatineau, as well as the founder of N gritude Magazine. Through her work, she is dedicated to uplifting Afro-descendant narratives, and her latest endeavour, a special edition of N gritude Magazine titled "Afro-cr atif," celebrates Afro-descendant art, culture, and values. This edition aims to amplify the voices of Afro-Canadian creatives who are not only preserving their rich heritage but also breaking stereotypes within society.

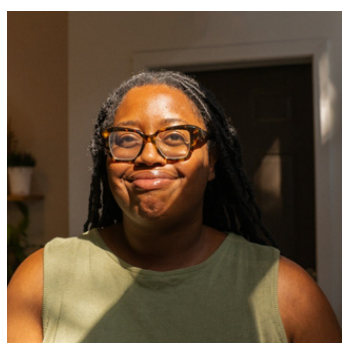
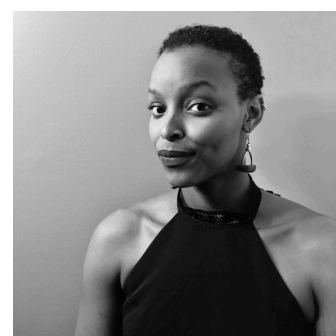


Educational Summit on Anti Racism

Introducing Christina Monabeka, a passionate youth leader and aspiring social worker from British Columbia, who serves as a board member of the Conseil Jeunesse Francophone de la Colombie-Britannique. She is at the helm of the Educational Summit on Anti Racism, an initiative aimed at educating CSF High School students about racism and fostering inclusivity. Through a series of workshops and storytelling sessions, this summit empowers youth from diverse backgrounds to reflect on their identities and advocate for equity within their schools.

Project Renaissance – From Healing to Thriving

Marina Mathieu is a visionary leader and lifelong advocate for gender equity and human rights, drawing on her Haitian heritage and over a decade of global community organizing experience. She leads a transformative series of healing-centered events designed specifically for Black youth who identify as women or 2SLGBTQ+. Through a blend of art and professional support, these events provide a safe space for participants to explore their identities and address intergenerational trauma in a nurturing environment.



Healthcare Tool Project (Potomitan'm ap boule)

Driven by a deep commitment to justice, Aur lie Milord—a PhD candidate in sexology—is amplifying the voices of Haitian women in Quebec, uncovering the often-overlooked medical injustices they face. She is leading an innovative initiative to develop a medical literacy tool aimed at combating obstetric and gynecological racism against Black communities. This essential resource provides education on reproductive health rights and outlines formal complaint processes, empowering individuals to advocate for themselves within the healthcare system. Aur lie's work is crucial in promoting awareness and fostering equitable healthcare access for marginalized populations.

BeeCoders

Introducing Martin Belporo, a passionate tech entrepreneur devoted to empowering underprivileged and orphaned youth through digital literacy and innovation. He leads a dynamic tech mentorship program that introduces these young individuals to coding, innovation, and entrepreneurship through hands-on workshops and training. Martin's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering creativity in marginalized communities not only equips youth with valuable skills but also inspires them to pursue careers in technology, paving the way for a brighter future.

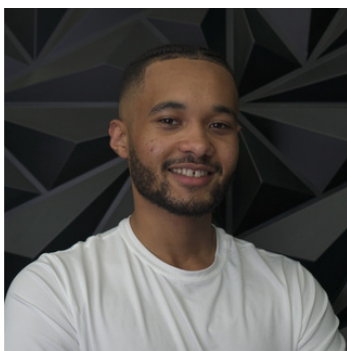


Learning Loop

Blending heritage with imagination, Taïna Mueth is a Haitian-Cameroonian artist and organizer who brings Afrofuturism to life while honoring the depth of cultural memory and narrative. She leads the Learning Loop, a transformative community initiative in Montreal that creates collaborative spaces for BIPOC communities to come together. Through art and dialogue, the initiative promotes knowledge exchange, confronts oppression, and fosters educational equity. Taïna's work empowers individuals to share their stories and experiences, cultivating a sense of belonging and collective strength within the community.

Digital Presence for Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust

Shekara Grant is a passionate community leader and founder of the Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust, working to reclaim space, land, and opportunity for future generations. Based in Cherry Brook, Shekara has developed a digital platform aimed at enhancing the visibility of a historic Black Nova Scotian community. This initiative not only supports cultural preservation but also serves as a launchpad for online projects that engage and empower community members. With her background in sociology and French, Shekara is committed to fostering strong community ties and elevating the voice of her community through innovative digital solutions.

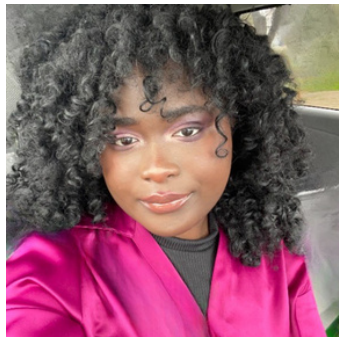


Cultivating Community Wellness: Food Security Project

At the University of the Fraser Valley, Mwenda Dyck is cultivating more than just knowledge; his passion for agriculture and health fuels a vision for thriving, resilient communities. As the leader of the "Cultivating Community Wellness: Food Security Project," he is committed to raising awareness about sustainable farming practices and food security. Mwenda's initiative aims to make nutritious food affordable and accessible for all by focusing on community education and engagement. Through this work, shaped by his upbringing in Kenya and the Canadian Prairies, Mwenda is empowering individuals to take control of their food sources and promote well-being in their daily lives.

Black Creek Community Farm – School Engagement

Meet Toni Agbaje-Ojo, a community-minded entrepreneur and the visionary leader behind the Black Creek Community Farm – School Engagement project. Toni has successfully funded school visits from farmers and scientists to Lamberton Public School, where they teach invaluable environmental topics such as vermicomposting. This initiative aims to foster agricultural literacy among youth, empowering them to understand and engage with sustainable practices. With a strong passion for education, food security, and youth empowerment, Toni is dedicated to cultivating a new generation of environmentally conscious individuals who are equipped to make positive changes in their communities. Through her efforts, she is bridging the gap between agriculture and education, inspiring young minds to take an active role in promoting sustainable practices.



Bridging Horizons: Black Youth in Agri-Tech

Introducing Bintu Adama, the dynamic leader of "Bridging Horizons: Black Youth in Agri-Tech." With a focus on empowering Black youth in STEM and agri-tech, Bintu's initiative features hands-on hydroponics projects and panel discussions with Black professionals in the field. This program not only promotes representation but also encourages innovation, inspiring participants to explore the intersection of agriculture and technology.

Afro Flavours

Ama Ouattara, based in Ontario, is the founder of Afro Flavours, an innovative cultural and culinary exhibition in Ottawa that highlights the diversity and vibrancy of African cuisine and traditions. This initiative beautifully blends art and food to celebrate Afro-descendant heritage, raise awareness about food security, and foster multicultural engagement within the community. As a social innovator and filmmaker from San-Pedro, Ama is deeply passionate about Afro culinary arts and community empowerment. Through her work with DJRIBO LAB, she is dedicated to showcasing the rich culinary traditions of the Afro-descendant community while highlighting the importance of food security and cultural exchange.



Black Queen Collective Workshop

At only 16, Eden-Belle O'Neill is already making waves. As the founder of the Black Queen Collective Workshop, she's using her voice and leadership to confront anti-Black racism and empower Black youth in Vancouver. The Black Queen Collective Workshop is designed as a healing space where Black teenage girls can engage with Black female therapists, focusing on setting boundaries and intentions. This unique initiative creates a safe environment for vulnerability, allowing participants to share their experiences and cultivate a sense of community and empowerment.

SSYC Community in Conversation Series

With a deep commitment to uplifting her community, Dina Nyjong co-founded the South Sudanese Youth of Canada and now leads *Adulting 101*, an empowering virtual series helping South Sudanese youth navigate life, leadership, and personal growth across the country. Rooted in her experience as a first-generation South Sudanese-Canadian and her dedication to youth empowerment, Dina's project tackles key challenges faced by refugee and first-generation youth, such as navigating institutions, grief, career building, and identity. Through bi-weekly sessions covering topics from mental health and financial literacy to intergenerational dialogue and civic engagement, *Adulting 101* provides culturally relevant tools, mentorship, and a sense of community—helping participants build confidence, resilience, and leadership in both their personal and professional lives.



Racialized Youth Research Committee

Bridget Andam and Roshaydia Morgan co-lead the Racialized Youth Research Committee, a research-based advocacy project committed to examining the experiences of Black students within educational systems and advocating for curriculum reform and broader structural transformation. Together, Bridget and Roshaydia are leading an important initiative that seeks to amplify the voices of Black students and advocate for a more equitable and inclusive educational system.

ACB Vloggers

Introducing Myriam, the inspiring leader of the "ACB Vloggers" initiative. This project focuses on mental health vlogging sessions aimed at addressing stigma within Ottawa's Black community through strategic partnerships, engaging activities, and accessible online resources. Through the ACB Vloggers initiative, Myriam is breaking down barriers to mental health care and promoting resilience within their community, making significant strides toward a healthier and more supportive environment for all.



StealMasta Studios – Citizens & Thieves Game

Joseph Akangbe, a Nigerian-born industrial designer residing in Ontario, is the founder of StealMasta Studios, a creative venture dedicated to showcasing African culture and narratives through innovative game design. His project, *Citizens & Thieves*, brings community members together through game prototyping sessions and interactive tournaments. Blending creativity with cultural pride, the initiative promotes African narratives while offering a space for youth to engage in storytelling, strategy, and innovation through board game design.

Black Canadian Scholar Census

Meet Naïka Edouard, a bold changemaker from Quebec and the visionary behind the Black Canadian Scholar Census, a groundbreaking research initiative examining how education shapes the quality of life for Canada's 1.5 million Black residents. This project leverages census data alongside qualitative insights to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by Black Canadians. The Black Canadian Scholar Census aims to illuminate the connections between education and quality of life, shedding light on educational disparities and their broader societal implications. Through Naïka's leadership, this initiative seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform policy changes and support efforts toward equity and inclusion for Black Canadians.



Med Melanin

Meet Yvonne Osagie from Ontario, the visionary founder of Med Melanin, a groundbreaking telehealth platform created to empower women of color in navigating the healthcare system and demanding equitable, culturally competent care. Med Melanin features a symptom-check questionnaire that empowers users to better understand their health concerns and articulate their needs to healthcare providers. Through Med Melanin, Yvonne is dedicated to closing the gap in healthcare access and quality, equipping women with the resources they need to advocate for themselves and ensure their voices are heard within the healthcare system. Her initiative stands as a powerful testament to the importance of inclusive and equitable healthcare for all.

Kids Connect Africa – Causons Discutons

Introducing Franck-Maleek Djabat-Dubois, the dynamic leader of "Kids Connect Africa – Causons Discutons," a vibrant debate series designed to ignite critical thinking among African youth regarding pressing continental issues. This initiative encourages solution-focused dialogue and fosters leadership development, empowering the next generation to engage actively in shaping their communities and futures. Through "Causons Discutons," Franck-Maleek inspires young people to confront challenges faced by their communities, cultivate leadership skills, and develop innovative solutions. His commitment to nurturing informed and engaged youth exemplifies the transformative power of dialogue in addressing critical issues facing the African continent and its diaspora.



Autour de la Table

With a deep love for culture and cuisine, Debora leads Autour de la Table, a heartfelt video series where Afro-descendant women share recipes, stories, and wisdom, keeping their culinary heritage alive for generations to come. This project celebrates the rich culinary heritage and cultural narratives that shape the identities of Black women, ensuring these valuable traditions are cherished and passed down through generations. Through "Autour de la Table," Debora invites audiences to explore the deep connections between food, culture, and identity, showcasing the recipes and stories that define the culinary landscapes of Afro-descendant communities. Her commitment to amplifying the voices of women of color and preserving their rich traditions is at the heart of this inspiring culinary journey.

A Future for Us

Joelle Weir, based in Ontario, is the founder of A Future for Us, a podcast-centered project that critically examines accessible approaches to sustainability and environmental justice. Through compelling storytelling and insightful interviews with environmental activists in Toronto, Joelle seeks to inspire and inform listeners about the importance of sustainable practices and social justice in our communities. In "A Future for Us," Joelle explores innovative solutions, shares inspiring stories of grassroots movements, and highlights the role individuals can play in making a positive impact on the environment. By engaging in meaningful conversations with activists and community leaders, she aims to empower the next generation with the knowledge and tools to advocate for a more sustainable and equitable future. Joelle's work embodies the intersection of environmentalism and social justice, making the podcast a vital resource for anyone looking to make a difference.

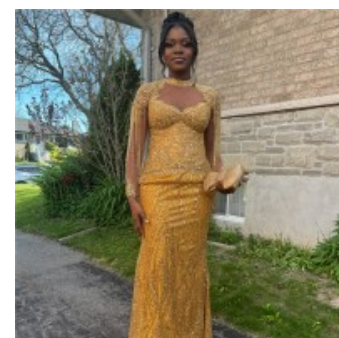


Black Women Healing Through Poetry

From Nova Scotia Asiah Sparks is a spoken word artist, storyteller, and mental health advocate from the historic Black community of Lake Loon/Cherry Brook, is the visionary behind Black Women Healing Through Poetry. Rooted in her passion for community and creative expression, this project creates a safe and empowering space for Black women to share their experiences with racism, resilience, and healing. Through poetry, dialogue, and reflection, the gathering fosters self-discovery, emotional restoration, and collective empowerment, celebrating the strength and beauty of Black womanhood.

Youth Coming Together

Introducing Oluwadarasimi (Dara) Bakare, an 18-year-old Nigerian-Canadian student at the University of Toronto, leads Youth Coming Together, a life-skills and leadership development program for immigrant youth aged 15 to 24. Rooted in her own journey of adaptation and growth, the initiative focuses on community engagement, personal development, and empowerment. By offering workshops, mentorship, and interactive sessions, the program equips young newcomers with the tools to build confidence, develop essential skills, and become active, positive contributors to their communities.



Through Our Eyes

Andre Anderson is a seasoned filmmaker from the historic Black community of Lake Loon, brings over 13 years of experience in film and television to his powerful project Through Our Eyes. This documentary trailer explores the African Nova Scotian experience within Halifax's education system over the last three decades, capturing the challenges, resilience, and progress of a community long underserved. Through compelling storytelling, the film seeks to spark dialogue, promote equity, and inspire systemic change in education.



Black Youth Leadership Program

Working out of The Door Youth Centre in Ottawa , a space known for its warmth and community spirit , Nadira Kulane leads the Black Youth Leadership Program, helping young Black Canadians grow, lead, and thrive over the course of six powerful months. Rooted in the principles of the Halifax Declaration, the program equips participants with leadership skills through activities such as a youth-led podcast, photovoice storytelling, and a cultural cookbook. The initiative culminates in community projects and a graduation ceremony, celebrating youth as agents of change.

Voices of Tomorrow

Introducing The People of Tomorrow, founded by community activist Benazir Tom Erdimi, is a vibrant organization dedicated to empowering BIPOC youth through storytelling and leadership development. Their project, Voices of Tomorrow, is a documentary that showcases the impact of community support through the personal stories of Vanessa Dorimain and Franck-Maleek Djamat-Dubois—two individuals making a meaningful difference. The film highlights the power of collective care and uplifts the saying “it takes a village,” illustrating how community can shape futures.

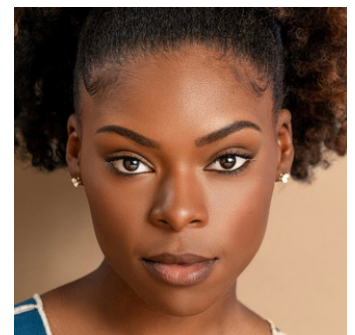


Connect yourself : The Importance of Cultural Identity

Connect Yourself is a youth-led project based in Ontario that helps marginalized youth reconnect with their cultural identity through art, music, dance, and storytelling. Led by 20today20tomorrow, the initiative supports three young participants on a transformative journey of self-discovery, combining personal reflection with scientific tools like EEG technology to track emotional growth. The project will culminate in a documentary and research paper, aiming to inspire broader conversations around identity, healing, and cultural empowerment.

Black Ottawa Youth in Film (B.O.Y.F)

Kiera Meeks, is an Afro-Caribbean actress based in Ottawa, is the founder of Black Ottawa Youth in Film (B.O.Y.F)—a groundbreaking initiative designed to create space for Black youth to thrive in the film industry. With hands-on experience in major productions across networks like Hallmark, OWN, and Amazon Freevee, Kiera uses her platform to uplift others by producing short films that showcase Black talent both on and off camera. The project provides participants with professional experience, demo reel material, and a safe space to explore creative careers. By building community and dismantling barriers to access, B.O.Y.F. directly addresses the underrepresentation of Black creatives in Ottawa’s film scene, while advancing the Halifax Declaration’s calls for recognition, justice, and development.





Let's Heal Sis

As a social worker and psychotherapist, Breanna Channele Phillip is creating community and care through Let's Heal Sis, a group therapy initiative offering Black women a space to heal, grow, and reclaim their mental wellness. With over a decade of experience working across housing, education, legal, and healthcare systems, Breanna brings a culturally grounded approach to mental wellness. Let's Heal Sis addresses the unique emotional and psychological challenges faced by Black women in Canada by offering safe, intimate spaces for healing, reflection, and sisterhood. Facilitated by Black women therapists, the sessions explore issues such as navigating racism, intergenerational trauma, and identity, while drawing from the cultural traditions of collective care. In alignment with the Halifax Declaration, the project promotes justice, wellness, and equity, empowering Black women to reclaim their mental health through community-rooted healing.

DEHYA Wellness Glamp Retreat

With Jamaican roots and a heart for community, Monique Pitt, an Ontario-based therapist and social worker created Gyllivant to be more than a wellness company; it's a space for Black women to heal, grow, and be seen through care that truly reflects who they are.. With years of experience in therapy, youth work, and community programming, Monique leads the DEHYA Wellness Glamp Retreat, a three-day immersive retreat for Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latina women. Set in nature, this initiative offers healing experiences through workshops, storytelling, movement, and sisterhood. DEHYA addresses the mental, emotional, and physical wellness needs of Black women by fostering connection, cultural celebration, and empowerment. In alignment with the Halifax Declaration, the retreat centers on justice, recognition, and development—creating a transformative space where well-being becomes both personal and collective liberation.



RAP IS POETRY! RIP!

Tyneisha Thomas, also known as Ty the Poetess, is Barrie's (Ontario) first Black Poet Laureate and a powerful voice for the arts and community empowerment. As a best-selling author and spoken word artist, she is passionate about creating inclusive spaces for underrepresented talent. Through her project, RAP IS POETRY! (RIP!), Tyneisha curates a poetic concert that unites poets, rappers, dancers, DJs, and visual artists to challenge negative stereotypes around hip-hop. The immersive event highlights the cultural and historical connection between rap and spoken word, offering paid performance opportunities to BIPOC artists in professional venues. By blending artistic expression with cultural education, RIP! celebrates unity, creativity, and the transformative power of hip-hop and poetry.

Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation Inc. (TAYFFI)

Introducing Renee Lawrence, a passionate community advocate and administrative coordinator at the Truly Alive Youth and Family Foundation Inc. (TAYFFI), leads the Emerging Leaders Civic Engagement Initiative in Saskatoon. With a background in youth programming, mentorship, and community development, Renee is dedicated to empowering underserved and racialized youth through civic education and leadership training. This initiative provides BIPOC, newcomer, and low-income youth with firsthand exposure to Canada's political systems through field trips to governance institutions, youth town halls, and webinars.





Hall Pass

Hassan Ahmed, a Toronto-based DJ, content creator, and community organizer, is the visionary behind Hall Pass—a dynamic initiative designed to empower emerging QTBIPOC creatives through art, community, and culture. Drawing from his own experiences growing up in York-South Weston and navigating elitist creative spaces, Hassan created Hall Pass to serve as a welcoming “third place” for marginalized youth. The project features The Syllabus (skill-building workshops), Lunchroom (community gatherings over food), and Field trip (immersive, nature-based experiences). Rooted in the values of equity, creativity, and belonging, Hall Pass reflects the goals of the Halifax Declaration by ensuring access, representation, and opportunity for underrepresented voices in the arts.

BIPOC BOUNCE BACK

Led by community organizer Mina Abdi, BIPOC Bounce Back is a powerful Winter project in Peterborough, Ontario, designed to uplift Black youth through wellness-focused events and culturally inclusive programming. Centered around Black History Month, this project creates intentional, barrier-free spaces for Black youth to engage in wellness and community-building activities during the winter months. From outdoor adventures to yoga and art therapy sessions, the program addresses financial and accessibility barriers while promoting healing and leadership among Black youth. Through culturally responsive programming and Black-led facilitation, BIPOC Bounce Back fosters belonging, resilience, and joy for young people navigating systemic and racial challenges.



Green Labs: Environmentally focused music production program

Hassan Ahmed, a Toronto-based DJ, content creator, and community organizer, is the visionary behind Hall Pass—a dynamic initiative designed to empower emerging QTBIPOC creatives through art, community, and culture. Drawing from his own experiences growing up in York-South Weston and navigating elitist creative spaces, Hassan created Hall Pass to serve as a welcoming “third place” for marginalized youth. The project features The Syllabus (skill-building workshops), Lunchroom (community gatherings over food), and Field trip (immersive, nature-based experiences). Rooted in the values of equity, creativity, and belonging, Hall Pass reflects the goals of the Halifax Declaration by ensuring access, representation, and opportunity for underrepresented voices in the arts.



EN ROUTE TO THE MONTREAL SUMMIT

As we prepared for the 4th National Black Canadians Summit in Montreal, we recognized the significance of this moment—marking the end of the First Decade for People of African Descent and continuing the movement to advance the demands of the Halifax Declaration. Our efforts were dedicated to unifying Montreal, engaging diverse communities, and ensuring balanced representation in the planning process. Contracts were secured, and funding was received from corporate, government, charitable, and private sources to cover major Summit expenses.

Unfortunately, due to a health emergency involving our co-founder, the Summit was postponed. This unforeseen challenge led us to implement a contingency plan, reassessing our pricing structure and refining our approach to engaging youth and grassroots organizations in Montreal. We also prepared the launch of a new, dynamic Summit marketing campaign for the rescheduled January/February 2025 dates. Throughout this process, we were deeply grateful to our many partners and suppliers who stood by us, securing their collaboration for the new dates and helping us maintain momentum.

We received significant support in light of the postponement from funders including TD Bank Group, Lloyd Wilks and John Beck, who helped us offer free registration for youth delegates. Our major sponsors, the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, remained supportive throughout the process. Additionally, our local partner, the City of Montreal, provided invaluable support—not only as a sponsor but also by organizing meetings with key stakeholders in the community and involving key leaders such as Mairesse Gracia Kasoki Katahwa. We were grateful for the expressed commitment of other sponsors including Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada Council for the Arts, Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Canada Life, Enbridge, Black Opportunity Fund,



Our new Executive Director, Edward, in collaboration with Madame Jean convened a think tank with senior community advisors in Montreal to strategize the best path forward in light of the postponement, ensuring that every effort was made to guarantee the Summit's success in the city. We prioritized building strong relationships with local community leaders, engaging in meaningful conversations, and strengthening connections with diverse organizations to ensure that the issues addressed at the Summit reflected the shared concerns and aspirations of Montreal's Black community.



Winnipeg emerged as the next host city for the 5th National Black Canadians Summit. Edward, along with our co-founders and several FMJF directors, met with key leadership from both the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. Their strong commitment not only to host and support the next Summit but also to send a delegation to the Montreal Summit was a powerful testament to their commitment for the Summit, now a powerful movement in Canada.

Board Member Angela Cassie was appointed Chair of the Winnipeg Summit, taking the lead in establishing a solid foundation with a full spectrum of relevant stakeholders in the region.

Despite rising costs associated with hosting the Summit, we have also observed an increasing national interest in sustaining this movement and expanding its reach across Canada. The momentum continues to grow, and we remain committed to fostering meaningful dialogue, building community, and strengthening the future of the Summit, while making a major contribution to our country, Canada.

COMMUNITY BUILDING, PARTNERS & PARTNERSHIPS



© Resolution Conference 2023

Across countless regions of Canada, we've spent years, building strong connections and meaningful relationships with incredible communities. Today, we're proud to continue nurturing those bonds while forging new ones—helping our communities thrive and flourish.

Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow Today

Supporting youth engagement in the Permanent Forum for People of African Descent

As part of its commitment to youth leadership and equity, we partnered with Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow Today (DYLOTT) during the Black Diplomacy Global Summit 2023, supporting youth participation and introducing the Power of Youth grant program. We also endorsed their vision for a Youth Secretariat to the UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

The partnership remains active, with Executive Director Edward Matwawana serving as a specialized mentor, contributing to DYLOTT's mentorship sessions and youth training programs. This collaboration reflects a shared mission to amplify Black youth leadership and dismantle systemic barriers.

African Nova Scotian Music Awards and Lighthouse Arts Centre

Supporting African Nova Scotian Youth Arts

On October 5th, 2023, our foundation proudly supported the 25th Annual African Nova Scotian Music Awards (ANSMA), a not-for-profit organization committed to promoting and celebrating African Nova Scotian music, locally and internationally. We presented 2 awards at the event, and Edward was celebrated as one of the founders of the organization.

In parallel, we partnered with the Lighthouse Arts Centre, and Edward to deliver a Creative Resourcefulness Workshop, designed to empower young artists and entrepreneurs through innovative approaches to problem-solving and artistic expression. These initiatives reflect the Foundation's commitment to nurturing Black cultural excellence and expanding creative opportunities for youth in Nova Scotia.

Afro Socio-Economic Summit

Empowering Black youth for a stronger future

In line with its commitment to youth empowerment and equitable community development, our Foundation participated in the Afro Socio-economic Summit, an initiative led by the Structure des jeunes pour le développement de l'économie sociale (SDESJ). The most recent edition held on January 26, 2024 in Gatineau brought together Afrodescendant youth to engage in leadership development, entrepreneurship, and civic dialogue. Through this partnership, we supported efforts to strengthen socioeconomic inclusion and amplify youth-led innovation in the fields of education, entrepreneurship, and social justice. This collaboration reflects a shared vision to elevate Black youth leadership and foster sustainable, community-driven impact.



© CHAFRIC Afro Success with Edward Matwawana

Echos of Empowerment

Exploring Black legacy

As part of Black History Month celebrations, the Racialized and Indigenous Students Experience (RISE) Centre at the University of Ottawa hosted its annual gala, with the 2024 theme, "Echoes of Empowerment".

Our Executive Director, Edward L. Matwawana, was invited to join a session focused on exploring the heritage, achievements, and ongoing contributions of Black individuals throughout history. During the event, valuable insights and perspectives were shared, contributing to a powerful evening of reflection, recognition, and inspiration for the university students.



© Gala Dynastie with Michaëlle Jean

Chantier d'Afrique du Canada - AFRO SUCCESS

Celebrating Success and diversity empowerment

On February 23, 2024, as part of Black history month, Edward participated in a panel discussion at Afro Success, a conference and salon organized by Chantier d'Afrique du Canada (CHAFRIC) Montréal. Held under the theme "Success and Diversity", the event brought together Afro Descent leaders and community members to celebrate Black Excellence, share lived experiences and engage in dialogue around inclusion and leadership. Our foundation's contribution to the panel reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to equity, civic participation and community-building. This was also an opportunity to promote the upcoming Montreal Summit and the importance of the Halifax Declaration.

Gala Dynastie

Celebrating Black excellence in the arts in Quebec

Recognized as passionate advocates for Black Excellence within the scene, we proudly attended the Gala Dynastie, an annual celebration recognizing the achievements and excellence of Black communities in Quebec across media, arts, and culture. This event is a powerful platform to honour trailblazers and rising talents whose work shapes the cultural and creative landscape of Quebec. Our presence emphasized its ongoing commitment to supporting Black excellence and amplifying underrepresented voices in the arts and beyond.

Groupe 3737- Gala Idée

Supporting the development of Black entrepreneurship

As we started settling into the dynamic city of Montreal, Edward representing the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, took a moment to celebrate and attend the Gala Idée as one of the works from one of the co-presidents of our Summit Louis-Edgar Jean François, through the Gala Idée held November 16th, hosted by Groupe 3737—a Montreal-based non-profit organization that has been working since 2012 to generate wealth through entrepreneurial projects led by individuals from ethnocultural communities.

The event celebrated and highlighted the contributions of BIPOC entrepreneurs to economic development on a national scale. As part of this collaboration, Groupe 3737 also opened its doors to the Foundation, offering access to resources to support the planning of the Montreal Summit. This partnership exemplified the importance of shared infrastructure and community-driven and economic empowerment.



© Graffiti Gallery 25th Anniversary

Graffiti Gallery 25th Anniversary

Celebrating 25 years of community building with youth arts in Winnipeg

While exploring the ongoing efforts in the province of Manitoba, our Foundation was honoured to attend the 25th Anniversary celebration of Graffiti Art Programming Inc. in Winnipeg. This not-for-profit community youth art organization has spent 25 years using art as a powerful tool for community development, social change, and individual growth in Winnipeg's core area. The evening was highlighted by encouraging words from the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Jean-Daniel Lafond, who addressed the importance of creative expression in empowering youth and building stronger communities.

Youth Arts Community Mixer

Fostering creative connections in our local community

On October 27th, 2024, we hosted the Youth Arts Community Mixer at the Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre to help strengthen the local youth arts ecosystem and promote meaningful engagement among emerging young artists.

The second Youth Arts Community Mixer featured recipients of the Power of Youth from Ottawa who shared their creative projects and participated in an open dialogue exploring the question "What makes a community arts space ideal for creativity and growth?" Artistic performances, youth-led facilitation by the Michaëlle Jean Foundation's Youth Advisory Committee member Emmanuel Antonin, and visual documentation by Hot Shoe Productions, a youth-led social enterprise, contributed to a vibrant and inspiring atmosphere.

Black North Initiative

Celebrating African Renaissance and Advancing Racial Equity

Our Foundation supported the BlackNorth Initiative's Excellence Gala, held on May 25, 2024, under the theme "African Renaissance". The event brought together influential leaders, policymakers, and community changemakers to honour the cultural heritage and societal contributions of Black communities across Canada. Through our participation, the Foundation reaffirmed our dedication to racial equity, youth empowerment, and inclusive civic leadership. This collaboration echoes a shared vision to create pathways of opportunity, celebrate legacy, and build a future where systemic racism no longer defines lived realities.



© Luminato Festival, 3rd International Concert Against Racism

3rd International Concert Against Racism

Collaborating with the Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism & Reparations and Luminato Festival

Demonstrating its dedication to racial equity and global solidarity, we partnered with the Global Coalition Against Systemic Racism and for Reparations to host the III International Concert Against Racism on June 9, 2024, as part of Toronto's Luminato Festival.

The concert marked the closing of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent, gathering artists and civil society leaders to amplify anti-racist messages through music and cultural dialogue. Featuring acclaimed performers such as K'Naan, Rocky Dawuni, William Cepeda, La Dame Blanche, and Vox Sambou, the event celebrated the power of art to unite communities and challenge systemic discrimination. This was also an occasion to promote the Montreal Summit by Madame Jean.

Funeral Services Association of Canada's Annual Conference

Strengthening Cross-Sector Partnerships through Compassion and Commitment

As part of a long-standing partnership, our Foundation attended the Funeral Services Association of Canada (FSAC)'s annual conference on June 12, 2024, in Winnipeg. With The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean serving as FSAC's Honorary Patron, this collaboration reflects a shared commitment to compassion, dignity, and community care. In recognition of this special relationship, FSAC consistently encourages its members to support the Foundation through annual donations and ongoing outreach. This partnership exemplifies how cross-sector collaboration can expand the Foundation's impact while fostering a culture of generosity and social responsibility within Canada's death care industry.



© Ottawa Newcomers Youth Music Awards 2024

Ottawa Newcomers Youth Music Awards

Supporting young immigrant artists in Ottawa

In celebration of World Refugee Day and Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW), we collaborated on the Ottawa Newcomer Youth Music Awards to support immigrant youth in showcasing their artistic talents and fostering community engagement. The event, held on June 20, 2024, provided a platform for young musicians to perform and connect with audiences.

The initiative included a workshop by renowned South African artist Lorraine Klaasen, a concert featuring award recipients and guest artists, and in collaboration with the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, an open-mic and reception to encourage networking and upcoming talents. With the backing of Dominion-Chalmers United Church, we supported two youth-led studios: Woke Studios, a youth-led artistic residency for young RnB Fusion artists, and Bikkurim Music Studios which offered a dynamic youth-led music, arts and creativity camp at Incubator 13 in the Vanier community of Ottawa.

Million Little Miracles

Collective Action for Pan-African Impact and Social Change

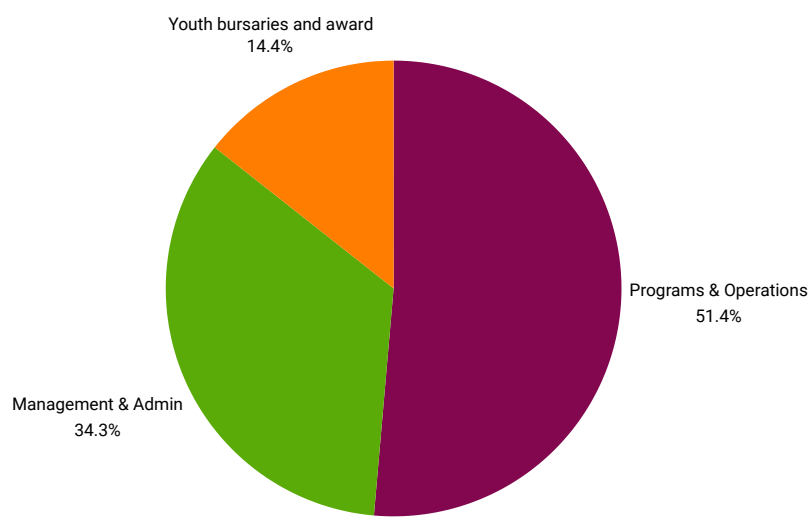
In alignment with our commitment to advancing community leadership and global solidarity, we supported Million Little Miracles' annual gala on August 30, 2024. Founded in 2023, Million Little Miracles is a youth-led initiative addressing health, education, and food insecurity across the African diaspora. The gala honoured key initiatives such as sponsoring 150 children in Burkina Faso, supporting an orphanage in Togo, and raising awareness on the Congo genocide through international healthcare partnerships. Executive Director Edward Matwawana delivered a speech on youth empowerment and equity, and both Madame Michaëlle Jean and Mr. Matwawana received a special award recognizing the Foundation's shared values of justice, compassion, and collective responsibility.



© Million Little Miracles, Shine Gala 2024

Numbers at a glance

2023-2024 FMJF FINANCIALS

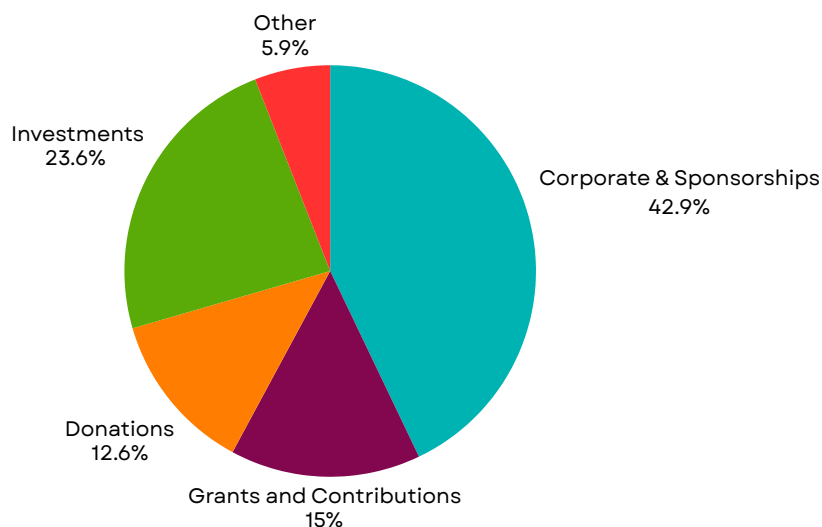


Expenses Breakdown

Our total expenses of \$1,013,086, highlighting key spending areas: Programs and Operations (\$607,852) and Management and Administration (\$405,234). Additionally, over \$170,000 was disbursed to youth in bursaries and awards, reinforcing the foundation's commitment to supporting young individuals through financial aid and program initiatives.

Revenue Breakdown

In 2023, our team recorded a total revenue of \$699,947, marking an impressive 135% increase from the previous year (2022). This significant growth was largely driven by a 122% rise in donations, showcasing the growing support from contributors. Additionally, net investment revenue reached \$795,061, surpassing total revenue, indicating a strong financial strategy that leverages investments to sustain and expand the foundation's impact.



ADVANCING OUR MISSION

10

youth leading
FMJF
programs

35

youth-led
projects
funded
nationwide

1st

youth-led
day at the
Summit

1st

Newcomer
Youth Arts
Award

YOUTH

Increased
youth
representation
on the FMJF
staff team

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Partners/Sponsors



Funded in part by the Government
of Canada's Supporting Black
Canadian Communities Initiative



Canadian
Race Relations
Foundation

Montréal 



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PYROX



Our Team

Tara Lapointe - Executive Director (until February 2024)

Edward Matwawana - Executive Director (as of March 2024)

Nick Veltmeyer - Manager of Programs and Operations

Lola Mongai Louangvannasy - Communication Manager

Olivia Lanza - Projects Coordinator Summit

Malika Astaoui - Administrative and Operations
Coordinator

Yetha Adam - Summit Project Assistant

Benazir Tom Erdimi - Special Programs Officer

Ariella Ritter Gubbay - Project Administrative Officer

Thomas Pouta - Communications Assistant

Individual Donors

Anon

Felicia Nagata

Michelle Douglas

Cedrik Edwards

Kadé Marjorie Rémy

Robert Potter

Renee Beneteau

Gina McMichael

Marissa King

Jean Pickering

John Paul Cunningham

Kollin Weatherbee

Rob Dellaire

Lewis MacIntosh

Raymond Fournier

Jeff Hagel

Board Members



Michaëlle Jean
Co-chair



Jean-Daniel Lafond
Co-chair



John M. Beck
Vice-chair



Michelle Douglas
Treasurer



Robert Peck
Director



Dave D'Oyen
Director



Angela Cassie
Director



Arni C. Thorsteinson
Director



Lloyd Wilks
Director



Curtis Gilfillan
Director



Deanna Pashe
Director



Angela Simmonds
Director

Contact Us

Supporting youth-led efforts towards inclusion and racial justice through creativity, arts and innovation initiatives.

The Michaëlle Jean Foundation recognizes that its premises are located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

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