

# Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition QUARTERLY NEWS



*OBMHC members gathered for the second bi-annual meeting to collaborate and share a meal on October 29, 2025.*

## Coalition Coordination Update Upcoming and Ongoing

This month OBMHC will wrap up our summer community engagement events. This year we will have participated in 15 community engagement events with volunteers contributing over 170 hours to community engagement at cultural and arts festivals, health fairs, and conferences. Volunteers and staff distributed tote bags and mental health information at Dapo Fun Day, Afro-fest, and the ACAO Multicultural Day. In October we participated in the Restore Medical Clinics health fair on October 18th, and the Queens Connected's UsNow Conference on October 25. OBMHC provided tote bags and information for participants at both these events as well as have a booth to promote member organizations.

Also in October, a 20 member delegation from OBMHC took part in the half-day conference at the University of Ottawa, "Failed Care: The Challenges of Antiracist Mental Health in Canada". The event will feature two keynote speakers: Dr. Monnica Williams and Dr. Guimezap Tsopmo Jackson.

Finally, OBMHC was recognized by CAPSA for our dedication to reducing stigma and collaborating to improve access to mental health and substance use health at their annual WOW Festival on September 12th. OBMHC staff and the Executive Board were there to receive the Community Allyship Award, presented by Shawn Fisk. Special thank you to Papa-Ladjike Diouf (SALUS), Sophia Jacob (CWCLN), Eb Amponsah (Uptream Ottawa), Kadra Good (MFSO) and Hodan Aden (OPH) for attending the ceremony and accepting the award on behalf of all our incredible partners!

### In this newsletter you can expect:

Coalition  
Coordination  
Update

Advocacy and  
Systems Change

Mental Health  
Awareness

Mental Health  
Supports

Community  
Engagement  
Events

Mental Health  
and Substance  
Use Health  
Resources

# Cooalition Coordination Update

## Upcoming and Ongoing

### Black Mental Health Week 2026 Planning

Black Mental Health Week 2026 planning continues as the planning committee works to develop the agenda around the theme Substance Use and Suicide: Breaking the Silence. Both substance-use and suicide impact our communities every day, but often shame and stigma prevent people from accessing support. This year, we want to break the silence and talk about these two difficult topics. We'll be exploring signs and symptoms, impacts of stigma, faith and culture, and what people can do to connect to care.

This year, all the events will be held on Monday, March 2nd and will feature an opening ceremony, Community Expo focused on connecting caregivers to supports and services and others. New in 2026, we will have Quieter Connections, a semi-private space where people can meet on-on-one with a peer support professional or social worker for support and advice. Since BMHW 2026 will be held during the holy month of Ramadan, we will also have a prayer space available on site.

Collaboration has also begun with Ottawa Public Health, CAPSA and The Royal Ottawa to provide training to community members in suicide prevention, Mental Health First Aid and stigma reduction.

### Community of Practice Workshops

Building on the momentum of the Community of Practice, Black Mental Health Week 2026 will also feature workshops for professionals. These free, expert-led in person workshops will incorporate the themes of Substance-use and Suicide – two issues that impact our community and wellbeing. Workshops will be held in person during Black Mental Health Week on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026. These workshops will address topics like stigma and be open to all professionals in the Ottawa region working in mental health, community, and social services who support Black individuals and communities.

#### Key Features:

- Small learning groups – register to attend sessions held throughout the day
- Led by experienced clinical supervisors and local partners with expertise
- Explore the Community Expo and Fireside discussions happening all day long

Registration for the workshops will open in early 2026. Be sure to secure your spot!



**This year our marketing will feature OBMHC members. Thank you for giving us permission to use your images. We hope that seeing familiar, trusted members of our many organizations will increase engagement in 2026!**



**Join the next planning meeting on November 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:30 AM**

Download the meeting documents from DropBox at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/jdrirImpfsf00j62rraep/Alh4bqe8-yinLLknEpjz0g?rlkey=fws5lnggd4u882b8h2nzt3u&st=1qgtqcmh&dl=0>

## OBMHC Capacity Building Support

You can connect with the team via email at [ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com) or by contacting OBMHC Coordinator, Michelle James at [mjames@swchc.on.ca](mailto:mjames@swchc.on.ca).



**Michelle James**  
Coalition Coordinator



**Basant Mohamed**  
Community of  
Practice Coordinator



**Catherine Yorgoro**  
Grants and Writing  
Support

In October we said farewell to Administrative Support, Ro Nwosu and Volunteer Coordinator, Keisha Ferdinand. Ro has been a joyful addition to the team and was the creative genius behind our BMHW marketing materials. Keisha was instrumental in our community engagement coordination and will be continuing her studies in Psychology. Somerset West CHC and OBMHC staff continue to look for ways to build sustainability and capacity as a coalition to support our member organizations.



**Fatima Baasher**  
Social Media Engagement

## Congratulations to our Working Group Award Winners

At our all member meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup> the Executive Board recognized the following OBMHC members for their outstanding contributions to furthering the efforts of the Coalition. Congratulations to all our winners and thank you for your contributions!

Advocacy and Systems Change:  
**Rosie Dixon, Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre**

Community of Practice Award:  
**Nora Elmi, Nora Elmi Counselling and Wellness**

Mental Health Awareness:  
**Nagad Hersi, Somerset West Community Health Centre**

Mental Health Supports:  
**Shukri Hussein and Bille Abdalla, Somali Centre for Family Services**

Community Collaborator Award:  
**Brotherhood Coalition – Chuks Onwuachi**



OBMHC members received the Allyship Award from CAPSA at this year's WOW Festival on September 12<sup>th</sup> at a ceremony held at The Royal Ottawa. Thank you to all our partners!

---

# Advocacy and Systems Change Working Group Update

The Advocacy and Systems Change (ASC) working group operates to advance the work of member organizations and the initiatives of the Coalition. Members of the working group include individuals from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds working together to champion and impact change for systems change in mental health, health and social services that address inequities and improve outcomes for Black residents.

## Updates

On August 25<sup>th</sup>, Devon Archer from the Ottawa Police Service attended our ASC working group meeting to present on the CHANGE initiative and answer questions from our group.

- OBMHC staff – Follow up and provide feedback and input on OPS body-worn cameras.
- Working group members are encouraged to reach out to Devon ([ArcherD@ottawapolice.ca](mailto:ArcherD@ottawapolice.ca)) or the [CHANGE](#) Initiative team with any additional questions or feedback at: [change@ottawapolice.ca](mailto:change@ottawapolice.ca)
- Share information on alternative models of police-community engagement, such as the "[koban](#)" system in Japan and the unarmed community [officers in the UK](#).
- Explore opportunities for OBMHC partners like Parents for Diversity to provide training or information sessions for police officers on the mental health impacts of their presence in schools.

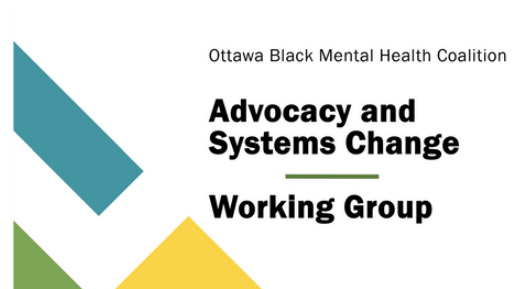
On October 21<sup>st</sup>, a group of OBMHC members attended the Failed Care: The Challenges of Antiracist Mental Health in Canada event hosted by V-TRaC Lab at the University of Ottawa. This event was extremely well received by the audience. Thank you to Dr. Jude Cenat for highlighting the mutual collaboration and support between the Coalition and V-TRaC Lab. Special thanks to Youma Konaté for coordinating tickets for members to attend this powerful event.

This year OBMHC staff and partners have presented 3-hour tailored information sessions for five agencies who will be working with Black residents in a variety of settings. OBMHC partners are connecting organizations to information and resources that help build their capacity to better serve Black residents and connect them to OBMHC partners across the city.

*Click to view the CHANGE Initiative slides presented at the working group meeting, on August 25th*



*Click to view the latest Advocacy and Systems Change working group meeting slides*



**[Next Advocacy Systems Change Working Group Meeting is November 24th at 3:30-4:30PM Join Zoom Meeting](#)**

---



---

# Mental Health Awareness Working Group Update

The Mental Health Awareness (MHA) working group members promote mental health and wellbeing information and perform outreach and engagement activities with community members, the public and partners and stakeholders. Members of the working group include individuals from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds working together to promote Black mental health programs and services, and to reduce stigma and foster open dialogue about mental health with Black residents.

## Updates

### **OBMHC Website Rebuild in 2025: Update**

The RFP process wrapped up in October and initial meetings with the new developer begin at the end of the month. While we had hoped to launch the new site in time for the All Members Meeting on October 29th, this has been pushed until later in the year. We hope to have the new website ready by mid-December in time to launch some preliminary marketing for Black Mental Health Week. Special thanks to the sub-committee who provided guidance during this process, which included Mohamed Sofa, Bo Turpin, Papa-Ladjike Diouf and Sabrina Mansour of Somerset West CHC.

Next steps: Members of the Mental Health Awareness working group will be asked for input and to test the site as we move forward with development.

### **Social Media Information Campaign: Wrap up**

This summer OBMHC ran an information campaign on Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook pages. Leveraging infographics from Black Health Alliance, Ottawa Public Health, Refugee 6-1-3 and other sources, OBMHC Communication Support, Fatima Baasher rotated posts and infographics related to newcomers, LGBTQ communities, youth, substance use and stigma. These posts demonstrated high engagement with target audiences and programs like Counselling Connect saw increases in access that correlated with increased posting. Every organization in the Coalition can benefit by following and sharing content across platforms to reach broader audiences, so please like, follow and repost OBMHC partner events and information!

### **Black Mental Health Week 2026: Planning Update**

The theme for 2026 is Substance Use and Suicide: Breaking the Silence. Planning is well underway and our committee is growing each month. Two supports that will be available at Black Mental Health Week 2026 are peer support and system navigation support. We are looking to recruit approximately 10 peer support workers and 10 general volunteers to support in our Quieter Connections room. If you are interested in knowing more, please contact Michelle James [mjames@swchc.on.ca](mailto:mjames@swchc.on.ca).

*The working group did not make quorum on September 29<sup>th</sup> and agenda items were carried to the BMHW Planning Session and the next meeting on December 15th.*



**[Next Mental Health Awareness Working Group Meeting will hold on December 15th 3:30-4:30PM Join Zoom Meeting.](#)**

---

---

# Mental Health Supports Working Group Update

The Mental Health Supports working group operates to advance the work of member organizations and the initiatives of the Coalition. Members of the working group include individuals from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds working together to champion and impact change by delivering 1-1 or group mental health supports and programs to residents or clinical supervision to mental health practitioners.

**Counselling Connect** ACB Community Counselling services receive extended funding from the City of Ottawa until July 1, 2026. We are currently looking at securing additional funding for the ACB portal and how we might leverage the new OBMHC website to better connect our community to counselling services.

As part of our reporting to the City of Ottawa, we will be conducting Client Impact Surveys in the months of November and December when demand tends to increase and there are greater opportunities to collect data. The City of Ottawa determines the format and questions of the survey and this data is collected to identify where gaps and needs are, and is available for the Coalition to consult. Preliminary data indicates that 100% of survey respondents indicated that their income did not meet their needs, and this impact will likely be seen by our partners on the ground.

## **Training for Black Community Members**

Earlier this year, our Mental Health First Aid for the Black community was very successful, with approximately 70 residents and frontline workers trained in mental health first aid. As a component of Black Mental Health Week, OBMHC partners have identified that connecting community members with additional training in suicide prevention, mental health first aid and stigma and substance-use health should be a key component of the weeks' activities. We are currently discussing with training partners like Ottawa Public Health, CAPSA and the Royal Ottawa and SMART Recovery, how we can bring these skills to as many people as possible in 2026.

## **Did you know?**

Ottawa Public Health and Somerset West CHC are in the process of updating the ACB Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List. You can expect to see some changes as they update the language and refresh the list. If you would like more information or to include an organization or service please contact Nagad Hersi at: [nhersi@swchc.on.ca](mailto:nhersi@swchc.on.ca)

*Click below for the latest Mental Health Supports working group meeting slides*



**[Next Mental Health Supports Working Group Meeting is  
January 19th 3:30 - 4:30PM Join Zoom Meeting](#)**

---

## Community Engagement



The poster for the ACAOT Youth Placement Program features a group of diverse young people smiling. A megaphone icon is on the left, and a rocket icon is on the right. The text includes: 'AFRICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF OTTAWA PRESENTS', 'The ACAOT Youth PLACEMENT PROGRAM', 'UNITY THROUGH SERVICE', 'CALL FOR THE YOUTH Are you between the ages of 12 and 30? Take the opportunity to grow, lead, and make an impact!', 'WHY JOIN?' with a list of benefits, and 'REGISTER TODAY WWW.ACAOTTOAWA.COM'. Social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are at the bottom left, and the Canada Service Corps logo is at the bottom right.

### Register Now for the ACAOT Youth Placement.

Have you heard about the African Canadian Association of Ottawa's Youth Placement program and not yet registered? The first cohort has officially launched and we are encouraged to keep seeking the best opportunities for our community.

If you are aged between 12 and 30 years, you can apply to join the next cohort. To apply, click [here](#).

### 3rd National Black Mental Health Conference - Abstracts due October 31

The 3rd National Black Mental Health Conference will hold on May 27, 2026.

Don't miss your chance! Abstract submissions close in just one month! Share your work, amplify your voice, and help shape the conversation at the National Black Mental Health Conference. Visit the [website](#) for more information and to submit your abstracts. We look forward to seeing you at the NBMHConf2026 !

### Boys and Girls Who Brunch November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Boys and Girls Who Brunch** is an annual community event that brings together youth and mentors for an inspiring day of connection, empowerment, and growth. Participants explore important topics like mental health, identity, and leadership — all while building meaningful relationships and celebrating community. Click [here](#) for more information.



The poster for Boys and Girls Who Brunch features a vibrant purple and blue design. It includes the text: 'AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN & BLACK WELLNESS RESOURCE CENTRE', 'Boys and Girls Who Brunch', 'NOVEMBER 8, 2025 9:00AM TO 4:00PM', 'SAVE THE DATE! LOCATION TO BE CONFIRMED', 'AGES 13 AND UP!', 'BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROVIDED', 'DOLLARS & SENSE BREAK OUT SESSION WORKSHOP #1', 'MINDFULNESS BREAK OUT SESSION WORKSHOP #2', 'PURPOSE & PASSION BREAK OUT SESSION WORKSHOP #3', 'PRIZES!', 'REGISTER TODAY AT: ACB.WELLNESS.CA/BOYS-GIRLS-WHO-BRUNCH', 'For any questions, please reach out at: communicationsacb@gmail.com (613) 801-7426', 'ALSO FEATURING: KEYNOTE SPEAKERS PANEL DISCUSSION', and 'DON'T MISS THIS CHANCE TO POWER UP WITH YOUR COMMUNITY!'. There are also three small photos showing people at the event.



The poster for the 3rd National Black Mental Health Conference features a stylized illustration of a person's head with a landscape of mountains, trees, and a river inside. The text includes: 'VtRaCLAB', 'CISN | ICBH', 'uOttawa', 'Nourris par l'héritage, portés par la justice', 'Rooted in Legacy, Rising in Justice', and '27 - 29 Mai 2026 May 27 - 29, 2026'.



## Community Engagement

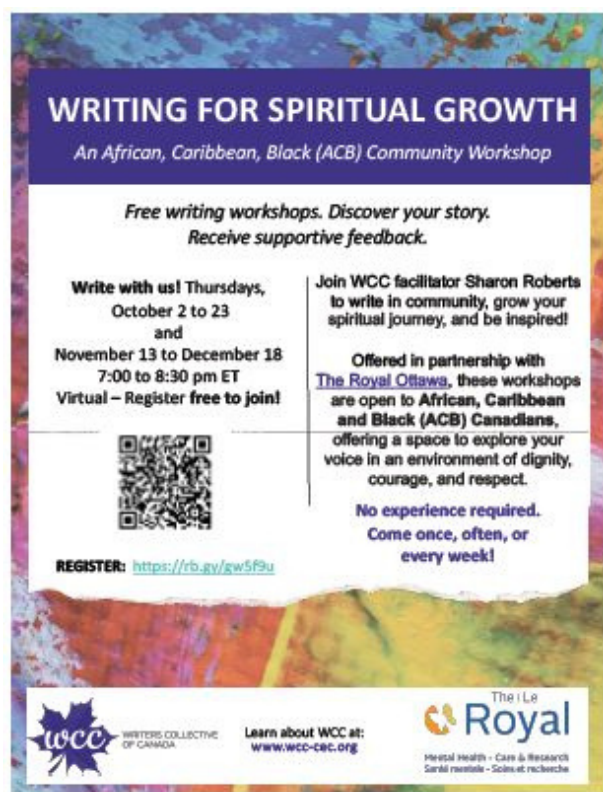
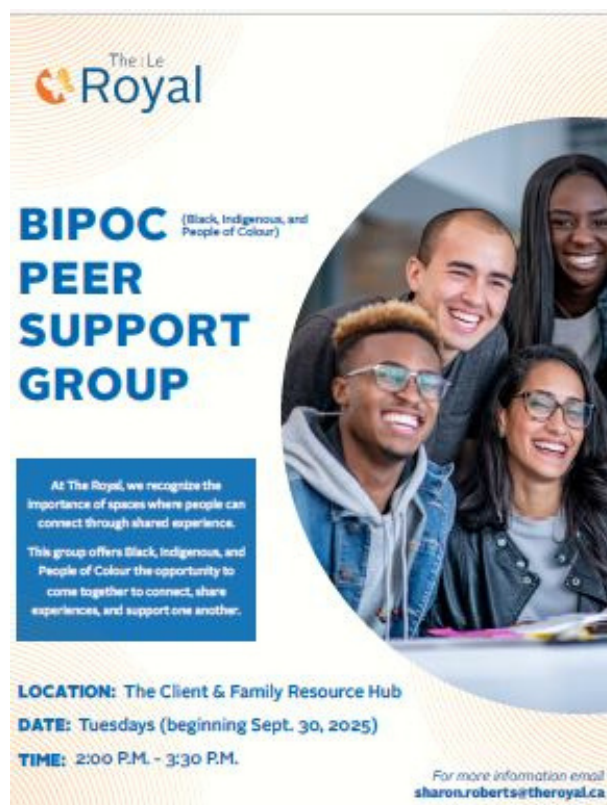


### BIPOC Peer Support Group

The Royal's BIPOC peer support group holds every Tuesday, from 2:00-3:30 PM. Email Sharon for more information at [sharon.roberts@theroyal.ca](mailto:sharon.roberts@theroyal.ca)

### Women In Mind Conference - Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - **CANCELLED**

The Annual Women in Mind Virtual Conference is Perimenopause and Menopause: Understanding the Impact and Implications for Mental Health Care has been cancelled for 2025. As a member of the planning committee, OBMHC would like to thank everyone who worked on this year's event, especially the team at The Royal Ottawa's Women's Mental Health programs.



### Writing for Spiritual Growth Free Writing Workshops

In partnership with The Royal, the Writers Collective of Canada (WCC) will be hosting **free writing workshops virtually every Thursdays from October 2<sup>nd</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup>, and from November 13<sup>th</sup> - December 18<sup>th</sup>**. Click [here](#) for more information.



---

# Resources

If you know of a resource and don't see it here, please let us know!  
Contact us at [ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com)



## ACB Community Counselling Portal

Available in French and English, this portal is staffed by OBMHC partner organizations and supported by clinical supervisors with extensive experience supporting Black community members. Book an appointment online or by calling 2-1-1.

**BOOK NOW**

## Sawubona Resources Caregivers Tool Kits

Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support is a non-profit organization that aims to EMPOWER Black caregivers of individuals with disabilities and their families. They have toolkits specifically for Black caregivers. Download their toolkits and tip sheets in English and French

**LEARN MORE**



## ACB Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List

Ottawa Public Health and Somerset West CHC have updated the ACB Mental Health and Substance Use Resource List.

**Download the PDF online:**

[Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health Services and Resources](#)

[Services et ressources de santé mentale, dépendances et de santé liée à l'utilisation de substances](#)



## Crisis Support

- **Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre** offers a 24/7 crisis line for those seeking immediate emotional support. Reach out at 613-562-2333. Additionally, Chat & Text Support service is accessible every day from 12 pm to 12 am. Text 613-544-6424. Visit [www.orcc.net](http://www.orcc.net) for more information.
- **Nisa Helpline** – 1-866-315 NISA (1-866-315-6472) assisting Muslim Women by providing peer-to-peer counselling 12 hours per day, 7 days per week. [nisahelpline.com](http://nisahelpline.com)
- **Naseeha Youth Helpline** – 1 (866) NASEEHA (627-3342) provides a confidential helpline for young Muslims to receive immediate, anonymous, and confidential support over the phone from 3 – 9 pm, 7 days a week.

---

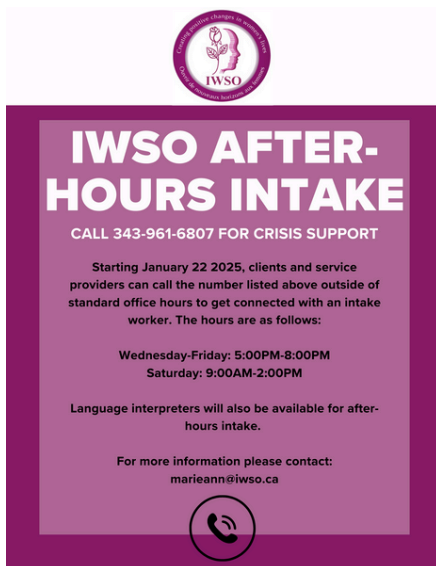
## Resources

If you know of a resource and don't see it here, please let us know!  
Contact us at [ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:ottawabmhcoalition@gmail.com)



## Mental Health Supports and Resources

- **Britannia Woods Support Line: Support Channel for Black Racialized Individuals** (CSIRN) -  
Phone: +1 613-596-3299 -  
CSIRN services are available Mondays and Thursdays (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) - Language services are available in the following languages: English, French, Somali, Arabic, and Linagalu
- **Muslim Family Services Ottawa** offers culturally-appropriate and trauma-informed counseling and psychotherapy services for individuals, couples, children, youth, and families in English, French, Arabic, and other languages. Phone: (613) 562-2273



## After Hours Intake

In an effort to address the gap in services after hours and increase the accessibility of services, Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa (IWSO) will be offering after hours intake and crisis intervention.

Service providers and clients will now be able to call **343-961-6807** after hours, Wednesday through Saturday, to speak with me and complete their intake.

You are also welcome to refer clients directly over email and staff will contact them to complete the intake.

Additionally, IWSO's language interpretation services are available after hours to support clients.

For more Info contact Marieann Thottungal at:  
[marieann@iwsoc.ca](mailto:marieann@iwsoc.ca)

## Impact Report

The release of CWCLN's Black Maternal Health and Reproductive Justice Impact Report—held on International Day of Action for Women's Health—sparked engagement across Ottawa and beyond. Community members, partner organizations, and sector allies voiced support, highlighted systemic gaps, and affirmed the importance of Black-led leadership in maternal health advocacy.

[READ THE REPORT](#)

## Parents for Diversity Workshop Catalogue

Parents for Diversity is offering workshops that are customizable and currently available in English, Spanish, with select workshops in French. Formats include online, in-person, and hybrid delivery. Workshops are designed for groups of 15–50 participants. More information available [here](#).



---

## Creative Corner

This newsletter shares some insight in taking a wellness focused approach to end of year reflections, as well as Black-led events taking place across Ottawa to increase connections.

2025

*There's no doubt that 2025 has been a tumultuous year for many - talks of war and escalation, trade and migration disruptions, and an amplification of rhetoric that negatively affects mental well-being.*

*Despite these facts, there is so much gratitude to be shown for the very fact that we've all made it this far.*

*As we embark on personal reflections in closing the year, let's be mindful to celebrate our small wins - the ones that filled our hearts with warmth, that filled our cups with goodness, and that created an enriched sense of **well-being**.*

2026



IN CELEBRATION OF THE  
WORK OF THE MICHAËLLE  
JEAN FOUNDATION

EN CÉLÉBRATION DE L'ŒUVRE  
DE LA FONDATION  
MICHAËLLE JEAN

### Celebration of the work of the Michaëlle Jean Foundation

A celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean's installation and ongoing impactful work with FMJF will hold on November 12, 2025 at the national gallery. More information can be found [here](#).

### Ottawa Black Parent Empowerment Symposium 2025 - Educational Justice

The Black Parent Empowerment Symposium is part of a growing collective effort bringing together parents, youth, educators, and community partners to reimagine education through the leadership of Black parents — centering care, belonging, and justice for all children. More information can be found on the [webpage](#).





## Proud Members of the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition

