

Canadian Blk Women in Excellence Society NS & BC

1st Report to the Community - 2023

Empowering Black Women Entrepreneurs and Fostering Economic Growth in Canada

Introduction

The Canadian Blk Women in Excellence Society NS, founded in September 2020, and its counterpart in BC, founded in March 2023, are pioneering organizations dedicated to empowering and supporting Black women entrepreneurs in Canada. Our mission is to foster economic growth, facilitate equitable opportunities, and amplify the voices of Black women in business. Through strategic partnerships, educational programs, and targeted initiatives, we aim to bridge the gaps and disparities that hinder the success of Black women entrepreneurs, driving positive change and building a more inclusive entrepreneurial landscape.

Milestones and Achievements

Since our inception, Blk Women in Excellence (BWIE) has achieved several significant milestones:

- ✓ **Training and Empowerment:** We are immensely proud of our success in providing comprehensive training to 87 Black women entrepreneurs. These programs have equipped them with the essential skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their businesses and pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.
- ✓ **Community Recognition:** BWIE has become a recognizable name within local Black communities in Nova Scotia and British Columbia. We have earned the trust of our community members and established ourselves as a valuable resource and partner.
- ✓ **Entrepreneurship Programs:** To date, we have delivered nine entrepreneur start-up programs, offering crucial tools, guidance, and mentorship to Black women entrepreneurs, helping them launch and grow their businesses.
- ✓ **Mentorship Initiatives:** BWIE has initiated nine mentorship programs, fostering a culture of support and guidance within our community. These initiatives have connected experienced entrepreneurs with aspiring ones, providing invaluable mentorship relationships.
- ✓ **BWIE Pitch Competition:** Our BWIE Pitch Competition, held in both 2022 and 2023, has provided a platform for Black women entrepreneurs to showcase their innovative ideas and

secure funding. This initiative has not only empowered individuals but also fueled innovation within our community.

- ✓ Lending Laptop Program Sponsored by LSI: We are excited to announce the successful launch of our Lending Laptop Program in 2023, made possible by the generous sponsorship from LSI. Thanks to their support, 20 Black women entrepreneurs now have access to laptops, empowering them to work on their businesses effectively and seize new opportunities.
- ✓ Our expansion to British Columbia (BWIE BC), led by our dedicated President, Dhorea Ramanula. Dhorea has been working tirelessly to build our presence in this vibrant community, and we are excited to see the positive impact BWIE BC will have on Black women entrepreneurs in the region.
- ✓ 4 Black women entrepreneurs have successfully secured vital capital through our partnership with TD Canada Trust's Black Access Credit Program. This accomplishment exemplifies the unwavering commitment and support that BWIE provides to our community.
- ✓ 5 Black women entrepreneurs have successfully secured vital capital through our partnership with Inova Credit Union, and 3 are in the processing stages to date.

Overcoming Challenges

Our commitment to supporting Black women entrepreneurs has remained unwavering, even amidst challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic racism. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that these challenges do not hinder the progress of the women we serve. Through networking opportunities, financial support, and personalized guidance, we have empowered our participants to launch and sustain their businesses successfully.

Strong Partnerships

We have established vital partnerships with a diverse array of community organizations, businesses, and financial institutions, including but not limited to:

- Mulgrave Park Tenants Association
- Canada Start Up
- Delmore Buddy Daye Institute
- Canadian International Women of Excellence
- Connecture
- Tribe Network

- Center for Women in Business
- Atlantic Growth for Women in Business
- Emera
- Apple Blossom Festival
- Kentville Municipality
- Common Good Solutions
- Black Cultural Center
- Scotia Bank
- INOVA Credit Union
- KWIB (BC)
- Hair and Design Center
- Good Robot
- TD Canada Trust
- Rise Helps
- Hope Blooms
- Benjamin Bridge
- Capture It Photography
- R Studio
- The Portal Youth Outreach
- Pattison Outdoor Advertising
- Starbucks
- Port of Halifax
- Grizzly Winery (BC)
- Pitch Better
- Carlisle House

These partnerships have expanded our reach and enabled us to provide comprehensive support to Black women entrepreneurs.

Measuring Impact

We have diligently tracked the progress of the businesses supported through our programs, and the results are promising.

- Capital Success: 19% of the Black women entrepreneurs participating in our programs have successfully secured capital.
- Business Registration 100% of participating Black women have registered their businesses with Joint Stocks or business registry in their Province.
- Business Planning: 100% have completed business plans and three-year financial projections.
- Entrepreneurial Dedication: 73% of supported entrepreneurs are operating their businesses 20-40 hours a week.
- Financial Responsibility: 14% of program participants have sought assistance with preparing their taxes as business owners for the 2022 fiscal year.

These percentages provide a clear and concise overview of the impact and achievements of our Access to Capital program and the commitment of Black women entrepreneurs in our community.

In addition to these statistics, the feedback from Black women has been overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the profound impact our programs have had on their personal and professional lives.

Financial Support

We are proud to acknowledge the financial support received:

- ACOA funded our 1st annual pitch competition in 2022 with an amount of \$52,920 and our 2nd annual in 2023 with an amount of \$70,978.
- LSI supported us for 16-week start-up programs in 2022 with an amount of \$18,226.50, and in 2023 with amounts of \$15,000 and \$20,700.
- African Nova Scotian Affairs funded "Our Story" in 2021 with an amount of \$12,500 and again with an amount of \$4,000 for our 1st annual business retreat in 2023.
- Community Health Board supported our Rural Youth Entrepreneurship Program with an amount of \$2,500.
- East Coast Credit Union funded our first accelerator program, "She Means Business," with an amount of \$7,500.
- Atlantic Credit Union supported our 1st annual business retreat with an amount of \$10,000.
- NSLC supported our 2nd accelerator program, "She Means Business," in 2022 with an amount of \$1,000.

- Center for Women in Business and Atlantic Growth for Women in Business funded our 28-day series in 2023 with an amount of \$18,060.
- TD Canada Trust supported our BWIE Pitch Competition in 2023 with an amount of \$5,000.
- Rise Helps supported our BWIE Pitch Competition with an amount of \$5,000.
- Inova Credit Union supported our BWIE Pitch Competition in 2022 with an amount of \$300 and in 2023 with an amount of \$500.
- The Canada Summer Jobs program funded our first 2 staff members in 2023 with an amount of \$11,000.
- Tribe Network supported our BWIE 2nd annual Pitch Competition with an amount of \$1,500.

Future Goals and Initiatives of BWIE NS & BC

As we look ahead, the Canadian Blk Women in Excellence Society NS & BC remains dedicated to empowering and supporting Black women entrepreneurs. We are committed to expanding our impact and pursuing the following goals and initiatives:

1. **Increased Outreach 2024:** We aim to reach and support a larger number of Black women entrepreneurs across Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and beyond. This includes establishing satellite programs in more communities to ensure accessibility.
2. **Advanced Training 2024 :** To meet the evolving needs of entrepreneurs, we will enhance our training programs, offering specialized workshops in areas such as digital marketing, e-commerce, and sustainable business practices.
3. **Financial Literacy 2024:** Recognizing the importance of financial literacy, we will develop programs and partnerships to provide Black women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools necessary to manage their finances effectively.
4. **Mentorship Expansion 2024:** We will expand our mentorship initiatives, connecting entrepreneurs with seasoned professionals who can offer guidance and insights specific to their industries.

5. **Tech and Innovation:** We will explore opportunities to support tech startups and businesses focused on innovation, ensuring that Black women entrepreneurs have a presence in these sectors.
6. **Policy Advocacy 2024:** We will actively engage with policymakers to advocate for policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the business ecosystem, addressing systemic barriers faced by Black women entrepreneurs.
7. **Sustainable Growth 2024:** Sustainability is a key focus, and we will encourage and support businesses that prioritize environmental and social responsibility.
8. **National Network 2024:** Expanding our reach beyond Nova Scotia and British Columbia, we aim to establish partnerships and chapters in other provinces, creating a national network of support for Black women entrepreneurs.
9. **Research and Data 2025:** We will continue to gather data on the impact of our programs and use this information to refine our offerings and demonstrate the value of our initiatives.
10. **Resource Hub 2026:** Creating a comprehensive online resource hub that provides easy access to information, tools, and resources for Black women entrepreneurs at all stages of their business journey.
11. **Youth Engagement 2024:** We recognize the importance of engaging and mentoring the next generation of Black women entrepreneurs. We will develop programs tailored to young aspiring entrepreneurs.
12. **Community Collaborations in BC 2024:** Strengthening partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and financial institutions across Canada to create a supportive ecosystem for Black women entrepreneurs.
13. **Microloan Program 2025 BC & NS:** In line with our commitment to financial empowerment, we will establish a microloan program with a scalable payback method. This program will be 100% accessible to Black women entrepreneurs, providing them with the capital needed to start and grow their businesses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Canadian Blk Women in Excellence Society NS & BC stands as a beacon of empowerment and support for Black women entrepreneurs across Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and beyond. Our unwavering commitment to fostering economic growth, facilitating equitable opportunities, and amplifying the voices of Black women in business continues to drive positive change and build a more inclusive entrepreneurial landscape in Canada.

As we reflect on our journey thus far, we are immensely proud of the milestones we have achieved—training, mentorship, entrepreneurship programs, and impactful partnerships. We have witnessed Black women entrepreneurs register their businesses, complete business plans, and make significant strides in operating sustainable enterprises, even in the face of challenges such as the pandemic and systemic racism.

The resounding success of our BWIE Pitch Competitions, the invaluable support of our diverse and dedicated partners, and the heartwarming feedback from the women we serve reaffirm the importance of our mission. Looking forward, we are excited about our future goals and initiatives—increased outreach, advanced training, financial literacy, mentorship expansion, tech and innovation focus, policy advocacy, sustainable growth, national network expansion, research and data utilization, resource hub creation, youth engagement, and community collaborations. These initiatives will further empower Black women entrepreneurs and pave the way for a more equitable business landscape.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, participants, supporters, and the entire community for their unwavering support. Together, we will continue to build a brighter and more inclusive future for Black women entrepreneurs in Canada. The journey is ongoing, and we invite you to join us as we make strides toward economic empowerment and equality for all. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

Cheers,

Tia Upshaw

CEO