

Africa Centre Overview

Organization Identity and Mission

Africa Centre, officially known as the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta (CAAC), is the largest pan-African non-profit organization in Western Canada. Founded in 2006, Africa Centre serves as a central hub for the African and Caribbean descent community in Edmonton. The organization provides resources and services aimed at improving social, cultural, educational, and economic outcomes for this community.

Africa Centre's mission is to "Create opportunities for access and full participation of the African descent community in Alberta". Its vision is to foster "A strong, relevant and engaged African descent community in Alberta". The organization strives to create opportunities for full access and participation of all Albertans in society, contributing to the holistic development and wellness of individuals, families, and the community.

Key Focus Areas and Services

Africa Centre focuses on several key areas to achieve its mission:

- Empowerment: Providing programs and services that empower individuals and communities.
- Advocacy: Addressing systemic barriers and advocating for the needs of the African descent community.
- Cultural Preservation: Celebrating and preserving African and Caribbean cultures.
- Youth Leadership: Developing leadership skills and providing support for youth.
- Social Service Support: Offering essential services to address community needs.
- Economic Integration: Promoting economic opportunities and integration.
- Health and Well-being: Supporting the physical and mental health of community members.

Africa Centre delivers a wide range of programs and services, including:

- Cultural events and initiatives, such as the Africa Day Gala, soccer tournaments, Reggae Fest, and CariWest.
- Youth programs that engage more than 900 youth annually in mentorship, leadership, and empowerment activities.

- Legal and health services, providing free consultations to over 300 individuals each year.
- Newcomer support services, including employment training and community orientation, serving over 400 individuals annually.
- Entrepreneurship programs that have trained 2000 entrepreneurs and contributed to the creation or expansion of 215 businesses since 2021.
- Programs focused on women and seniors, providing support and resources.

Community Reach and Impact

Africa Centre serves over 20,000 community members annually. The organization plays a critical role in addressing systemic barriers faced by African and Caribbean descent communities in Edmonton and provides comprehensive services tailored to the diverse needs of African and Caribbean Canadians.

Africa Centre has demonstrated significant community impact, including:

- The distribution of over \$12.5 million in funding to Black-led organizations since 2021.
- The engagement of thousands of youth in mentorship and leadership programs.
- Significant milestones in recent fiscal years, such as the provision of counselling services, the expansion of childcare services, and the empowerment of women, girls, and seniors.

Notable Partnerships

Africa Centre maintains a network of strategic partnerships that amplify its work and broaden its reach. These collaborations strengthen its capacity to provide comprehensive services to African and Caribbean descent communities across Alberta.

- **Community Partnerships:** Africa Centre collaborates extensively with community-based organizations to provide comprehensive and integrated support to individuals and families. These partnerships facilitate access to specialized services, promote cultural exchange, and foster a stronger sense of community cohesion. Examples of these partnerships include collaborations with organizations focused on health, legal aid, youth development, and settlement services.
- **Government Partnerships:** Africa Centre maintains strong relationships with all three levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) to effectively address the needs of the African and Caribbean descent communities and advance initiatives that promote social inclusion,

economic opportunity, and equity. Its role as a key intermediary for the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative (SBCCI) underscores the federal government's trust in the organization's capacity to manage significant funding programs and deliver impactful results.

- **Corporate Partnerships:** Africa Centre actively seeks partnerships with corporations to secure vital funding and resources for its programs and initiatives. These partnerships not only provide financial support but also create opportunities for collaborative projects that benefit the community. The ongoing discussions with RBC regarding potential funding for the AMCC project illustrate Africa Centre's proactive approach to engaging corporate partners in its vision for the new facility.
- **Engagement of Black Experts:** Recognizing the importance of community expertise and empowerment, Africa Centre strategically engages Black experts and professionals in its initiatives. For the AMCC project, this has included proactively involving Black architects and developers in the planning and development process. This approach not only ensures culturally relevant design and development but also contributes to building capacity within the Black professional community.

Organizational Capacity and Growth

Africa Centre has grown exponentially, with its reach and impact increasing each year. The organization has expanded its services and programs, demonstrating its ability to adapt to the evolving needs of the community. Over the last five years, Africa Centre has managed a total annual revenue of just over \$40 million.

In anticipation of the AMCC project, Africa Centre is proactively building its capacity to manage a multi-million dollar facility. This includes engaging Black experts, such as architects and developers, and establishing a Capital Committee of the Board to steward the project. As the project expands into the next phase, Africa Centre would invite other community experts with relevant experience to join the capital committee.

Africa Centre created a fund development department last year, to steward raising funds for internal operations, from non-traditional sources such as banks, establishing an endowment fund, philanthropic sources and private sector. This initiative has been very successful and Africa Centre's annual revenue has grown by 100 per cent in the last 24 months. Africa Centre has been in conversations with different funders including CHMC, GoA and Government of Canada, RBC regarding funding the AMCC, once the land title is available, Africa Centre indicates it will be able to access these resources.