

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT



WILDSEED
CENTRE FOR ART & ACTIVISM



BLM - Canada Intro and Explainer

01

Dear Black Liberation Family,

We are so happy to be able to present this report to you about our ongoing work over the last couple of years. We have been working very hard to create a national resource body with very specific and limited goals, the primary of which is to make radical Black organizing as easy as possible for activists across Canada.

The difficulties of running a grassroots organization are paramount. On top of the skills needed to effectively carry out this work, activists are volunteering their time to engage in difficult emotional labour supporting families who have lost their loved ones, providing unseen work to community members who are in need, and attempting to interrupt state structures that inflict anti-Black violence on us daily. The need for support within Black communities is high, and Black activists are often unprepared for the personal toll and harm this work can cause. In addition to these pressures, state operatives like CSIS, the police, and the Canadian Military have all admitted to monitoring the activities of Black activists. As a result, some volunteers, organizers, and researchers in our network have requested that their involvement in our work remain anonymous, and are not named in the staff section below. Overall, this dangerous surveillance adds to the strain experienced by Black radicals engaged in courageous organizing work on the ground..

The consequence is that radical Black organizations suffer from burnout, attrition, and are ultimately rarely able to sustain radical activism long term.

With Black Lives Matter - Canada, we aim to change that. We believe that local activism is where potential for revolutionary change lives, and our goal is to support grassroots Black activist groups across Canada by taking care of some of the more difficult and process-based challenges that most Black activist groups face. We want to make radical grassroots movement work as simple and sustainable as possible, and to take care of the difficult work so that grassroots activists can focus on their core mandates. Activists are expected to be experts at social movement building, mobilizing, organizing, media engagement, finances, logistics, research, legal frameworks, liberation theory, security culture, writing, teaching, knowledge of the political apparatus--the list is long; and impossible. Our aim is to provide these skills and supports to radical activists where we can, so that their work can be more sustainable.

There is no model for this that we can find to replicate. We are attempting to build something new. We welcome your feedback as we do our best to support the courageous activists taking on the deepest personal risks on the ground. We thank these activists for their work, and we do this work with the conviction that the work of these activists is necessary for a liberated future.



INCORPORATION HISTORY - M4BJ

The impetus for our national organization began when the Black Lives Matter Global Network began to receive increasing applications from grassroots groups to affiliate with the United States’-based organization. After onboarding chapters in Toronto, Vancouver, and Waterloo, the Black Lives Matter Global Network realized in 2015 that it did not have the capacity to support Canadian chapters under its infrastructure.

The Global Network first attempted to correct this deficit by hiring a Canadian Organizer. It soon became clear that this work was greater than the support a single staff person could provide. In late 2017, The Global Network asked the Toronto Chapter to take on Canadian organizing by building a BLM-Canada that could carry out this work. The Global Network committed to providing funding to Black Lives Matter - Canada to carry out this work. In order to receive these resources from the Black Lives Matter Global Network, a 501(c)(3) organization regulated by the IRS, we were required to incorporate in Canada. At the time, we had just received word that state operatives in both the United States and Canada were watching Black activists and monitoring the threat of “Black Identity Extremists.” Indeed, some of us were being harassed by the police. Freedom of information requests on our names were denied. We decided to incorporate as M4BJ - Movement for Black Justice - so we could carry out our work under the radar and with less risk to our personhood. We incorporated in November 2018. We’ve since filed an “Operating As” designation with Corporations Canada under the name Black Lives Matter - Canada.

PILLARS OF M4BJ

In building this organization, we decided to, as mentioned above, be specific and limited in scope. In many ways, this decision was based off our experience, watching the difficulties of those attempting to build an international infrastructure at BLM - Global, and learning from groups like the Black Visions Collective, started by former Black Lives Matter Minneapolis activists.

We decided to organize around a few pillars:

- 1) Chapter and Grassroots Organizing Support: Under this pillar are the resources we are offering to grassroots organizations in order to support their organizing.
- 2) Research: Under this pillar, we are amassing data and research to support grassroots organizing work.
- 3) Cultural Production and Programming: Under this pillar, we are archiving radical Black activist work occurring across the country, and providing support for Black activists who help us to imagine new worlds.
- 4) Space: Under this pillar, we are attempting to provide a crucial organizing resource--space--to as many people as we can reach. This work begins with the Wildseed Centre.

WHO WE ARE

Board of Directors:

- Rodney Diverlus, Director of Organizational Development
- Sandy Hudson, Director of Strategic Planning
- Janaya Khan, Member-at-Large
- Syrus Marcus Ware, Director of Cultural Production and Development
- Ravyn Wngz, Director of Space Administration

STAFF:

- Executive Director:** Jessica Kirk
- Operations & Finance Director:** Shorna James
- Organizer:** Freeyelle Mehari
- Fellowship Coordinator:** Mila Mendez (on leave)
- Interim Fellowship Coordinator:** Elizabeth Mudenyoy
- Communications Coordinator:** Imani Busby
- Administrative Associate:** Venessa Harris

Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism

[Wildseed Centre](#) for Art & Activism is a vessel that seeks to nurture Black radical creation in Canada. Inspired by Octavia Butler’s evocative novel, this artist-run centre aims to be fertile ground for Black creativity and organizing.

Wildseed was first birthed in 2018 by Black Lives Matter activists who hope to build an enduring space that could cultivate the most transformative and radical ideas from Toronto’s diverse Black communities.

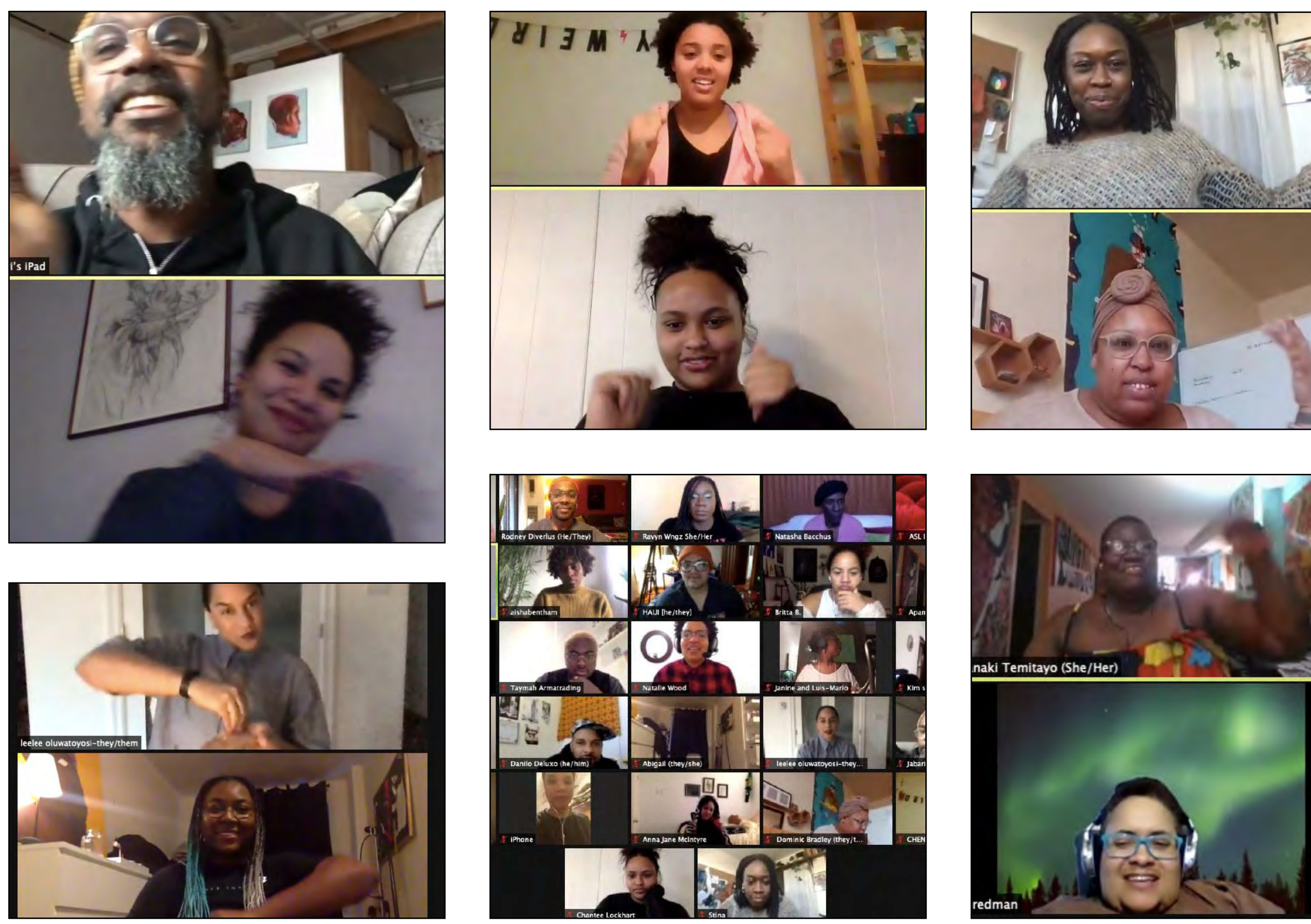
Originally located at 76 Geary Avenue, Wildseed was a transformed industrial space; a blank canvas reimagined as a multipurpose artist-run community incubator, gallery, studio and home to Black Lives Matter — Canada. Wildseed is a transfeminist, queer affirming space politically aligned with supporting Black liberation work across Canada.

Wildseed has been reimagined by space designers Tom Kuo and Helen Yung of Foundation Creative Studio and Architect Bryan C. Lee Jr. Founder & Design Principal at Colloqate.

In the fall of 2019, BLM - Canada hosted the first Wildseed Black Artist Residency in the space. Three artists—Kara Springer, Kosisochukwu Nnebe and Kim Ninkuru—worked out of Wildseed for a few months, collaborating and expanding their practices. Artist Sandra Brewster, art collector Kenneth Montague and Canadian Art features editor Yaniya Lee were invited to mentor the three artists.

Since the Artist Residency, we initiated a two-year Black Arts Fellowship program that is predominantly facilitated online; fellows have used both our rented and permanent spaces. As a multipurpose community centre that nurtures Black radical creation, we hope to expand our offerings in 2022 and onward, providing even more opportunities for programming and partnerships.

Wildseed is located in T’karón:to on Three Fires Territory and the territory of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum. This area is covered by Treaty 13. We learn from the Land and are so thankful to be here, in this place. We are in solidarity with Land Back and support Indigenous resurgence.



2020 LAUNCH EVENT AT 76 GEARY

The Wildseed launch event occurred on March 7, just before the City of Toronto went on lockdown for COVID for the first time. The event welcomed the Black and LGBTQ2+ community to the space with performances from DJs Ace Dillinger, Myst Milano and Craig Dominic; R&B singer Shi Wisdom; and performance artist Nymphinity. It also featured voguing by the Toronto Kiki Ballroom Alliance.

Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism - Press

NEWS / MARCH 17, 2020

Black Lives Matter Launches Art and Activism Centre in Toronto

Wildseed is a space that hopes to create opportunity for Black community organizing on a deeper level—including residencies, performances and more



Arts · Black Light

Why Black artists should spend 2021 forging our own paths — not trying to fix broken institutions

'Our collective protests have created a chasm, one we can fill with Black art, new ideas, and our full selves'

 [Rodney Diverlus](#) · CBC Arts · Posted: Jan 15, 2021 3:00 PM ET | Last Updated: January 15, 2021

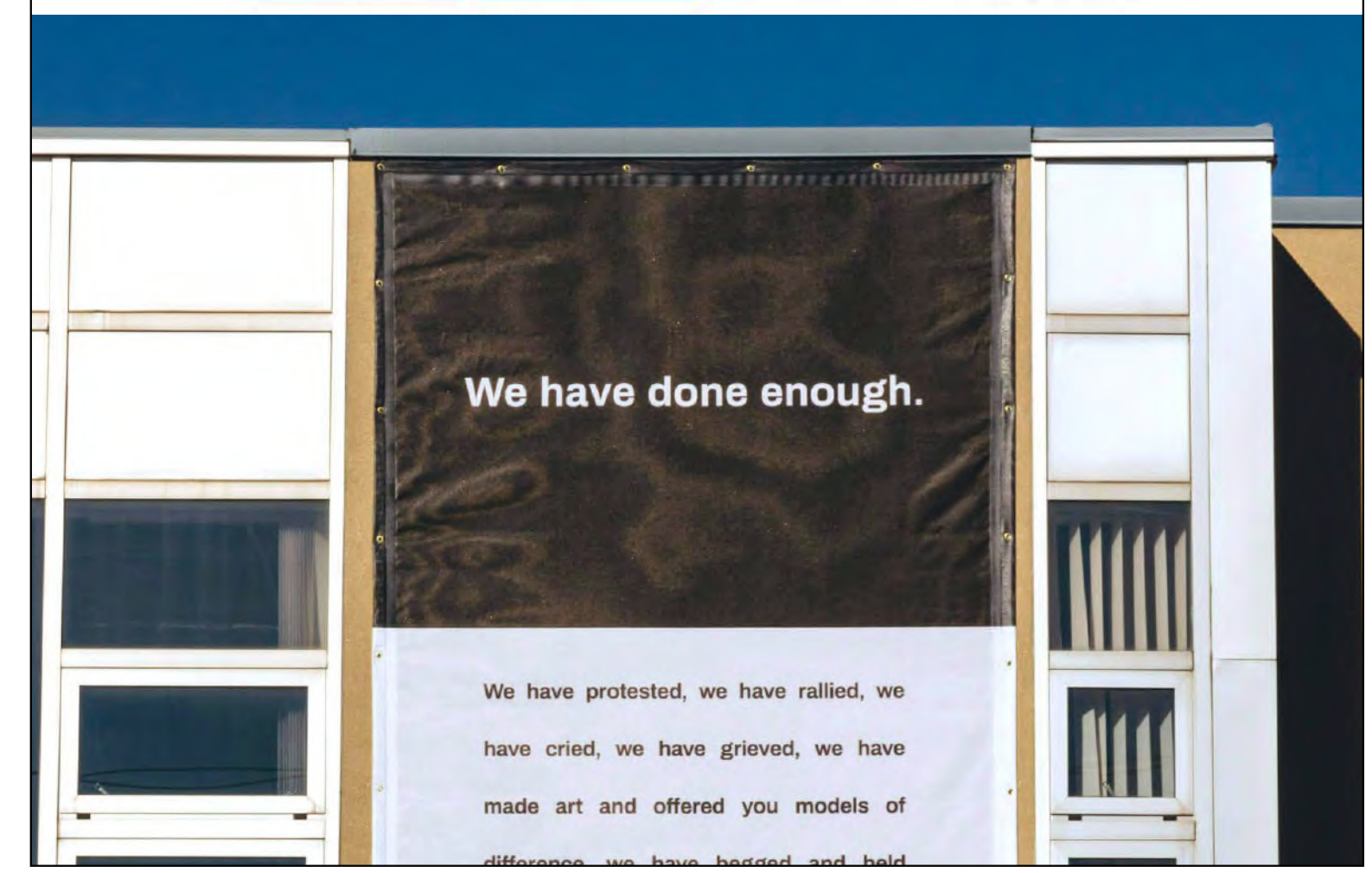


We have done enough

Reflections on creative practice and its role within movements for Black life

By Jessica P. Kirk

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Arts · Black Light

What is COVID-19's impact on Black culture and activism in Toronto?

Three artists from BLMTO discuss art, activism and adapting to life in lockdown

 [Amanda Parris](#) · CBC Arts · Posted: Mar 27, 2020 10:45 AM ET | Last Updated: March 27, 2020



Arts · Black Light

Nia Centre and the legacy of Black arts and culture spaces in Toronto

Nia Centre announced plans for expansion last month. Their Toronto venue will double in size

 [Amanda Parris](#) · CBC Arts · Posted: Nov 09, 2020 12:45 PM ET | Last Updated: November 9, 2020



RENOVATIONS

We began renovations to The Wildseed Center formerly located at 76 Geary in 2019. We received the space as a 1600 sq foot box with potential. With the guidance, support, drawings and labour from Helen Yung and Tom Kuo of the Foundation Creative, and Byran Lee Jr. of Colloquate. We turned the space into an accessible art and activism centre space with additions of an outside ramp, wooden stairs, HVAC system, kitchenette, polished flooring, sprung dance flooring and storage space

RENTALS

We launched the Wildseed Centre in March 2020 and unfortunately due to the Covid-19 Pandemic had to close our doors for public safety. We have offered space to participants of our Fellowship program and space on an ad-hoc basis to community groups who required it and could meet safely in the space.

We are currently developing booking systems that will be released once renovations are complete at 24 Cecil in late Spring 2022. There will be several different ways to book space and establish partnership programs with Wildseed Centre. When we have established an opening date, updates will be shared through our listserv, social media and our website.

WILDSEED BLACK ARTS FELLOWSHIP

Wildseed Black Arts Fellowship is a bold and expansive 20-month *paid* fellowship with 7 distinct residency periods designed to create career changing training, and deep exploration/creation space for a cohort of 13 Black visual, performance, and movement artists from Tkaronto and an expanded circle of 26 artists in the network.

7 BI-MONTHLY RESIDENCIES

Each residency will be designed by a pair of established artists and will focus on exploration and discovery, skill-development, and new ways of working outside of one's familiar practice.

20 MONTHLY MEET-UPS & WORKSHOPS

Each month we will have guest facilitators that will lead participants through an exploration of a key topic in the field that will help to shape their subsequent residency program.

20 FELLOWSHIP FACULTY

There are a total of 20 Black mentors/lead artists on the project: Aisha Sasha John, Barak Ade Soleil, Curtis Talwst Santiago, Evan Ifekoya, Jaz-Fairy J, Kara Springer, Leroy Moore, Mahlikah awe:ri, Nalo Hopkinson, Oluseye, Ravyn Wngz, Rodney Diverlus, Syrus Marucs Ware, Tarik Elmoutawakil and more.

NEW CENTRE**Buildings & Spaces Considered**

Having to close our doors the same week we hosted the opening of our rented location amid the pandemic, invited us to challenge ourselves to more deeply and consider what tangible structural support might look like for Black liberation organizers and creatives in Tkaronto and across these lands. Rather than continuing to rent an industrial, open concept space, which required us to transfer thousands of dollars in resources to landlords monthly, we decided to hirework with Black and Indigenous real estate agent who mentored us through the process of purchasing a permanent space wherein community could organize, convene, create and dream.

Here are the principles that guided this initiative:

- 1) The space would be used to support decolonization struggles and build Black power as twin primary goals.
- 2) We would seek a tax exemption so that our initiative will not be indirectly supporting the police.
- 3) We would unapologetically name that the building was for art and activism, a central and foundational piece of creating a new world. We appreciate activism materializing in a diversity of means; for example, community farming is rooted in environmental justice, legal training is a form of political education, archiving pushes back against Black absencing, and all of those are also forms of activism. It's not just about space to store banners ahead of a protest.
- 4) The building purchase would not involve any partners. We feared how partnerships have been used in the past to dampen our organizing. We decided that if we needed to have a partner, we would walk away from the project.
- 5) There would be no mortgage. We feared how future financial constraints could compromise our work, and that our mission could be warped into ensuring that we could pay for capital year after year. We would have to buy a building outright.
- 6) Grassroots organizing must be protected from the structural bureaucracies of space ownership that could be distracting and demobilizing. We would ensure Black Lives Matter – Toronto or any other local chapter was not burdened with legal rigmarole. Chapters will be able to use the space for free.
- 7) Though the mission of our organization is national in scope, we would refuse to locate our centre in Ottawa. The centre of our organizing is not the centre of colonial power—it is Black people, and it is access. With the majority of the Black population in the GTHA and Toronto being the most accessible urban space above the 49th parallel by multiple modes of transportation, we would locate our initial space there, with an eye to considering other spaces in future.
- 8) Any funding that we sourced could not come with strings attached—it could not constrain our radical future making.

2021 Soft Launch Event

We anticipated that the building announcement would spark community interest and were eager to engage community to shape our renovation plans, but were unsure how those renovations would impact day-to-day use. Before getting the shovels to the ground, we decided to host two small-scale gatherings at 24 Cecil involving food, pre-recorded entertainment, a live DJ and community-engaged tours of the Centre. The soft launches were hosted sometime after Ontario entered Phase 3 of its reopening plan, which meant that we were allowed a maximum of 100 attendees for outdoor gatherings. We took extra precautions by limiting our guestlist to roughly 50 RSVPed attendees at each event, and spread our convening across two days of identical programming. Self-assessment forms were distributed ahead of the gathering and at the entrance, extra PPE was available at the event, and event staff distributed all food and drinks.

Welcome to Wildseed Teaser

In an effort to balance having artists at the heart of our inaugural celebration while keeping people safe, we decided to collaborate with Black-owned Video Production Company Falling Motion to create a short video segment featuring Black Toronto artists. Welcome to Wildseed premiered at the soft launches, and involved artists highlighting the importance of Black space, sharing their hopes for Wildseed and other emerging Black spaces, and showcasing their talent through performance art. Segments of the teaser video will be released across Wildseed Centre's social media on Wednesdays, beginning mid-October 2021.

Press

[CBC](#)

[Toronto Star](#)

[Now Toronto](#)

[BlogTO](#)

[CP24](#)

[YouTube](#)

[CBC](#)

[Art Critique](#)

[Streets of Toronto](#)

[Toronto Star](#)

[The Globe and Mail](#)

[Spring Mag](#)

[The Star](#)

City Support

When it was announced that we would be purchasing a community hub, Mike Layton, councillor of Wildseed Centre's ward, put forward a motion to provide one-time funding to support renovation costs through Section 37 - Planning Act Reserve Funds. Rather than a programming or maintenance grant, S. 37 provides cash-in-lieu contributions and its spending is reserved for specific local facilities that provide durable community benefits.

[Implementation Guidelines for Section 37 of the Planning Act Support for The Wildseed Centre for Arts and Activism](#)

Critique

Although there was much excitement about the Wildseed Centre announcement, some expressed skepticism toward the purchase. A few community responses involved misinformation about partnerships with the City, concerns about usurpation of resources that could have otherwise gone to other community hubs, as well as frustrations toward a shift in priorities for Black Lives Matter Toronto. As mentioned above, Section 37 does not involve any partnership arrangements. Funding is made available in a number of ridings across the City of Toronto as cash-in-lieu contributions to put toward local facilities that provide durable community benefits.

On the note of BLMTO Priorities, there are two items for consideration. Firstly, the local chapter did not purchase 24 Cecil Street. Rather, the initiative is being taken up by the national organization - Black Lives Matter-Canada. On the other hand, Wildseed Centre is a natural progression for Black liberation organizing in Toronto. One of BLMTO's demands during the 2016 Pride action had to do with retaining programming space for Black Queer Youth. The direct action in front of Toronto Police Headquarters earlier that year evolved into a 14 day occupation, Tent City.

In response, Black Lives Matter-Canada organized a community dialogue to address concerns and offer context wherever necessary. It was not organized as a means to imply that we should have a single unified approach to our collective work for liberatory spaces. Instead, the space was created to respond to concerns and so others could express themselves safely.

Some of the critique is centred in general opposition to the ownership of space as a capitalistic, colonial endeavour. We understand this as a critique, and had deep conversations about this ourselves. In a world where activists need to use space in order to continue our work, is the transfer of wealth to a white landlord any less problematic than the ownership of property? We decided that we would become a charitable organization, legally prohibited from accumulating capital. We are open to shifting the model of governance, and responding to critiques that improve the radical possibilities of this space—we do not presume to have all the answers, and as our elders have advised us, there is no local analog to this project

in which we are now engaged. As with all radical action, we must engage in trial and error to find out what works best for our community's needs. That way, the Wildseed Centre could become a model for how space could be used in the furtherance of radical ideals, outside a social enterprise model that relies on capitalist engagement.

It is worth noting that several radical organizations have used space as a critical resource in their strategic engagements, including the Black Panthers. Indeed, many organizations involved in movement struggles—from unions, to women's organizations, to climate justice organizations, to queer and trans archives—engage in the procurement of space. The scrutiny and difficulty that Black people face when engaged in the purchase of space is itself an extension of anti-Black tropes about Black people's trustworthiness with respect to money and management.

Holding Black radicals to an impossible standard that our peers are not required to meet is itself a manifestation of anti-Blackness.

[The Wildseed Centre for Art and Activism Sparks Debate on Funding](#)

Plans for engagement moving forward

Since the initial community dialogue, a number of subsequent opportunities for community feedback were underway. In partnership with Studio of Contemporary Architecture Design (SOCA) and Black Planning Project, we facilitated a multifaceted approach to hearing from the community regarding their priorities. All responses from our social media engagement, a feedback form circulated to our network of Black activist and artistic organizations, the virtual visioning sessions and an in-person walkthrough following COVID-19 safety protocols will help to inform subsequent designs and renovation plans. A subsequent community engagement report will be developed and published on Wildseed Centre's website in early 2022.

Renovations & Planning

Grants

In order to fund renovations that will be taken up at 24 Cecil Street, we have applied to two funding opportunities. The first of which is the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, which is a federal program led by Employment and Social Development. The second funding application has been to Canada Community Revitalization Fund.

Request for Qualifications

In July 2021, Black Lives Matter – Canada and Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism invited a host of six (6) qualified Black-led interior design and architectural firms to submit statements of qualifications to provide Design Services for the renovation and design of Wildseed Centre, a 3-storey property in Toronto, Ontario. Firms were selected to move onto the subsequent RFP phase based on two evaluation criteria: Team Qualification (i.e. a demonstration of relevant and range of experience from

team members and sub-contractors) and Demonstration of Experience (i.e. photos and descriptions of recent projects completed or commenced within the past 5 years).

Request for Proposals

In August 2021, three (3) Black-led interior design and architectural firms were invited to Stage 2 of the selection process via an RFP for Architectural and Design Services, which includes leading the design, authority approvals, contracting and permit submissions and the overseeing construction. As part of the RFP process, each firm attended a mandatory walkthrough of the building prior to submitting their proposal. Submissions were evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a) *Project Team & Process* relevant experience and ability to implement all aspects of the work
- b) *Project Vision and Approach* with consideration toward their commitments to accessibility, green sustainability, community and stakeholder engagement, public art engagement and community economic development.
- c) *References* for at least three (3) relevant projects of similar scope in the past 5-10 years; and
- d) *Fee Proposal* divided into the following categories - Hourly Rates; Prime Consultant Fee; Subconsultant(s) Fee; Disbursements Allowance.

Public Art Commission Request for Proposals

A subsequent RFP was issued to Black artists or Black artist-led teams for a minimum of two (2) permanent public art commissions. The first site for artwork is located inside the community hub - a two-story installation replacing a current framed fixture. The second site will be collaboratively decided on by the successful candidate, BLMCA-Wildseed and SOCA Design, the architectural firm leading the scheduled renovation plans at the Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism. At the time of this report, applications were still being accepted and installation will coincide with renovation plans.

[Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada](#)

Members of Black Lives Matter - Canada was approached by the University of Regina Press to write a book about our experiences. We decided to allow Black Canada to write itself, and embarked upon a long process of engaging emerging and established writers and artists across the country in the making of this book. The result is a collection of works of prose, essays, poetry, photo essays and theoretical discussions of Black Lives in Canada today. The works are contributed by visual artists, dancers, teachers, scholars, writers, mothers, disabled folks, Black Indigenous folks, incarcerated people, and migrants. We created this book by and for community - working with folks who have been on the ground for the past 7 years with us to build the movement - about the history of our organizing here, and about mothering in the movement, digital activism, disability justice, abolition, Black and Indigenous solidarity and other issues in the movement. Despite not being able to tour the book due to COVID 19, the book became a Canadian bestseller in June 2020. We are in our third reprint of the book.

Contributors include Ravyn Ariah Wngz, Sarah Jama, El Jones, Robyn Maynard, OmiSoore H. Dryden, Gilyr Massa, Silvia Argentina Arauz, Janaya Khan, QueenTite Opaleke, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Camille Turner, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Giselle Dias, Dana Inkster, Dr. Naila Keleta Mae, Randloph Riley, and Paigelina Pea Gee. Each contributing author was compensated for their contribution. All proceeds of the book are directed to Black Lives Matter - Canada.

The book was released on February 1, 2020.

Confusion with Regina University Press

On April 16 2019, editors Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, & Syrus Marcus Ware received an email from Professor Rinaldo Walcott requesting that his contribution to *Until We Are Free* be removed. In doing so, he expressed his sadness, and stated that his upcoming book *BlackLife* was not about BLM Toronto, that he had never been asked previously to share an unpublished manuscript of any books, and that the publisher appeared to think that two books mentioning Black Lives Matter could not co-exist in the marketplace. He further expressed that he wished the editors would have approached him directly if there was concern that he was stepping on BLM's turf.

Subsequently, we received an email from Professor Idil Abdillahi requesting that her contribution be removed. She stated her frustration with the editors in strong terms.

These communications were confusing. The editors had no knowledge of the *BlackLife* book and had no mention or requests to our publisher in regards to *BlackLife* and remain resolutely supportive of books in the marketplace referencing Black Lives Matter. Indeed, *Until We Are Free* is part of a series of books curated by Professor Afua Cooper that began with Whitney French's *Black Writer's Matter*, of which we were doubly supportive.

A subsequent phone call and email from our publisher explained that the University of Regina Press had requested an advance copy of a book that Professor Walcott and Professor Abdillahi were working on together called *BlackLife* from publisher ARP Books. Our publisher stated that this was not unusual and expressed confusion at Professor Walcott and Professor Abdillahi's response. He also expressed his apologies for the confusing situation.

Attempts to communicate with Professor Walcott were met with instructions to communicate with Professor Abdillahi exclusively. Attempts to communicate with Professor Abdillahi made over the course of six months were unsuccessful.

We regret that we were unable to continue to communicate and resolve this apparent misunderstanding, and we congratulate Professors Walcott and Abdillahi on their book.

Release Events

On February 9, 2020, Black Lives Matter - Canada held what was to be the first launch event of *Until We Are Free* at Lula Lounge in Toronto.

Hosted with Black bookstore A Different Booklist, the event featured direct readings from contributing authors Sarah Jama, QueenTite Opaleke, Silvia-Argentina Arau, Paigelina Pea Gee, Sandy Hudson, Rodney Diverlus, and Syrus Marcus Ware. The space was family friendly, with childcare provided. The event space was at capacity the day of the launch and the books available for purchase sold out at the event.

The event was hosted by journalist Vicky Mochama and Pascale Diverlus. Music was provided by DJ Nik Red.

Los Angeles

On February 10, in partnership with UCLA School of Law, a second release event was held in Los Angeles at the UCLA campus. The event was co-sponsored by the Public Interest Law & Policy Department and was hosted by student Jaz Buckley. Rodney Diverlus, Syrus Marcus Ware and Sandy Hudson provided readings and answered questions to the packed room. The books available for purchase sold out at the event.

Subsequent launch events were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Canadian Bestseller

On June 24, 2020, *Until We Are Free* became a Canadian bestseller. *Until We Are Free* spent over 15 weeks on the Canadian Bestsellers list over the spring and summer of 2020. *Until We Are Free* was included in The Hill Times best 100 books of 2020.

Black August Book Club- 4 week online engagement

For Black August, we held a virtual book club to celebrate the writing in the book in lieu of our canceled book tour. The four-week engagement was hosted by artist Michele Pearson Clarke and took place on facebook live and via instagram lives. We worked with authors and artists in the book to host panels on abolition, on Black and Indigenous solidarity, about art in the movement and about future directions for organizing.

Week One: A Conversation on Abolition

Abolition is a clear and constant theme in this book, and just a few short months after its launch, the concept is being discussed seemingly almost everywhere. This conversation brought together four authors to both unpack the ways in which abolition is taken up in the book, while also considering what might be missing from the debates of the current moment.

Featuring: Sandy Hudson, El Jones, Janaya Khan and Syrus Marcus Ware

Week Two: Words I Wish I Wrote: Author's Picks

As a way to engage with the breadth of the book, authors were invited to choose a short passage by another author that provided a moment of learning for them. This was a fast-paced session held on Instagram Live.

Featuring: Silvia-Argentina Arauz, Paige Galette, Dana Inkster, Sarah Jama, Gilyr Massa, QueenTite Opaleke and Camille Turner

Week Three: Performing Black Activism: Movement & Conversation

Artistic strategies play an important role in the book and in the Black activism explored in various chapters. During this week, we focused on performance and movement. In relation to the theorizing of Rodney Diverlus in Chapter 11, "Choreographic Design and Performing Black Activism," Rodney and Ravyn translated a portion of the text into a simple movement score, and they led participants through the choreography during this session. They then discussed the theme of performance in the book.

Featuring: Rodney Diverlus, Naila Keleta Mae and Ravyn Wngz

Week Four: Towards Black and Indigenous Futures: A Conversation

To end our book club, this conversation brought together four authors to consider Indigenous and Black solidarity, with a futures orientation. The conversation surrounded what it means to engage in community-building across communities in this land now called Canada.

Featuring: Giselle Dias (Niigaanii Zhaawshko Giizhigokwe), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Syrus Marcus Ware

Press

[The Hill Times](#)

[CBC](#)

[Quill And Quire](#)

[Quill And Quire](#)

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Press - Newstalk 1010 with Desmond Cole

In early 2020, editors Rodney Diverlus, Sandy Hudson, and Syrus Marcus Ware were asked by Desmond Cole to speak to the book project on his Newstalk 1010 radio show. During the broadcast, Cole instead asked personal questions about a former member of Black Lives Matter - Toronto. Editors declined to respond to his requests.

A subsequent conversation was had with Desmond Cole explaining that his actions had been dangerous. Newstalk 1010 is a conservative radio station, and Cole's questions specifically requested the editors to break commitments to confidentiality that had been made both to the former member, and to our elders who had graciously moderated a process with Black Lives Matter - Toronto members. The editors expressed sadness and frustration with Cole's actions, and reminded him that in the past, whenever difficult and courageous conversations had to be had with him, we connected with him directly in community, in ways that would not put him at risk, that were generative, and that were in service of continuing deep liberation work.

Cole expressed regret at his actions, and sent a lengthy apology, committing not to continue such engagement and to putting thought to how he could hold himself accountable publicly. We have yet to see any follow-up to the first commitment.

Black Grief event

Black Grief was an online gathering to mark the rising Black deaths and share space to process feelings and emotions. To be together in our shared grief. Featuring performances and speeches by: Ravyn Aariah Wngz, Dr. Naila Keleta-Mae, Dr. OmiSoore H. Dryden, M. NourbeSe Philip, Canisia Lubrin, Kojo "Easy" Dampety. The event began with an acapella performance by Black youth Aeshna Ware-Huff and the night was punctuated by performance, readings and discussion. This virtual space created room for collective grief and as a space of mutual support and care.

Defund the Police Campaign

Black Lives Matter - Canada has been running a long-standing campaign to defund the police since early in its creation. This year, the campaign was ramped up significantly due to the 2020 uprisings. In Canada, there were multiple protests in over 70 cities from coast to coast to coast. Of significance is BLM - Vancouver's action, in which BLM activists shut down the viaducts that were built over the razed Black community of Hogan's Alley.

a) Defund the police poster series engaging with Black artists around abolition

Working with 7 artists we created a new series of Defund the Police posters for distribution as part of our broader campaign.

Working with acclaimed artists Elicser Elliot, Sandra Brewster, Anna Jane McIntyre, Ifetayo Alabi, Camille Turner and others, we are looking to sell these posters through a fulfillment company online as a fundraiser.

b) Defund the Police Demands

A series of demands were developed that could be adapted across Canada. The demands were as follows:

Taxpayers spend over \$41 million per day collectively on police services across the country. This does not include spending on the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, railway and military police, and government departments enforcing specific statutes in the areas of income tax, customs and excise, immigration, fisheries and wildlife. In engaging in these policing practices, police forces across the country routinely engage in surveillance against Black and Indigenous People, constrain our movements, harm and kill us. We believe that Black communities, and all communities, deserve better.

The \$41 million per day that is being spent on policing is not creating safer, more secure communities. This funding can be reallocated to create safer and more secure societies for all of us, and to rid Black and Indigenous communities of a serious threat to our safety.

We can and should have an emergency service that people can call if they are experiencing mental distress. We can and should disarm police, like the United Kingdom does, and like Oakland has just committed to do. We can and should invest in shelters for people who are experiencing gender-based violence, so that the 300 women who are turned away from shelters each night in Canada have a place to go. We can and should create an emergency service for survivors and victims of sexual assault that will actually support them, instead of relying on the police forces in this country who have been routinely accused of sexual misconduct. We can and should provide nurturing educational environments, free of police interacting with our children without parental supervision. We can and should decriminalize drug use, and take a public health approach to providing support for those who need it. We can and should stop policing poverty, and reinvest funding into social housing, free transit, and food security. We can and should create a world where we all feel safe, and we all get what we need to live a life of dignity. And we can start that process by taking the funding that we currently waste on policing, and reinvest it in creating the safety and security we all need.

We are working toward the abolition of the police and toward a society where we can all be safe. While this is focused on law enforcement, we are also calling to defund jails, prisons, immigration detention centres, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA).

We are calling for a reinvestment into Black, Indigenous, racialized, impoverished, & other targeted communities.

WE DEMAND:

DEFUND THE POLICE

Immediately redirect a minimum of 50 percent of municipal budgets toward the communities they have devastated by investing in secure, long-term housing for street-involved and unhoused communities, food security programs, public transit, public health, public libraries, and community-led anti-violence programs.

DEMILITARIZE THE POLICE

End Emergency Task Force (ETF) and Emergency Response Teams (ERT) (similar to the US-based SWAT teams), tactical squads, military grade weapons, and surveillance equipment.

Remove all weaponry from police and other law enforcement, including tasers, batons, firearms, rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, and sound canons.

End the mass surveillance of our communities through the use of technologies such as stingray, facial recognition, and predictive policing technologies, drones, robots, and G20 surveillance technology that remained in Toronto.

REMOVE COPS IN SCHOOLS

Remove police and school resource officers (SROs) in all schools, at all levels, across Canada.

REDUCE SCOPE OF POLICE

End all special constable programs and all policing on campuses.

End the policing of public transportation.

End the policing of minor bylaw infractions and noise complaints.

End paid-duty policing program (officers for hire by developers, street festivals, etc.).

End police collaboration with the CBSA.

Eliminate all stealth police cars and plainclothes operations.

Eliminate community policing patrols in highly racialized communities.

End Carding

DOCUMENT POLICE VIOLENCE

Mandate the public collection of data regarding police killing, and incidents of police brutality for all local, regional, provincial, and Federal police or law enforcement agency disaggregated by race, gender, age and citizenship.

DECRIMINALIZE POVERTY, DRUGS, HIV & SEX WORK

Release and expunge record for all poverty-related charges (including bylaw infractions, solicitation, sleeping outside, public urination, loitering, solicitation).

Decriminalize drugs, sex work, and HIV status.

Release and expunge records of all drug-related and sex work charges.

CREATE ALTERNATIVES

Create Crisis Intervention and Mad co-lead support teams; work with communities to develop models that work for them.

Create police-free, community-led, trauma-informed emergency service for mental health/psychiatric distress and other forms of crisis.

Invest in community support for shelters, drop-ins, after-school programming in low-income, Black, and Indigenous neighborhoods.

Create restorative services, mental health services, and community-run health centres

Invest in harm reduction, including safe supply, safe injection/inhalation sites, and harm-reduction outreach workers.

Establish a community-based and trauma-informed emergency service for people who have experienced gender-based violence.

Implement of civilian transportation safety service and better/safer road infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit

Create a civilian conflict resolution resolution service to replace policing of minor bylaw infractions/ noise complaints

c) Defund The Police Coalition Work

During the course of the summer, we established connections with groups such as Doctors for Defunding the Police, Defund the Police for Public Health Advisory Group, and Artists for Defunding the Police to work in coalition to pressure municipal governments across Canada to consider motions to defund the police. Many municipalities are considering motions to defund the police in the upcoming months.

d) 7500 Square Foot Mural, And More In Toronto And Beyond

At 7:30 a.m. on Juneteenth, over 80 artists and activists gathered on the corner of College and Bay Street to create a 7500 square-foot mural in downtown T'karonto addressing recent police killings and

the ongoing targeting of Black communities by policing. Using bright pink paint, we wrote out "Defund the Police" in block letters on the street in front of Toronto Police Headquarters. We listed the many names of Black people killed by the police. After painting the mural, We released a set of demands related to policing in T'karonto, including an immediate defunding of the police by a minimum of 50%.

Subsequent sister murals were painted by community in Kensington Market in Tkaronto, Sudbury, the Yukon and Montreal.

e) Impact

In May 2020 and August, 2020, public opinion polls were conducted by media organizations. Between these summer months, Canadian support for defunding the police in some way rose from 23 percent to over 63 percent, signalling the success of our campaign.

f) Statue Demos:

i) Tkaronto - We engaged in a demonstration aimed at addressing the monuments to slavery and colonialism present in our city, including the ever present police and prison system- the largest monument of them all. We engaged in an artistic demonstration targeting statues of Ryerson, Mcdonal and Kind Edward the VI that saw 3 arrested and resulted in a broader campaign around the criminalization of dissent.

ii) Montreal - In Montreal, activists successfully toppled a monument of Sir John A McDonald during a protest. Videos of the statue falling were shared widely and his head popping off upon impact with the ground was widely Gif-able.

g) Defundthepolice.org

During the uprising of Summer 2020, we realized that there were some key problems that we needed to address if we were going to be successful in our campaign. The key problems identified were:

- while defunding the police in order to fund other social services better suited to addressing safety and security needs is supported by several reasonable argument, prior to summer 2020, it had little pick up beyond movement organizers;
- even amongst movement organizers, sophistication in discussing reasoning for defunding the police is inconsistent and inadequate;
- reasoning for defunding the police is varied across jurisdictions between specific locations;
- prior to summer 2020, there were few repositories of information for finding these arguments in an accessible way, written for the general public; and

- city-based data that compared how much cities were spending on police when compared to other social services are disparately available.

In order to tackle these problems, we decided to develop a new website that would:

- bring together complex arguments in support of defunding the police using easy-to-understand language that could be shared broadly;
- to make the arguments on the website broad enough to apply to several jurisdictions;
- to make the website visually appealing to attract users and shares;
- to provide original research on municipal, state/provincial and country-wide expenditures on policing when compared to other services that would provide safety and security to communities;
- to update the website regularly to add more city data, policy research and arguments as they arise in the broader public.

In June 2020, Black Lives Matter - Canada released defundthepolice.org which has been updated several times and is used by activists across the country and beyond.

h) “For All Black Lives” Video Of Mural Creation

To document our Juneteenth action we worked with videographer and drone operators to create a 1:33 4K second video exploring the action and calling for a defunding of the police.

i) Defund The Police Victories

- Hamilton School Board successfully got SROs out of their schools after a tireless campaign.
- Calgary City council voted to defund the police by \$16 million over the next two years. The current police budget is over \$401 million. This is far less than what activists were demanding but represents the first budget reduction in some time.
- Toronto is currently in budgeting talks. For the first time in decades, the police submitted a budget request that has no increase. This is suspected to be because of the uprisings. Activists are calling for a 50% reduction to the police budget, which is currently at \$1.13 billion. A coalition of community groups have signed on to an immediate reduction request of 25 percent. Budget talks are ongoing.

Family Support

a) Regis Korchinski-Paquet & D’Andre Campbell - family support

Black Lives Matter–Toronto provided and continues to offer medium-term support for the Korchinski-Paquet family after their daughter was killed in police presence in June 2020. Housing and legal

support was provided, as well as help in planning a 5 km memorial procession honouring Regis. There is interest from the family to plan an annual commemoration.

b) Expedition to Ottawa

For Juneteenth 2021, BLMTO and other grassroots organizations including Ottawa Black Diaspora Coalition, Justice for Eishia Hudson, Justice for Jamal, Defund Hamilton Police Services and the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project brought together 10 families affected by police violence and who had lost family to policing in Ottawa to call for justice and systems change. With a massive red and yellow banner dedicated to Black and Indigenous families fighting police violence, the coalition marched to the Hill and held a press conference featuring speakers from 10 families affected by police killings, and one survivor. After the press conference, coalition members and the families gathered in a park in Ottawa to share stories and plan how to continue organizing together.

c) Broad Family support

After having learned about direct conversations with Black and Indigenous families whose loved ones have been impacted by police violence at the Ottawa Expedition, it paved the way for both local chapters and BLMCA to understand what resources and ongoing support can be made available within or outside Willdseed Centre for Art & Activism. BLMCA is in the process of developing Black & Indigenous Family Support Network, which will take into consideration not only financial support, but mental health support, access to space at below market rates and facilitating partnerships for food and gardening programs at the Centre. We are also in the process of gaining better perspective on what role chapters across can play in supporting numerous families and individuals impacted by police assault, police violence and police murder.

Pride Programming

Running from June 18th, 2021 to July 7th, 2021, “Say Love: 5 Years Later Pride Action Anniversary Celebration” was a four part virtual series that brought together activists from across the country for a celebration of Black Lives Matter–Toronto’s and Black Lives Matter Vancouver’s Pride Action 5 Year Anniversary.

In honour of the late Michelle Ross, “Say Love” conveyed memories, reflections on what has/hasn’t changed since the Pride action, and hopes for shared futures without policing. The “Say Love” series explored Black Queer and Trans activism within and beyond Pride, activist aesthetics, media misinformation, and movement building to create better futures.

a) Social Media - Infographics

Between June 22, 2021 to July 3, 2021 six infographics were shared on Instagram to provide context surrounding the Pride Actions and counter media misinformation. The infographics outlined the

9 demands at BLMTO's Pride Action, highlighted the role of artistry and fashion, celebrated pride across borders, shared affirming quotes, and provided a thorough timeline for the actions. On average, these resources reached over 4,000 people.

b) Social Media - Instagram Live

“Activist Aesthetics: Rainbow Smoke Bombs, Banners, and Art-based engagement in the movement“ was an accessible conversation that took place on June 23, 2021 via Instagram live. This conversation between Tamyka Bullen, Syrus Marcus Ware, and Ravyn Wngz unpacked the artistry of BLMTO's Pride Actions and explored the ways in which Black aesthetics and critical art play crucial roles in movement building. As of November 2021, this conversation has been viewed by over 700 people .

c) Community Gathering

The community gathering was a closed event shared between individuals who supported the action in a variety of ways. Folks came together to share unique/collective reflections and to observe in remembrance. The gathering was recorded with the goal of creating a community archive with selected aspects of the discussion, thus creating a space for those involved to be remembered on their own terms. During this gathering folks came together to share memories, thoughts on what has/hasn't changed, and hopes for our shared futures.

d) Short Film

On July 3rd, 2021, in remembrance of BLM TO's and BLM Vancouver's 2016 and 2017 Pride Actions, Black Lives Matter - Canada projected “Say Love” on the exterior wall of Pride Toronto's Office.

This film was entitled “Say Love” in honour of the legendary Michelle Ross, remembered as true drag royalty in Toronto. (August 5, 1954 - March 27, 2021) “Say Love” conveys memories, reflections on what has/hasn't changed since the Pride action, and hopes for shared futures without policing. As a community archive edited by Chriss Lowe, this short film provides concrete material for Black queer and trans organizers, community and allies to be remembered on their own terms.

Shared via Instagram, this film has reached over 10,000 people.

From Ottawa to Lagos Solidarity Action

Black Lives Matter—Toronto, brought 10 Black and Indigenous Families from across Turtle Island together to demand justice and share their experiences of child loss due to Police violence in front of the office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. With help and support of Ottawa Black Diaspora Coalition and Defund Hamilton Police Services. BLMTO were able to provide travel, food, and lodging for the families.

The deeper, more significant outcome is that these family members have stayed connected, have organized events together and provide emotional support for each other. To Date there have been a total of 3 National gatherings taking place in Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Vancouver with plans on gatherings in Toronto and Montreal.

COVID Survival Fund

COVID 19 is disproportionately affecting Black Canadians. We created a support fund to help Black folks to survive the worst of this pandemic. The purpose is to ensure Black people have the financial supports needed to stay safe, stay fed, and stay cared for.

The official public health response to the COVID19 virus has required significant changes in our behaviours and many things are being cancelled to keep the community safe. These closures have impacts on the many people in our community working in the gig economy—freelancers, artists, performers, servers, service workers, etc. Many in our communities have lost their income source for the foreseeable future.

Additionally, school closures, while absolutely necessary, impact the many families who rely on the school meal program to feed their children. Many families are missing work to care for young loved ones home from school.

Black Lives Matter- Canada launched a COVID Support Fund. We offered a particular call outs to Black folks on the margins- folks who are queer/trans, disabled, Deaf and or Mad, migrants, and families, who all face unique challenges in this pandemic.

a) Black COVID Emergency Support Fund - 2020

Black Lives Matter Toronto ran 3 rounds of the Black COVID Emergency Support fund. Fundraising over \$135k through GoFundMe, the chapter disseminated onetime stipends of \$125 or \$250 to Black community members in need during the COVID 19 outbreak.

b) Good Food Box Partnership

BLMCA collaborated with FoodShare to offer hundreds of large organic and locally sourced fresh bulk produce and Good Food Boxes for Black folks on a first-come, first-basis for families and communities experiencing food insecurity. The COVID19 pandemic has and continues to disproportionately impact Black people across the city and beyond, which is what made this collaboration so tangibly useful to families.

c) Black Mutual Aid Fund - 2021

COVID 19 is disproportionately affecting Black Canadians. We know that this pandemic is having a dramatic effect on folks already marginalized and we don't see an immediate end in sight. With that in mind, Black Lives Matter Canada created a support fund to help Black folks to get through these lockdowns and closures- surviving the worst of this pandemic. As numbers skyrocket- we want to make sure people have the financial supports needed to stay safe, stay fed, and stay cared for.

The Canada-wide Black COVID Support Fund was a program available to any/all Black folks living in Northern Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat/ "Canada". We offered a particular call out to Black folks on the margins- folks who are queer/trans, disabled, Deaf and or Mad, migrants, and families, who all face unique challenges in this pandemic.

To date, we have given out one time stipends to 1,635 Black people through this program, distributing \$409,000 through online intake and distribution processes. In an effort to reach as many people as possible, we requested that folks apply once. In the future, we hope to expand the Mutual Aid Program to incorporate offers of non-financial services to families impacted by police violence.

d) Difficulties and Improvements

The Good Food Box partnership was initially launched as a BLMCA project and was subsequently handed over to BLMTTO to continue leading. By Fall 2021 neither group had the capacity to continue the program due to staffing and volunteer capacity constraints. As such, BLMCA brought forward a list of recommended Black led orgs for FoodShare to connect with in order to deplete the partnership funding.

One of the biggest challenges faced during Round 1 of BLM Canada's Black Mutual Aid Program were regional privileges. Although applications launched in late afternoon Eastern Time, a vast majority of applicants were from Southern Ontario. Given those difficulties, we reached out to BLM-Fredericton, BLM-Vancouver, and BLM-YYC requesting that they share an advanced application link with their networks. Staggered launch times during Round 2 of the program helped to balance out regional inequities that played out during Round 1. Since email addresses were required to accept all e-transfers, another constraint was the lost connections with people who submitted the incorrect email addresses while applying for their microgrant. We addressed this concern by including clear expectations and instructions on the FAQ page of our website, on most promotional social media posts, and on the application form itself.

BLM - Canada Organizing**a) Potential Chapters**

We have been onboarding several chapters over the past year, and are in the process of a pre-onboard process with Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Peterborough, Guelph, PEI, and Newfoundland.

Groups in the Yukon and Ottawa who do not go by the name BLM are also considering joining our formation. We are engaged in a vetting process with each of these organizations to ensure that they share our principles.

b) New and Continuing Chapters

We have completed onboarded and provided skills-based and political education training to new chapters, including chapters in Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, Waterloo, Montreal, Sudbury, and Fredericton. Each chapter was provided with resources and seed funding.

c) Statement of Unity

We have developed a Statement of Unity that describes the principles upon which new chapters agree to work with one another.

**Full Unity Agreement on page*

d) Political & Skills Education Platform

We have developed a robust political education platform as part of our onboarding process. The platform includes skills-based education and political education. Each chapter is required to complete the political education platform in order to be fully onboarded to Black Lives Matter - Canada.

Training was provided on the topics of Direct Action, Media, Creating Safety for Ourselves, Digital Security, Trans Leadership, Know Your Rights, Criminal Code, Abolition, Disability Justice.

e) Services Suite

In service of making things as simple as possible for on-the-ground organizers, we have created a suite of services for chapters to access. Chapters of BLM - Canada have access to financial support, fundraising support, free access to the Canada Newswire service, access to every media request received by BLM - Canada, subscriptions to various news outlets, brand support, unlimited emails address, a subdomain of blacklivesmatter.ca, a legal support fund, free access to the Wildseed Centre, and digital security consulting and advice.

f) First Convening & Wolf Willow Partnership

In October 2021, Black Lives Matter -- Canada hosted its inaugural gathering of Eastern/Central chapters - a weeklong convening that took place at Artscape Gibraltar's Point. We met each other, shared information, and learned together about system change theory and collective organizing. Together we shared news about our regions and work, learned from others about what they are working on, and heard from leaders, artists and activists about making structural change and thinking through strategy. Guest speakers included Adrienne Maree Brown and d'bi young. We have plans to engage with Western chapters in 2022.

g) Identity Update

In 2021, we engaged artist Yazmin Butcher to create a new logo and look for Black Lives Matter - Canada. We engaged in this project in order to make it visually clear that there is independence between Black Lives Matter - Canada and Black Lives Matter in the United States. Yazmin was very attentive to our needs and principles, even utilizing typefaces created by Black founders.

h) New Website and social media presence

In addition to new identity markers for BLM - Canada, we created new social media assets and a new website. The purpose of these were both to distinguish BLM - Canada from the grassroots BLM - Toronto, and also to distinguish BLM - Canada from BLM in the United States. We hired a part-time Social Media Coordinator to help us ensure that the assets were active and in line with the work that affiliated chapters were engaged in, and could serve as an educational resource for followers. Since then, our Social Media Coordinator has been promoted to Communications Coordinator.

On our new website, donors get automatic charity receipts, and can designate the area of the country that they'd like their donations to benefit. The new website is more user-friendly, and it has been easier for us to update it with crucial information.

i) Counterorganizing and Concerns

- i. A few chapters in Canada were contacted by a group calling themselves the BLM10 in the United States. The group states that they are chapters of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, and were inviting Canadian chapters to join in publicly exposing the Global Network's apparent refusal to support these chapters.

Canadian chapters have not had the experience that the BLM10 describes. While we were subject to frustrating delays in receiving funding support, the delays were explained as related to the unexpected and unprecedented growth and scaling up of the organization, the necessary shifting of fiscal sponsors as a result of the inability to manage the significant increase in donations received, and the requirements that the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) had for receiving organizations to receive support.

In order to avoid local Canadian chapters experiencing delays as a result of IRS requirements, BLMCA ensured that it met all requirements of the IRS and the BLM Global Network Foundation's fiscal sponsor, and received all funding on behalf of Black Lives Matter Canada chapters. Every official chapter thus received seed funding.

- ii. BLMCA has had some requests to join our network from organizations that are affiliated with police, and that are hostile to queer and trans identified Black people. We continue to refuse affiliation with such groups.

Black Women Are Divine

BLM - Canada participated in the Black Women are Divine campaign run by the Global Network Foundation in the wake of Breonna Taylor's murder. Over 20 Black artists were engaged across Canada, who created artwork that was sent to Black women and femmes across North America. Gifts were sent to Black women and femme activists from Vancouver Island to Halifax -- coast to coast. We received heartfelt messages from women and femmes and their community members about the love they received.

Black Trans Love video

Launched on Trans Day of Remembrance 2020, the Trans Love Video Project brought together activist voices in support of Black Trans lives and offered hope for a future wherein trans people get to live long enough to become elders, and are supported to thrive. The video is captioned and translated into three languages: Spanish, Portuguese and French Shot by Ayo Tsilthaba, the project features leading voices offering support and affirmation for Black trans people in Northern Turtle Island,

Staffing & Human Resources

In order to facilitate effective mobilization capacity and sustainable supports for grassroots organizations across the country, we determined that we required staff support. With the assistance of movement elders, we developed a strategic plan with different phases of organizational development and staffing that would grow over time. The staffing structure will eventually be scaled up such that there are no working board members.

a) Phase one of our organizational development occurred between 2018 and 2020. During this time, we had between one and five working board members working to set up infrastructure and scale up the organization. We incorporated, engaged pro bono legal support to assist with bylaws and requirements of the Canada Corporations Act, and established appropriate tax, payroll, and corporate accounts. At this time, volunteer bookkeepers were engaged, and a rental office space was secured.

b) Phase two occurred between May 2020 and May 2021. During this phase, Jessica Kirk was hired as Managing Director on a part-time basis, Mila Mendez was hired as our Fellowship Coordinator on a part-time basis, and Yorda Haile was hired as an Administrative Assistant on a part-time basis. At this time we continued to have five working board members, Consultants and short-term contract staff for design, cleaning and maintenance, renovations, research and web development. We engaged pro bono bookkeeping support, and were able to respond to the COVID crisis through emergency microgrants through the support of our staff.

c) Phase three occurred after May 2021 to the present. At this time, Jessica Kirk was hired as a full-time, permanent Executive Director and Shorna James was hired as a full-time, permanent Operations and Finance Director.

We also hired a Nahomi Amberber as a part-time, permanent Research and Policy Director (who has since left our organization), Freeyelle Mehari as a part-time permanent BLM Canada Organizer, Mila Mendez as a part-time, permanent Black Arts Fellowship Coordinator, Venessa Harris as a part-time, permanent Administrative Associate, and Imani Busby as a part-time, permanent Social Media Coordinator (who was recently promoted to Communications Coordinator). We have engaged consultants and contract staff for real estate acquisition and support, architectural renovations, bookkeeping, auditing services, development, web development, and additional research support. During this time, working board members reduced the time they were devoting to the organization and their stipends.

d) During Phase Four, we plan to scale all Staff Director positions to full time, hire a legal researcher, a Services Coordinator, a Curator, a Development Coordinator, a Communications Director, an in-house Bookkeeper, and we will have no working Board members.

e) provided a robust health and dental plan to all staff, generous benefits, and an organizational minimum wage of \$25 per hour.

Research

One of the first pillars of Black Lives Matter–Canada that was established was the research pillar. The research team consists of a Research and Policy Director, a part-time legal researcher, and an additional researcher to assist with United States Data. The research team was the team primarily responsible for the compiling of geographical data that appears on the defundthepolice.org website. The research team is engaged with the following projects:

a) Use of Force Data

The research team is currently working to gather disaggregated use of force data from urban centres across Canada. Freedom of Information requests were submitted to the Edmonton Police Service, the Hamilton Police Service, the Ottawa Police Service, the Service de police de la ville de Montréal, the Toronto Police Service, the Vancouver Police Department, the Winnipeg Police Service (through the City Clerk’s department).

The requests asked for data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, postal code, and additionally asked for the age, gender and name of the officer who used force.

The Hamilton Police Service denied the request, stating that the information would be released publicly at an upcoming meeting. The Hamilton Police Service subsequently released information, but did not provide data on postal codes, or the police officer who used force.

The Winnipeg Police Service stated that they could not release the data because the “Crime Analysis Unit and Information and technology Solutions Division are not able to design a query to extract the requested information” electronically.

The Service de police de la ville de Montréal stated that “the documents requested contain personal and confidential information and their disclosure can be authorized only by the individuals concerned.”

The other police services did not respond.

The research team is again submitting requests with a focus on Ontario urban centres, as part of a joint project with the Black Legal Action Centre.

b) Potential project with BLAC

The denied freedom of information requests represent a deep failing of Canadian society to have a level of transparency around policing. The research team has joined forces with the Black Legal Action Centre, a specialty legal clinic providing services to Black Ontarians, to resubmit freedom of information requests for Ontario urban centres. Should these requests be similarly refused or ignored, a strategy of appeal and a potential test case will be explored.

c) Budgetary expenses in urban centres across Canada

The research team undertook significant research to determine the proportion of budgetary expenses that police account for in urban centres across Canada and the United States. The team continues to update the geographical data that appears on www.defundthepolice.org, with an aim to expand the number of urban centres featured on the site.

d) Legal Research

The team has employed the services of a legal researcher who has compiled and provided extensive training on legislation to chapters across the country, including the Canadian Criminal Code. This extensive research is usable both to inform chapter members, and to provide suggestions for continued advocacy.

e) Policy Platform

The research team is undertaking to release a radical policy vision for Black Lives in partnership with grassroots organizations across the country. The collaboratively built policy platform will be an educational and visionary guide for a liberated Black future. The team also crowdsourced feedback from social media sources.

f) Research Service

The research team is establishing a research service available to chapters. Chapters often do not have the research to undertake their own research that can be continually updated and that meets data collection standards. Black Lives Matter–Canada is fulfilling that role to facilitate local organizing.

Development & Fundraising

a) Charitable Status

After a lengthy process we applied for and successfully received charitable status. This is excellent news because it means that we can offer tax receipts to folks who need this and will be able to help BLM Chapters coast to coast to coast in receiving donations under charitable status.

b) Tynomi Banks Partnership - For Black History Month 2020, we partnered with Canada's Drag Race's Tynomi Banks on a fundraiser that included a limited edition line of apparel. BLM Canada received a portion of all sales, which went directly into our Community Support budget.

c) Grants

- i. **Groundswell** - We love Groundswell's mission and vision and are thankful for their continued support over the years. We applied for a grant this year to support our Wildseed space at 76 Geary avenue and were successful in receiving \$10,000 towards access and programming at Wildseed.
- ii. **Resource Movement** - Black Lives Matter–Canada was able to fundraise \$4000 through this granting opportunity and redirected all funds to the Korchinski-Paquet family.
- iii. **Open Doors** - We applied through the Toronto Arts Council for their Open Doors program for a wild idea- to gather together Black faculty and a cohort to run a 20 month Black Arts Fellowship. We received a \$30,000 grant and the Wildseed Black Arts Fellowship was born. We are now halfway through the 20 month process and will eventually complete seven two-week residencies and 20 workshops with Black artists from across Canada.
- iv. **Black to the Future** - As a warm up to our Wildseed programming we held a mini art show that featured Kim Ninkuru, Disieye, Kike Otuje and dance artists Kysiha Williams, Rodney Diverlus and Ravyn Wngz. Celebrating Black artists we held a public night of performances and a one month exhibition of visual works in our rented hub at 76 Geary.
- v. **Arts Councils** - We have been working to get our profiles set up with the local, provincial and federal arts councils. We are not set up to apply for grants from all three councils and look forward to dreaming up creative projects with artists in our communities that can be supported by these incredible programs.
- vi. **Capital Grant Proposal** - After two years of paying rent toward a 1,700 square foot studio, we decided that a larger multipurpose cultural hub could be put to much better use for a variety of artist activists in the city. In early April 2021, we submitted a Capital Grant Proposal to Black Lives Matter Global Network, requesting that they subsidize \$5,000,000 USD. This amount covered a majority of costs for the building purchase, and included preliminary restricted funds that were put toward renovation costs. Included in the proposal were the following spatial priorities: archiving materials,

organizing space, educational space, meeting rooms, co-working space, studio, performance and creation space, office space and gardening space. Our funding request was accepted within the month, and we were able to purchase 24 Cecil Street community hub as a result.

Operations, Budgeting & Finances

a) Scaling Up - 2020 marked the final phase of BLM Canada/Wildseed's 2-year incubation, with heavy focus on scaling up our operations. This phase saw us transition out of our seed funding from BLM Global to the establishing our own fund development infrastructure and processes, transitioning from a board-only organization, hiring of full-time and part-time staff, and consultants, searching for and acquiring a permanent home for Wildseed Centre, building the organizational framework, creating robust policies and procedures to ensure safe and positive working conditions, and the creation of a sustainable financial infrastructure that prioritizes generally accepted accounting and fiscal consistency and transparency. These plans were further complicated by COVID-19 and the 2020 uprisings; but we continued to push through, readapt, and readjust our plans to continue moving forward.

b) Ethical Fundraising - In 2020, as with most other Black-led community organizations BLMCA received a mass influx of donations, new donors, and financial support from a wide range of new sources. In response to the influx, the board adopted an Ethical Fundraising Policy to guide our development and fundraising practices. This was not planned and in many ways caught us unprepared. We grappled with hard conversations for months, and the adopted policy ultimately creates a framework through which prospective donors (including their values and intent) can be assessed and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Charitable Status

During the influx of donations from 2020, Black Lives Matter - Canada received hundreds of requests for charitable receipts. Chapters across the country also received such requests. The Board of Directors determined that seeking charitable status would be beneficial toward generating funding for chapters across the country, and would also force a level of transparency for donors.

With the pro bono support of two legal teams, Black Lives Matter - Canada submitted a request to become an official Canadian charity in August 2020. The organization received charitable status in early 2021, and the Charities Directorate backdated the designation to August 2020. Black Lives Matter - Canada is now able to issue tax receipts.

a) Wildseed Centre Taxes

Because Black Lives Matter–Canada is an official charity, it can realize certain tax exemptions. One of the concerns of the organization in acquiring property was the inadvertent funding of police through property taxes.

BLMCA currently has pro bono legal support looking to establish tax exemption based on similar exemptions provided to like organizations. A motion was passed at city council directing city staff to review tax exemption for the building.

b) Governance Training

In May 2021, pro bono legal support provided charitable status training to the Board of Directors to ensure that the organization is well-prepared to meet the stringent transparency requirements of the Charities Directorate.

Audit

a) Search - In November 2020, M4BJ (operating as Black Lives Matter Canada and Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism) released an RFP in search of Black-led external auditors to complete two years' worth of filings - both prior to and during our first year as a recognized Charity.

b) Appointment - The board appointed GMS Professional Corporation, Chartered Professional Accountants to prepare its first two yearly audited financial statements and related filings, in accordance with CPA and CRA standards.

c) Progress - Financial statements for both fiscal years (May 1, 2019 - April 30 2020 as well as May 1, 2020 - April 30, 2021) can be found in this annual report.

BLM Global

Black Lives Matter's global formation has gone through some structural changes during this period. In 2019, in response to internal fragmentation, the organization split into two separate and distinct organizations: the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, a foundation to resource Black organizations and BLM chapters; and Black Lives Matter Grassroots, a group made up of representatives from existing chapters and components.

a) BLM Grassroots

BLM Grassroots intends to house the movement work of chapters across the world, to resource them, and to support them when needed. When it was created, chapters were looking to create a networked structure to facilitate this work. BLM - Canada was given a directorship role to represent all the chapters in Canada--this is distinct from the chapters in the United States, who each hold a representative seat. As a result of significant disagreement on the strategic forward path of the Grassroots formation, the Canadian representative stepped down from the directorship role in the summer of 2021.

Alongside other formations globally, there remains some frustration regarding the US-centric focus of the Grassroots organization. We will continue to engage with Grassroots to the extent that we believe it can be an organizing and mobilizing resource for Canadian chapters.

Security

a) CSIS/Military

In May 2021, we were contacted by journalists who provided us with documents showing that the Canadian military had been gathering intelligence on the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada. We were provided with documentation showing that the military had mapped out information that included what organizations support us, geographic mapping of support, social media analysis, and a timeline of the movement. An article was published in the Ottawa Citizen about the military activities.

This information underscores the risk that activists take on in doing Black liberation work in Canada. We condemn the militarized surveillance of Black activists by state governments.

b) Digital Security

In response to growing security concerns, Black Lives Matter - Canada led a partnership with the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.) located in New York City to provide digital security training to chapters across the Black Lives Matter Global Network. S.T.O.P. litigates and advocates for privacy, working to abolish local governments' systems of mass surveillance. S.T.O.P. coordinated multiple trainings and literature to support chapters in becoming more secure in their use of technology.

c) Summer 2020 Arrests

Black Lives Matter Toronto held a protest on July 17, 2020 aimed at drawing attention to monuments to slavery and colonialism, the largest of which is the police and prison system.. In the early hours of that morning attendees decorated three statues with water soluble paint - specifically beautifying the statues of ugly colonizers Egerton Ryerson, Sir John A McDonald and the statue of King Edward the VI. Attendees were cornered during the last part of their action and three people were arrested, specifically charged with defacing Ryerson's statue. Arrestees were detained for hours, and ultimately taken to several precincts and held until the wee hours of the next morning- almost 24 hours in jail. They faced extreme charges and fought for a year in court to have the charges dismissed. In June 2021, just before the one year anniversary the charges were dismissed with volunteer hours served and penalties paid.

Solidarity

a) Khaleel Siewrattan Legal Support

Carpenter Khaleel Seivwright spent most of 2020 raising money to rent a garage, buying materials and building durable insulated tiny shelters for homeless people across Toronto who might be living outside this winter. In February 2021 an injunction was placed against Khaleel, and the fundraising page has since shut down.

b) Moka Dawkins Legal Support

Black trans activist and criminalized person Moka Dawkins was arrested in the summer and we

supported her legal case, mobilized people on the ground and supported with some transitional support when she got out.

c) Freedom School Bereavement Support

This year the unthinkable happened. A member of the Freedom School team, a young man named Jacob Quinonez died in a tragic accident. We worked with the Freedom School team to offer bereavement support for all affected by this great loss.

d) Koffler Boycott

At the height of Solidarity protests challenging forced evictions and genocidal violence in Sheikh Jarrah and across Palestine during Summer 2021, Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel called on cultural organizations to join calls to boycott Israel. Wildseed Centre supported activists calling for Koffler of the Arts to divest from UJA, acknowledge the harms of Zionist artwashing, and stop discriminating against artists with decolonial politics.

e) Danger Kairo Kewusu’s Providence Bereavement Fund

Danger Kairo Kewusu is another individual who we lost during the heart of the pandemic in 2020. Danger was a rock in Toronto’s Black Queer and Trans community, and we worked with their family to support with bereavement costs.

f) Tigray Solidarity

In November 2020, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched a military offensive into the Tigray region, denying them humanitarian access to food, water, medicine, communication, health and banking services. By March 2021, Tigray organizers launched an international political educational campaign and were supported by Black Lives Matter Canada. We released a statement in solidarity and spoke at teach-ins upon request from the 24 hrs for Tigray organizers.

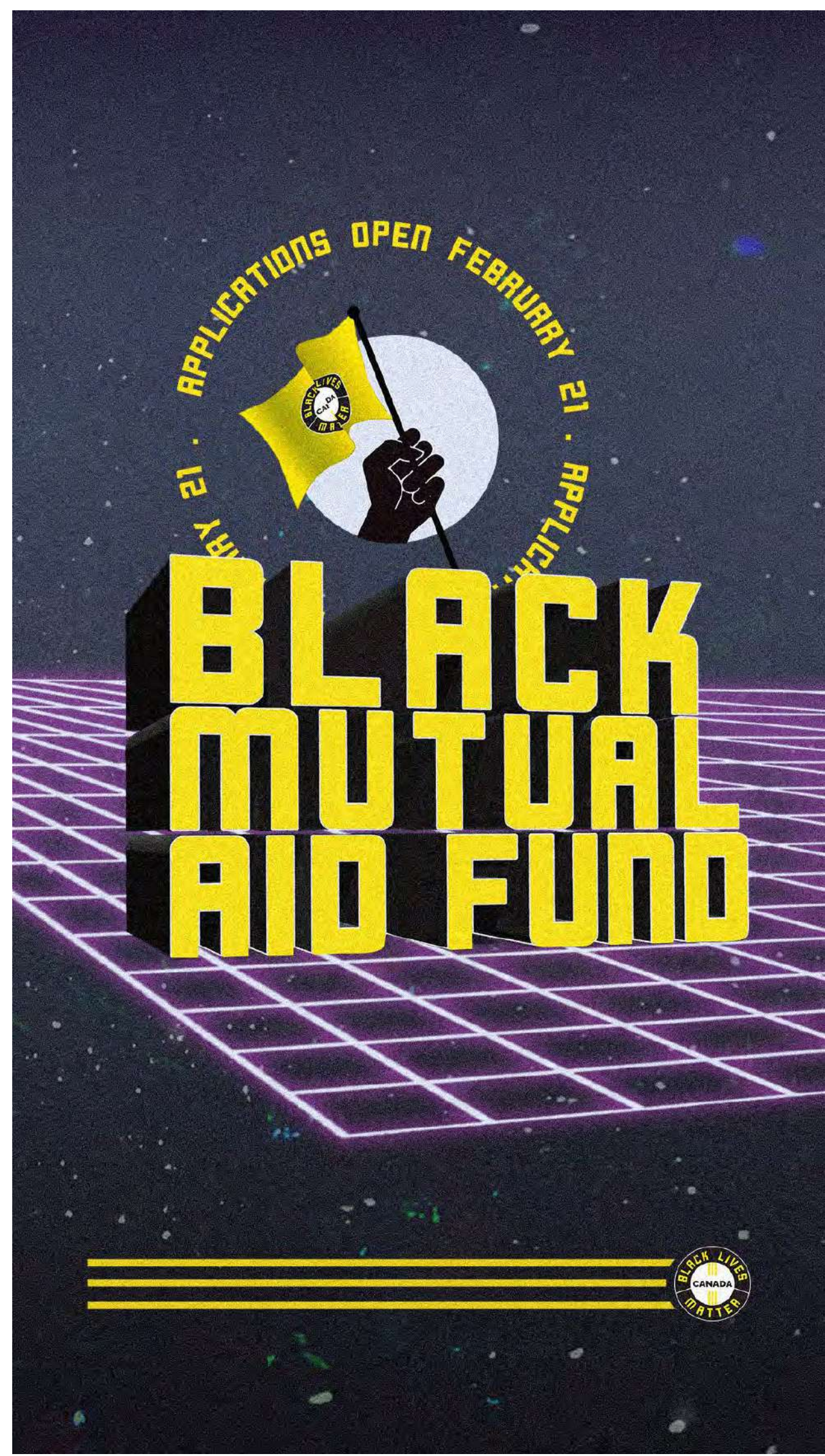
Disability Justice Initiatives

a) ASL Classes

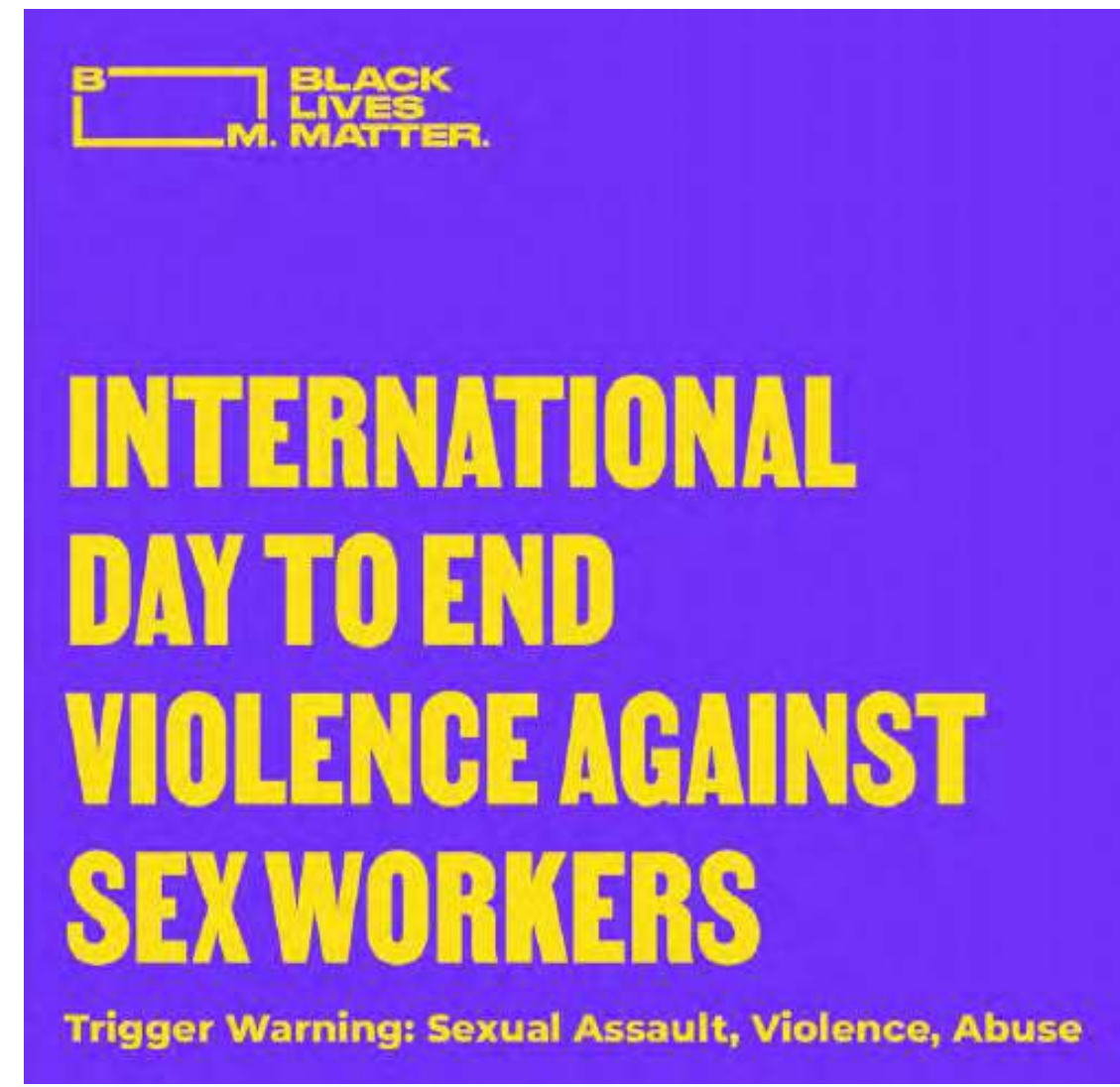
We worked with the board, staff and Black Arts Fellows on an intensive ASL course led by Black Deaf educator Tamyka Bullen. We spent the winter of 2021 learning ASL together to ensure that our programs are accessible to Black Deaf community members and plan to continue to upgrade our skills.

b) Deaf access consultation

Black Lives Matter Canada worked with Courage Bacchus on some strategic planning for Deaf access in our programming and in our new space at 24 Cecil Street.



Designed by: Jonathan Broderick



BLACK LIVES MATTER CANADA UNITY AGREEMENT

The following is the basis of unity upon which the chapters of Black Lives Matter - Canada comes together to work across geographies on our common goal of Black Liberation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Every day, we recommit to healing ourselves and each other, and to co-creating alongside comrades, allies, and family a culture where each person feels seen, heard, and supported.

- 1. We are committed to Black-led chapters and we center Black leadership.
- 2. We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate differences and commonalities.
- 3. We work vigorously for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.
- 4. We intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting.
- 5. We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black lives matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a prerequisite for wanting the same for others.
- 6. We see ourselves as part of the global Black family, and we are aware of the different ways we are impacted or privileged as Black people who exist in different parts of the world.
- 7. We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location.
- 8. We are a trans-led organization and take direct leadership and guidance from trans people.
- 10. We build a space that affirms Black women and is free from sexism and misogynoir.
- 11. We practice empathy. We engage comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts.
- 12. We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with or without their children by creating the conditions that support parent involvement in organizing.
- 13. We dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires caregivers' unpaid labour and create room for public and private caregiving that nurtures participation in public justice work.
- 14. We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting

each other as extended families and “villages” that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents and children are comfortable.

15. We are queer led and commit to ensuring we create a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormativity.

16. We cultivate an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism. We believe that people of all ages show up with the capacity to lead and learn.

17. We embody and practice justice, liberation, and peace in our engagements with one another.

18. We are an abolitionist organization .

19. We root our work in disability justice and Mad justice and justice for Deaf people. We recognize that we will only be free when we make the world safer for those who are most marginalized and we recognize the fact that many of the folks killed and affected by state violence are disproportionately from Deaf, Mad and disabled communities.

* *

BLM GRASSROOTS CORE CHAPTER AGREEMENTS

We agree and affirm, in unity, that Chapters of BLM Grassroots:

- 1. Are in agreement with and adhere to the guiding principles above.
- 2. Are comprised of Black people committed to ending state-sanctioned anti-Black violence and to stepping fully into the Black radical tradition of freedom struggle.
- 3. Have a minimum of five Black people leading Grassroots organizing.
- 4. Participate in ongoing trainings, campaigns, programs and actions as part of our collective work.
- 5. Engage our local Black community to be involved in our organizing and mobilizing

COMMITMENT TO COURAGEOUS DISCIPLINE

In adhering to the embodiment and praxis of courageous discipline, we commit ourselves to the wholehearted and sacred work of Black liberation that requires both struggle and sacrifice. We understand that there is no “sheltered rear,” or place of retreat where we can take cover. The battlefield is everywhere.

We commit ourselves to engaging responsibly, adopting strategic positions and practices that are well-thought out and disciplined, prioritizing the movement and our people ahead of momentary reactions. We commit to transformative, and abolitionist forms of engagement. In doing so, we reject carceral logic, punitive ideology and any and all reformist practices.

We demonstrate through intentional study and praxis that we are committed to the guiding principles above.

Core Tenets

1. We are mindful of safety and security concerns. We endeavor to protect ourselves and the Black community to the extent that we are able.
2. We consciously consider and make every effort to protect the safety of our people, especially our elders, undocumented, disabled, Deaf and Mad people transgender people, children, youth, prisoners and ex-prisoners, and those on parole, probation, or with open cases with the state.
3. We center radical dignity and grace by prioritizing call-ins (i.e., internal restorative conversations) over callouts (i.e., public statements of condemnation or “blasting”) within our organizing. When disputes arise, we reject the callout culture that intends to shame, embarrass, and put down members, potentially alienating them from the movement. We prioritize call-in culture which centers respect and healing, and aims to create a dialogue of mutuality wherein we receive feedback on concerns on our behavior or actions. Courageous discipline also requires that we take the time to meet in intimate and loving contexts with the purpose being to listen, hear concerns and offer honest productive feedback that strengthens us as a whole.
4. We engage in the Black radical praxis of criticism and self-criticism, by offering principled critique and accepting individual awareness and accountability. We refrain from personal attacks or vent personal spite, pick verbal and physical fights, or seek revenge against fellow organizers and affiliated Chapters. Instead, we seek to

recognize harm committed against one another and engage in principled struggle for the sake of unity and forward movement.

* *
*

On behalf of

_____,
(organization name)

**we agree to join in common struggle with the other chapters
of Black Lives Matter - Canada**

Representative

1: _____

Phone:

Email: _____

Signature:

Representative

2: _____

Phone:

Email: _____

Signature: _____

-

Organization Website:

Organization Email:

Date:

2020 Financial Statements

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M4BJ

 2020 Financial Statements

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Directors of
M4BJ

Qualified Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of M4BJ, which comprise the statement of financial position as at April 30, 2020, and the statements of operations and changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, except for the effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion section of our report, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of M4BJ as at April 30, 2020 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Qualified Opinion

As is common with many not-for-profit organizations, the Organization derives revenue from fundraising activities the completeness of which is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. Accordingly, verification of these revenues was limited to the amounts recorded in the records of the Organization. Therefore, we were not able to determine whether any adjustments might be necessary to fundraising revenue, excess of revenues over expenses, and cash flows from operations for the year ended April 30, 2020, current assets and net assets as at April 30, 2020. Our audit opinion on the financial statements for the year ended April 30, 2020 was modified accordingly because of the possible effects of this limitation in scope.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. Basis for qualified conclusion independent of the Organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Organization's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they

Independent Auditor's Report — continued

could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- ♦ Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ♦ Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organization's internal control.
- ♦ Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- ♦ Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- ♦ Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

GMS Professional Corp

GMS Professional Corporation
Chartered Professional Accountants
Authorized to Practice Public Accounting by the Chartered
Professional Accountants of Ontario

Mississauga, Ontario
October 5, 2021

M4BJ Statement of Financial Position As at April 30, 2020

	2020
ASSETS	
Current assets	
Cash	\$ 17,258
Accounts receivable (note 3)	121,624
	<hr/> 138,882
Property, plant and equipment (note 4)	28,735
	<hr/> <hr/> \$ 167,617
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES	
Current liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 7,910
Deferred revenue (note 5)	1,853
	<hr/> 9,763
Net assets	157,854
	<hr/> <hr/> \$ 167,617

See accompanying notes

On behalf of the Board

Member

Member

M4BJ
Statement of Operations
and Changes in Net Assets
Year ended April 30, 2020

	2020
Revenue	
Coporate funding (note 6)	\$ 411,696
Fundraising	6,144
Interest income	266
	<hr/> 418,106
Expenditures	
Amortization	3,192
Artist-in-residence	10,365
Community support fund	53,125
Cultural production	7,398
Interest and bank charges	248
Office and administration	6,936
Occupancy costs	49,420
Professional and legal fees	7,910
Salaries and related benefits	121,678
	<hr/> 260,272
Excess of revenue over expenditures	157,834
Net assets, beginning of year	20
Net assets, end of year	<hr/> <hr/> \$ 157,854

See accompanying notes

M4BJ
Statement of Cash Flows
Year ended April 30, 2020

	2020
Operating activities	
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ 157,834
Item not involving cash	
Amortization	3,192
	<hr/> 161,026
Net change in non-cash working capital items	
Accounts receivable	(121,624)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	7,910
Deferred revenue	1,853
	<hr/> (111,861)
Cash flows from operating activities provided by operating activities	<hr/> 49,165
Financing activity	
Opneing balance equity	20
Investing activity	
Purchase of property, plant and equipment and cash flows from investing activity	(31,927)
Net change in cash during the year	17,258
Cash, beginning of year	-
Cash, end of year	<hr/> <hr/> \$ 17,258

See accompanying notes

M4BJ
Notes to Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2020

1. Nature of operations

M4BJ is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act on November 7, 2018, and is not subject to income taxes under the Income Tax Act (Canada).

Movement for Black Justice (M4BJ) is a federally registered not-for-profit organization that works within the non-profit, community advocacy, and arts and culture industries. The organization has two wings of operations: Black Lives Matter — Canada and Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism.

Black Lives Matter - Canada is a national umbrella for Black Lives Matter in Canada, an advocacy organization resolutely committed to the eradication of anti-Black racism. It does so by developing and disseminating educational programs and resources, conducting researching, compiling data, and producing cultural content on issues affecting Black communities. BLM - CA also resources and supports local Black Lives Matter chapters in Canada and other grassroots groups working toward the liberation of Black people through grants, training, and in-kind support. BLM-CA is also engaged in advocacy-developing policy recommendations and facilitating a national mutual aid funding program.

Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism is a community incubator, and artist-run centre that operates a rentable space, art gallery and art studio. Wildseed provides education, cultural content, programing, mentorship, and opportunities for Black artists and activists. Wildseed operates the Black Arts Fellowship, a 20-month Fellowship program for selected Black artists in Canada.

2. Summary of significant accounting policies

These financial statements are prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. The significant accounting policies are detailed as follows:

Basis of accounting

Except for revenue from donations and grants which are recorded on a cash basis, with no accrual being made for amounts pledged but not received, revenues and expenditures are recorded on the accrual basis, whereby transactions and events are recognized in the period in which the transactions and events occur, regardless of whether there has been a receipt or payment of cash or its equivalent.

Basis of presentation - Going Concern

These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis which contemplates the realization of assets and the payment of liabilities in the ordinary course of business. Should the organization be unable to continue as a going concern, it may be unable to realize the carrying value of its assets and to meet its liabilities as they become due.

M4BJ
Notes to Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2020

2. Summary of significant accounting policies — continued

Revenue recognition

The Organization follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured. Endowment contributions are recognized as direct increases in net assets.

Restricted investment income is recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted investment income is recognized as revenue when earned.

Externally restricted contributions for the purchase of property, plant and equipment that will be amortized are recorded as deferred capital contributions and recognized as revenue on the same basis as the amortization expense related to the acquired property, plant and equipment. Externally restricted contributions for the purchase of property, plant and equipment that will not be amortized are recognized as direct increases in net assets to the Investment in Capital Assets balance.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of cash on hand and balances with banks.

Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the balance sheet date and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the year. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Contributed services

Directors and other persons volunteer their time to assist in the organization's activities. While these services benefit the organization considerably, a reasonable estimate of their amount and fair value cannot be made and, accordingly, these contributed services are not recognized in the financial statements.

3. Accounts receivable

As at April 30, 2020 Accounts receivable included the following:

	2020
Reddick Electric	\$ 2,100
Thousand Currents	119,524
Total	\$ 121,624

M4BJ
Notes to Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2020

4. Property, plant and equipment

	2020		
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net
Furniture and equipment	\$ 1,083	\$ 108	\$ 975
Leasehold improvements	30,844	3,084	27,760
	<u>\$ 31,927</u>	<u>\$ 3,192</u>	<u>\$ 28,735</u>

5. Deferred revenue

Unearned revenue represents restricted funding for which the proceeds have been received and approved for spending, but have not yet been spent.

	2020
GoFundMe - Black Emergency Support Fund	\$ 11,853

6. Corporate funding

Funding relating to the 2020 fiscal year were as follows:

	2020
	\$ -
Thousand Currents	358,571
Black Emergency Support Fund	53,125
Total	\$ 411,696

The organization signed an agreement with Thousand Currents for the fiscal year 2019 & 2020 (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2020) for an amount of \$514,587.01.

The first and second installment of \$239,047.50 (\$119,523.75 each installment) from Thousand Currents was received during the fiscal year under review and has been recognized in income. The third installment of \$119,523.75 was due to be received in the fiscal year ended April 30, 2020, however, was received late. This was also recognised in revenue and will also be shown as a receivable.

The balance (4th installment) of \$119,523.75 due from Thousand Currents in the fiscal year ended April 30, 2020, was not recorded due to its collectibility being uncertain.

M4BJ
Notes to Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2020

10. Financial instruments

Transactions in financial instruments may result in an entity assuming or transferring to another party one or more of the financial risks described below. The required disclosures provide information that assists users of financial statements in assessing the extent of risk related to financial instruments.

Fair value

The fair value of current financial assets and current financial liabilities approximates their carrying value due to their short-term maturity dates. The fair value of long-term financial liabilities approximates their carrying value based on the presumption that the Organization is a going concern and thus expects to fully repay the outstanding amounts.

Credit risk

The Organization does have credit risk in funding receivable of \$121,624 as at April 30, 2020. Credit risk is the risk that one party to a transaction will fail to discharge an obligation and cause the other party to incur a financial loss. The Organization reduces its exposure to credit risk by ensuring that their grant obligations per the grant contract are adhered to, so that receipt of grant funds are not jeopardized. In the opinion of management the credit risk exposure to the Organization is low and is not material.



M4BJ

2021 Financial Statements

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Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Directors

Qualified Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of M4BJ, which comprise the statement of financial position as at April 30, 2021, and the income statement, retained earnings and cash flow for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, except for the effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion paragraph, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Organization as at April 30, 2021, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Qualified Opinion

In common with many not-for-profit organizations, the derived revenue from donations and fundraising activities, the completeness of which is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. Accordingly, verification of these revenues was limited to the amounts recorded in the records of the organization. Therefore, we were unable to determine whether any adjustments might be necessary to donations and fundraising revenue, excess of revenues over expenses, and cash flows from operations for the years ended April 30, 2021 and April 30, 2020, current assets and net assets as at April 30, 2021 and April 30, 2020. Our audit opinion on the financial statements for the year ended April 30, 2021 was modified accordingly because of the possible effects of this limitation in scope.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the 's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Independent Auditor's Report, continued

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- ◆ Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ◆ Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control.
- ◆ Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- ◆ Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- ◆ Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

GMS Professional Corp

GMS Professional Corporation
Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants

Mississauga, Ontario
December 9, 2021

M4BJ
Statement of Financial Position
As at April 30, 2021

As at April 30	2021	2020
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash	\$ 2,851,959	\$ 17,259
Internally restricted funds (Note 6)	3,413,781	-
Accounts receivable	17,935	121,624
Government remittances	5,700	-
	6,289,375	138,883
Capital assets (Note 3)	31,808	28,735
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 6,321,183	\$ 167,618
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 39,648	\$ 10,061
Deferred revenue (Note 4)	-	1,853
	39,648	11,914
Fund balances		
Operating net assets	2,867,754	155,704
Internally restricted funds (Note 6)	3,413,781	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 6,321,183	\$ 167,618

See accompanying notes

Approved on behalf of the board

Name here

Name here

M4BJ
Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets
Year ended April 30, 2021

For the year ended April 30	Operating	Internally Restricted	2021	2020
Corporate funding	\$ 260,069	\$ 3,037,000	\$ 3,297,069	\$ 411,696
Interest income	12,135	-	12,135	266
Fundraising	1,552,145	-	1,552,145	6,144
Legal fund	-	50,000	50,000	-
Other donations	1,907,273	-	1,907,273	-
TOTAL REVENUE	3,731,622	3,087,000	6,818,622	418,106
Expenses				
Chapter support	305,945	627,787	933,732	-
Community organizing programming	537,402	8,432	545,834	62,439
Office and administration	129,535	-	129,535	23,974
Rent and maintenance	58,407	-	58,407	54,762
Salaries and benefits	394,197	-	394,197	121,247
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,425,486	636,219	2,061,705	262,422
Surplus/(Deficiency) before undernoted items	2,306,136	2,450,781	4,756,917	155,684
Other expenses/(income)				
(Gain)/Loss on foreign exchange	(405,914)	(963,000)	(1,368,914)	-
Net surplus	\$ 2,712,050	\$ 3,413,781	\$ 6,125,831	\$ 155,684

See accompanying notes

M4BJ
Statement of Changes in Net Assets
Year ended April 30, 2021

	Operating	Internally Restricted	2021	2020
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 157,854	\$ -	\$ 157,854	\$ 20
Prior period adjustment (Note 8)	(2,150)	-	(2,150)	-
Adjusted balance, beginning of year	155,704	-	155,704	20
Net surplus/(deficiency)	2,712,050	3,413,781	6,125,831	155,684
Balance, ending of year	\$ 2,867,754	\$ 3,413,781	\$ 6,281,535	\$ 155,704

See accompanying notes

M4BJ
Statement of Cash Flows
Year ended April 30, 2021

Year ended April 30	2021	2020
Operating activities		
Net income	\$ 6,125,831	\$ 155,684
Adjustments for Amortization	6,879	3,192
Total adjustments	6,879	3,192
	6,132,710	158,876
Change in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	31,737	10,060
Deferred revenue	(1,853)	1,853
Accounts receivable	103,689	(121,623)
Government remittances	(5,700)	-
Cash flows from operating activities	6,260,583	49,166
Investing activities		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(9,952)	(31,927)
Cash flows used in investing activities	(9,952)	(31,927)
Financing activities		
Prior period adjustment	(2,150)	-
Opening balance equity	-	20
Cash flows (used in)/provided by financing activities	(2,150)	20
Increase in cash	6,248,481	17,259
Cash, beginning of year	17,259	-
Cash, end of year	\$ 6,265,740	\$ 17,259
Cash consists of:		
Chequing account	\$ 2,851,959	\$ 17,259
Restricted funds	3,413,781	-
Cash, end of year	\$ 6,265,740	\$ 17,259

See accompanying notes

M4BJ**Notes to the Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2021****1. Nature of operations**

M4BJ is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act on November 7, 2018, and is a registered charity which is exempt from tax under section 149(l) of the Income Tax Act. The organization operates as Black Lives Matter - Canada (BLM-CA) and Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism.

Black Lives Matter Canada is a national organization contracting with other grassroots organizations across Canada to carry out its charitable purpose.

Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism is a community incubator, and artist-run centre that operates a rentable space, art gallery and art studio. Wildseed provides education, cultural content, programming, mentorship, and opportunities for Black artists and activists.

2. Summary of significant accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. These financial statements have, in management's opinion, been properly prepared within the framework of the accounting policies summarized as follows.

(a) Basis of accounting

Except for revenue from donations and grants which are recorded on a cash basis, with no accrual being made for amounts pledged but not received, revenues and expenditures are recorded on the accrual basis, whereby transactions and events are recognized in the period in which the transactions and events occur, regardless of whether there has been a receipt or payment of cash or its equivalent.

(b) Basis of presentation - Going Concern

These financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis which contemplates the realization of assets and the payment of liabilities in the ordinary course of business. Should the Association be unable to continue as a going concern, it may be unable to realize the carrying value of its assets and to meet its liabilities as they become due.

(c) Revenue recognition

The Organization follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Internally restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which they are received or receivable. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

(d) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of cash on hand and balances with banks.

M4BJ**Notes to the Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2021****2. Summary of significant accounting policies, continued****(e) Property, plant and equipment**

Purchased capital assets are recorded at cost and donated capital assets are recorded at their fair values at the time of receipt. Amortization is provided on a declining balance basis at rates selected to write-off capital assets over the term of their estimated useful lives. The rates are as follows:

Computer equipment	30%
Furniture and Fixture	20%
Leasehold Improvements	20%

(f) Financial instruments

The company's financial instruments consist of cash, accounts receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Unless otherwise noted it is management's opinion that the company is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risks and the fair values of these instruments approximate their carrying value.

(g) Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the balance sheet date and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the year. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

(h) Contributed services

Directors and other persons volunteer their time to assist in the organization's activities. While these services benefit the organization considerably, a reasonable estimate of their amount and fair value cannot be made and, accordingly, these contributed services are not recognized in the financial statements.

3. Property, plant and equipment

	2021 Cost	2021 Accumulated amortization	2021 NBV	2020 NBV
Furniture and fixtures	\$ 1,083	\$ 303	\$ 780	\$ 975
Leasehold improvements	38,064	9,358	28,706	27,760
Computer hardware	2,732	410	2,322	-
	<u>\$ 41,879</u>	<u>\$ 10,071</u>	<u>\$ 31,808</u>	<u>\$ 28,735</u>

Included in rent and maintenance is \$3,855 related to the current year amortization.

M4BJ**Notes to the Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2021****4. Deferred Revenue**

Unearned revenue represents restricted funding for which the proceeds have been received and approved for spending, but have not yet been spent.

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Opening balance	\$ 1,853	\$ -
Add: Contribution received during the year	-	54,978
Less: Amount amortized to revenue during the year	(1,853)	(53,125)
<u>Ending balance</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,853</u>

5. Related party transactions

The M4BJ board is currently operating as a working board as it establishes the organization. As staff are hired and infrastructure is properly developed, the board of directors intends to transition to a management board.

Related party transaction are identified as:

1. Reimbursements made to the board members
2. Remuneration made to board members and included in salaries and related benefits

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 316,738</u>	<u>\$ 118,610</u>

These transactions are in the normal course of operations and have been valued in these financial statements at the exchange amount which is the amount of consideration established and agreed to by the related parties.

6. Internally restricted funds

The Board of Directors has restricted the amounts received and paid out from the following funds, to the purpose for which the board intends.

The funds are as follows:

	<u>Internally restricted funds</u>	<u>Legal funds</u>	<u>Total</u>
Donations received	\$ 4,000,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 4,050,000
Disbursement	(627,787)	(8,432)	(636,219)
<u>As at April 30, 2021</u>	<u>\$ 3,372,213</u>	<u>\$ 41,568</u>	<u>\$ 3,413,781</u>

M4BJ**Notes to the Financial Statements
Year ended April 30, 2021****7. Subsequent events**

Subsequent to the April 30, 2021, M4BJ announced plans to purchase a property at 24 Cecil Street for use as a community hub. This property is intended to replace a much smaller rented space on Geary Avenue.

8. Prior period adjustment

Prior year adjustment related to rental expense of \$2,150 paid in the current year, however, is related to prior period expenses that were not recorded.

9. Financial instruments

Transactions in financial instruments may result in an entity assuming or transferring to another party one or more of the financial risks described below. The required disclosures provide information that assists users of financial statements in assessing the extent of risk related to financial instruments.

(a) Credit risk

The company does have credit risk in accounts receivable and government remittances of \$23,635 (2020 - \$121,624). Credit risk is the risk that one party to a transaction will fail to discharge an obligation and cause the other party to incur a financial loss. The company reduces its exposure to credit risk by performing credit valuations on a regular basis; and creating an allowance for bad debts when applicable. In the opinion of management the credit risk exposure to the company is low and is not material.

(b) Liquidity risk

The company does have a liquidity risk in the accounts payable of \$39,648 (2020 \$10,061). Liquidity risk is the risk that the company cannot repay its obligations when they become due to its creditors. The company reduces its exposure to liquidity risk by ensuring that it documents when authorized payments become due. In the opinion of management the liquidity risk exposure to the company is low and is not material.

10. Comparative figures

The financial statements have been reclassified, where applicable, to conform to the presentation used in the current year.