



# AMPLIFY. ADVOCATE. ACT: CLAIMING OUR HEALTH, OUR VOICES, AND OUR POWER

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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# Our Executive Director – Kearie Daniel

There wasn't just one moment when it became clear that something had to change, there were many. It was attending funeral after funeral of Black women who had passed too soon from preventable diseases. It was watching Black mothers carry the silent weight of stress, burnout, and anxiety, with nowhere to turn. It was seeing Black women's health concerns dismissed, our pain minimized, and our needs ignored.

In 2023, The Black Women's Institute for Health was just an idea. By late 2024, it became a reality. But an idea, no matter how powerful, cannot take shape without belief, support, and collective strength. I was fortunate to have that support from the very beginning from our Board Chair, who without hesitation, said, "I got you, sis. What do you need?" to our Board of Directors, who took on leadership roles despite their full schedules and professional commitments.

I am proud of what we have built so far. This year, we launched **Canada's first-ever national survey on Black women's health, Voices Unheard**, gathering data from Black women across the country to address long-standing gaps in healthcare, employment, mental health, and more. We launched **Mothering Minds**, a mental health support program for Black mothers, in partnership with **Shoppers Drug Mart**, ensuring that Black women struggling in silence could find a community of care.

Starting a new organization is daunting. Even with a track record of leading and building organizations, stepping into this role meant proving myself all over again. It meant securing funding, advocating for support, and building from the ground up. None of this would have been possible without the belief of our funders, especially the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, our first funder, and Sun Life Financial, our first sponsor.

But beyond the funding, what has been truly invaluable are the people those who met with me, who made connections on our behalf, who supported us simply because they believed in the vision of an organization that is not just about supporting Black women and girls, but about building something **transformational for all of our communities**.

**Black women, femmes, and gender-expansive people are at the center of this work, our health, our voices, our well-being are the foundation upon which BWIH stands.** But true health equity cannot exist in isolation. **For Black people to thrive,**

**our entire community must thrive.** That means ensuring that **Black men and boys**, non-binary and gender-diverse people also have access to care, resources, and advocacy that reflect their lived experiences.

**We also cannot build a healthier future without addressing the systems that harm us from both outside and within.** Misogynoir, transphobia, lateral violence, and gender-based oppression do not exist in a vacuum, they are symptoms of systemic anti-Black racism and colonial legacies that have dehumanized us for generations. If we are serious about healing, we must be just as committed to dismantling these internalized structures as we are to fighting the external ones that oppress us.

At BWIH, we are not just focused on survival, we are committed to liberation, healing, and community care. This means not only ensuring that Black women and gender-diverse people have the tools to navigate oppressive systems, but also that we are building something better, something rooted in justice, dignity, and collective care.

**My hope is that together, we can make BWIH into a thriving institution that does more than just provide services. We are building a future where our people are well, where sustainable employment exists, where our communities are cared for, and where all of us, across gender identities, across experiences, can access the support we need to heal and thrive.**

With gratitude,



**Kearie Daniel**  
**Founder & Executive Director**



# **Letter from the Board Chair**

## **– Shequita Thompson-Reid**

Serving as Board Chair of The Black Women's Institute for Health (BWIH) is not just a role, it is a calling rooted in my lived experience and my deepest convictions. This work is personal. I know what it means to face systems that were never designed with us in mind. But I also know the strength, the brilliance, and the unshakeable spirit that lives within Black women. It is this truth that drives me, and it is why BWIH exists: to ensure Black women across Canada are truly seen, genuinely heard, and wholeheartedly cared for in their full humanity.

This past year has been nothing short of transformative. One of the most profound milestones was the launch of **Voices Unheard Canada's first national health survey focused solely on Black women**. For the first time, thousands of our stories and health experiences are being documented, validated, and centered. We are no longer absent from the data. We are the data. **And with that visibility comes power the power to inform policies, reshape practices, and demand a healthcare system that works for us, not around us.**

I've witnessed the real impact of this work, from intergenerational conversations in our communities to national discussions in research and policy circles. **Our outreach initiatives have brought together young women, elders, healthcare professionals, and everyday advocates, reminding us that our collective wisdom can and will transform the future of health in this country.**

Being a Black mother and professional, I understand the exhaustion of constantly navigating inequitable systems, advocating for basic dignity, and balancing a multitude of roles. That's why BWIH's mission speaks to the core of who I am. It addresses the everyday realities that Black women face, and it lifts up our resilience, leadership, and boundless capacity to care for one another, even when the world does not. I am endlessly grateful to our dedicated Board of Directors, whose unwavering commitment and lived experience shape the soul of this organization.

To our generous funders and steadfast partners, thank you for believing in our vision and fueling our momentum. And to the thousands of Black women who courageously participated in Voices Unheard, you are the heartbeat of this movement. Your trust, your stories, and your strength are the foundation of everything we are building.

Looking ahead, BWIH is poised to deepen its impact. We are expanding our research, strengthening our partnerships, and translating insights into tangible strategies for change. Whether it's access to culturally responsive mental health care or pathways to safe, affirming medical services, our vision is bold and our resolve is strong. **We are here to redefine what healthcare can and must look like for Black women in this country.**

The road ahead will not be without challenges, but our foundation is strong. And we are not walking it alone. **The legacy we are building will not only serve this generation it will uplift the next.**

It is my honor to serve as Board Chair of The Black Women's Institute for Health. Thank you for walking with us, for championing our mission, and for helping us shape a future where Black women's health is not an afterthought, but a national priority.  
In solidarity and hope,



**Shequita Thompson-Reid**  
**Ubuntu- I am, because we are**

# OUR MISSION AND WORK

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The Black Women's Institute for Health (BWIH) was established to address the systemic barriers that prevent Black women from receiving equitable healthcare, mental health support, and career opportunities. BWIH is not a research institute, it is an advocacy organization, committed to collecting disaggregated race-based data and tangible impact. We do this not just to fill a gap but to fuel policy change, demand systemic accountability, and ensure that Black women and gender-diverse people are no longer invisibilized in health and social policy.

Our work is deeply rooted in an anti-Black racism, anti-oppression, and trauma-informed framework. While Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people are at the center of what we do, we recognize that our health is interconnected with the well-being of our entire community. That is why we also advocate for Black men and boys, challenge the misogynoir and lateral violence that impact our communities, and push for holistic, community-driven solutions.

That is why we also advocate for Black men and boys, challenge the misogynoir and lateral violence that impact our communities, and push for holistic, community-driven solutions.



Though BWIH was officially incorporated in June 2023, our work truly began in late 2024.

## IN JUST FIVE MONTHS, WE:

- ✓ Launched Voices Unheard, Canada's first-ever national survey on Black women's health, collecting groundbreaking data from over 1,300 Black women and girls across the country
- ✓ Developed Mothering Minds, a mental health support program for Black mothers in partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart, providing culturally responsive care and resources
- ✓ Hosted Breaking the Silence, a community-led workshop series focused on mental health, self-advocacy, and healthcare access
- ✓ Launched Pathways to Leadership, a Workforce Collaborative-funded initiative to address systemic barriers preventing Black women from advancing into leadership roles in healthcare
- ✓ Garnered national media attention, reaching millions of Canadians through platforms like CBC, CityNews, Breakfast Television, and the Toronto Star, forcing long-ignored conversations on Black women's health into the mainstream
- ✓ Built strong collaborations with funders, community organizations, and grassroots leaders, ensuring that our work is impactful, sustainable, and deeply connected to the needs of Black communities



# OUR TEAM!

## BWIH Staff

**Colleen Irowa-Abraham,**  
Director of Programs and Evaluation

**Vanessa Ebhohimhen,**  
Social Media Manager and  
Digital Storyteller

**Kearie Daniel,**  
Founder, Executive Director

**Nwando Oranye,**  
Director of Finance

## Board of Directors

**Dr. Tope Adefarakan,**  
Acting Treasurer

**Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah,**  
Member

**Shequita Thompson-Reid,**  
Board Chair

**Koko Bate Agborsangaya,**  
Secretary

**Professor Bukola Salami,**  
Member

## BWIH Advisory Committee:

**Dr. Josephine Etowa,**  
PhD, RN, RM, FWACN, FAAN, FCAN,  
FCAHS Full Professor, Canada  
Research Chair (Tier 1) in Advancing  
Black Women's Health, University  
of Ottawa

**Dr. Tope Adefarakan,**  
PhD, Assistant Professor of Black  
Canadian Studies, University of  
Toronto Community Educator &  
Africentric/Black Feminisms Expert

**Amma Gyamfowa,**  
Founder and Clinical  
Director of Womanist Healing  
Counselling Services

**Dr. Oluwabukola Salami,**  
PhD, RN, BScN, MN, FCAN, FAAN  
Full Professor & Tier 1 Canada  
Research Chair in Black & Racialized  
Peoples' Health, University of Calgary

**Debbie Owusu-Akyeeah,**  
Gender Equity Policy Specialist

**Maureen Abhulimen,**  
Community Organizer

**Dr. Ijeoma Michael,**  
Founder, Future Black Female

**Koko Bate Agborsangaya,**  
Healthcare Researcher & Policy  
Advisor

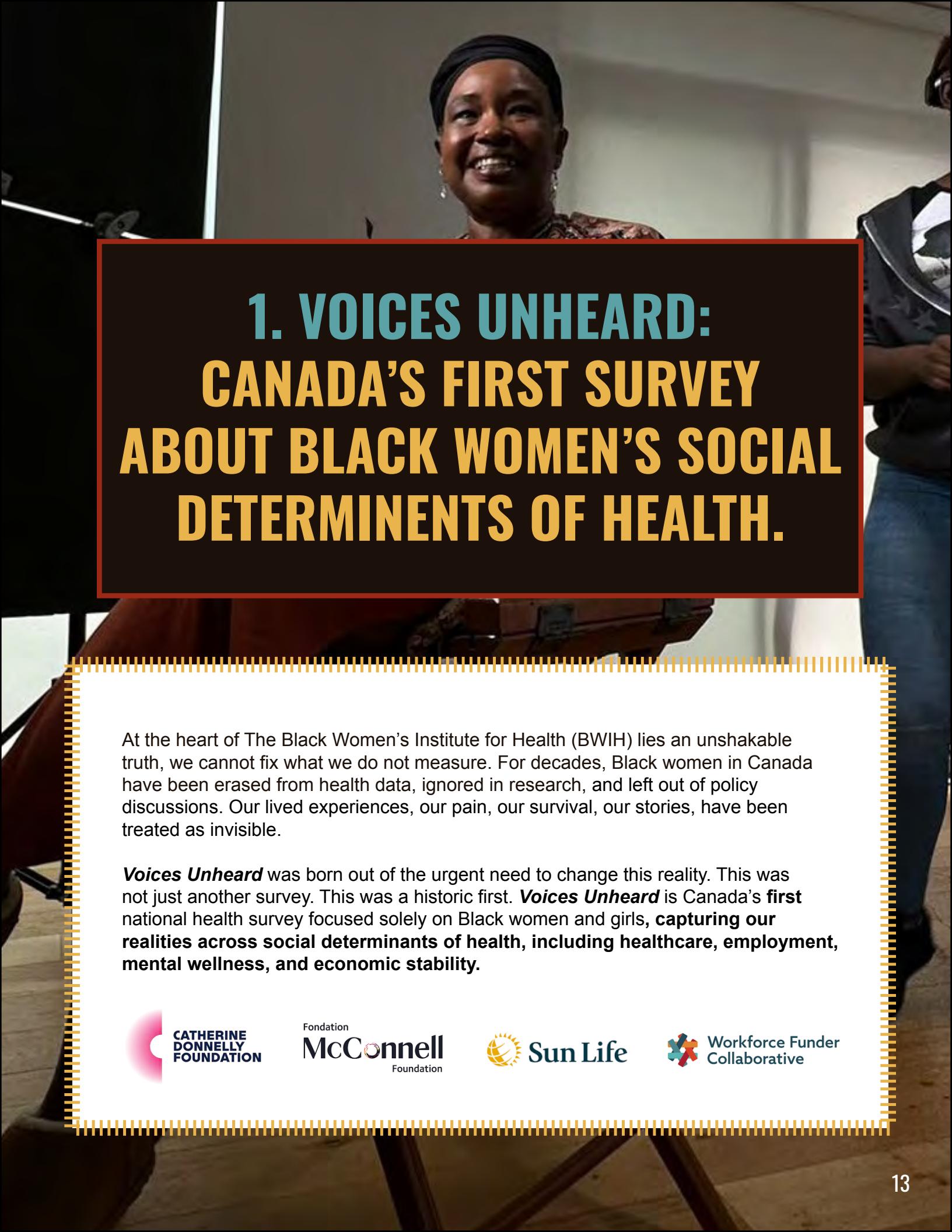
**Elsie Amoako,**  
Founder & Executive Director,  
MinoCare & Mommy Monitor

**Shequita Thompson-Reid,**  
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
Consultant & Community Leader

•



# MAJOR INITIATIVES OF 2024 BREAKING THE SILENCE! THE PROGRAMS THAT DEFINED OUR FIRST YEAR.



# 1. VOICES UNHEARD: CANADA'S FIRST SURVEY ABOUT BLACK WOMEN'S SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH.

At the heart of The Black Women's Institute for Health (BWIH) lies an unshakable truth, we cannot fix what we do not measure. For decades, Black women in Canada have been erased from health data, ignored in research, and left out of policy discussions. Our lived experiences, our pain, our survival, our stories, have been treated as invisible.

***Voices Unheard*** was born out of the urgent need to change this reality. This was not just another survey. This was a historic first. ***Voices Unheard*** is Canada's first national health survey focused solely on Black women and girls, **capturing our realities across social determinants of health, including healthcare, employment, mental wellness, and economic stability.**



CATHERINE  
DONNELLY  
FOUNDATION

Fondation  
**McConnell**  
Foundation

 Sun Life

 Workforce Funder  
Collaborative

# ANALYSIS CONTINUES!

## IN JUST A FEW MONTHS, WE ACHIEVED SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY:

- 1,500+** Black Women and girls participated in the survey and focus groups, spanning the entire country
- 63.3%** reported experiencing workplace bias
- 76.6%** felt their health concerns were dismissed by healthcare providers
- 27.6%** experienced self-harm ideation at some point in their lives
- 66.7%** were treated for chronic conditions but cited long wait times, inadequate care, and lack of culturally competent providers

**THIS WAS THE DATA WE HAD BEEN MISSING.  
NOW, IT CANNOT BE IGNORED.**

## THE REACH & IMPACT OF VOICES UNHEARD

The Voices Unheard survey is not just about collecting data—it is about ensuring Black women's health outcomes are recognized, studied, and prioritized in research, policy, and healthcare reforms. This initiative is a historic step toward filling critical gaps in race-based and gender-specific health data, and our findings will be used to push for systemic changes that improve healthcare access, workplace equity, and mental health supports for Black women across Canada.

The survey did more than collect data, it ignited a movement and engaged our communities in unprecedented ways. The data analysis will take place in 2025 and the survey launch is scheduled for Fall of 2025.



## 2. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

### EMPOWERING VOICES: ADVOCACY AND WELLNESS FOR BLACK WOMEN



CATHERINE  
DONNELLY  
FOUNDATION

For many Black women, this work was more than just attending a workshop, it was the first time they had the opportunity to share their stories in a space where they were truly seen and heard.

Through ***Voices Unheard***, our education and advocacy workshops, and community engagement—made possible by the support of the **Catherine Donnelly Foundation**—Black women spoke out about their mental health struggles, their experiences of being dismissed in healthcare settings, and the systemic barriers they navigate daily.

Many of these women had never spoken publicly about their challenges before. Their willingness to share, to be vulnerable, and to demand change sparked a movement.



## THREE BRAVE BLACK WOMEN:

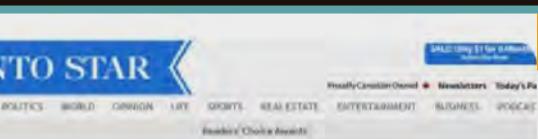
We deserve to be seen, recognized, and valued in the healthcare system.

Among those who bravely stepped forward to launch the **Voices Unheard** survey were three courageous Black women, **Akilah Dressekie**, **Anya Henry**, and **Siobhan Stewart**, whose personal testimonies became a catalyst for national conversations. By openly sharing their lived realities, they confronted long-standing barriers of silence that often shroud Black communities, barriers rooted in systemic anti-Black racism, cultural stigma, and generations of mistrust. Their willingness to be vulnerable—discussing the impact of healthcare inequities, mental health challenges, and the broader implications of oppression—served as both a healing act of self-affirmation and a resounding call for collective action.

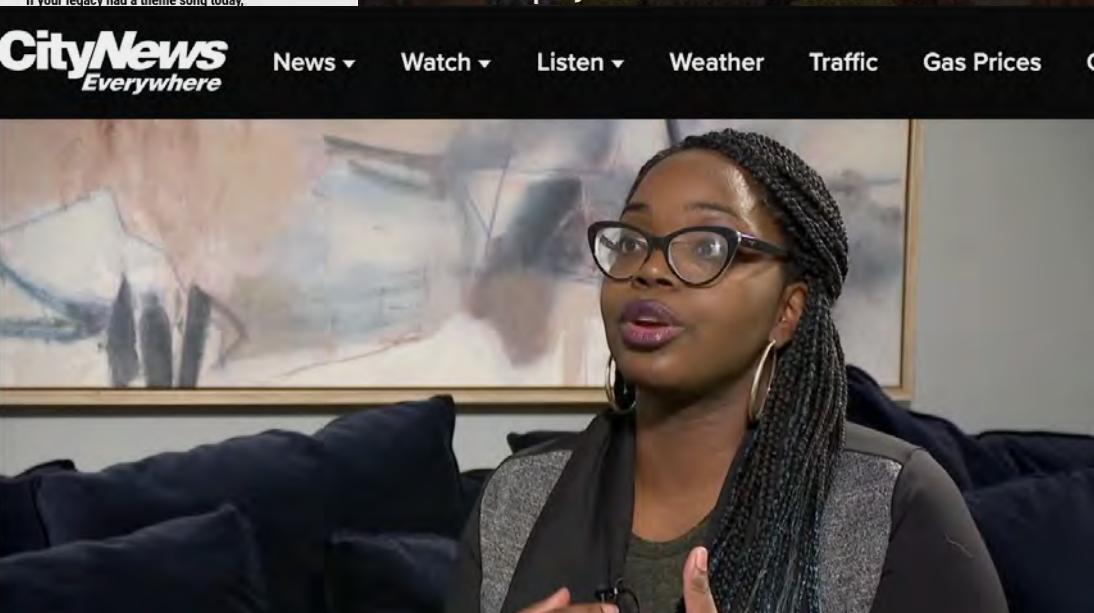


Their stories resonated with thousands across Canada, illustrating the undeniable power of storytelling in transforming how we understand and address critical issues that affect Black communities. In revealing their truths, they exemplified the strength and solidarity that emerge when we break the silence and illuminate shared experiences. Their voices not only ignited the Voices Unheard survey but also underscored the urgent need for systemic change—proving that when Black women unite to speak boldly and authentically, their stories have the power to inspire hope, amplify community resilience, and spark meaningful reform.

# THE MEDIA RESPONSE TO VOICES UNHEARD WAS PHENOMENAL, WITH COVERAGE ON CANADA'S BIGGEST PLATFORMS:



A screenshot of the Toronto Caribbean newspaper website. The main headline reads: "Vital Signs Survey: A landmark initiative to amplify Black women's health outcomes". Below the headline is a sub-headline: "Peel United Cultural Partners celebrate Black resistance: We have a future to build". A large image of three Black women is displayed on the right. A "Read More" button is visible.



THIS WAS NOT JUST ANOTHER INITIATIVE.

# MEDIA COVERAGE: MAKING BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH A NATIONAL CONVERSATION WE WERE SEEN. WE WERE HEARD.

Monday, March 31, 2025



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## New Survey Amplifies Black Women's Health Experiences Across Canada

By *The Caribbean Camera Inc.* on October 29, 2024 ·



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The Black Women's Institute for Health (BWIH), a new non-profit dedicated to advocating for the survival of Black women and girls, is launching a critical survey on October 23, 2024. This initiative marks the first national survey specifically for Black women in Canada, focusing on the intersectional social factors—such as housing, education, and finance—that impact their mental and physical health.

BWIH's initiative, titled VOICES UNHEARD: Canada's First Vital Signs Survey For Black Women, aims to address the lack of race-based data in Canadian healthcare. This data is essential for tackling alarming health disparities faced by Black women, including poorer perinatal outcomes and increased risks of cardiovascular diseases and aggressive cancers.

"Black women are in the midst of a health crisis," states Kearie Daniel, Executive Director of BWIH. "For too long, we've



City News

NATIONAL SURVEY LAUNCHES TO ADDRESS BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH CRISIS IN CANADA



### Health for ALL Black Women!

The social determinants of health – where you're born, where you live, your job, your education, and your social network – all play a crucial role in your well-being.

For Black women, these factors are often compounded by systemic challenges, including anti-oppression and anti-Black racism.



#### Economic Empowerment

Locate for financial stability, knowing it's key to accessing health resources

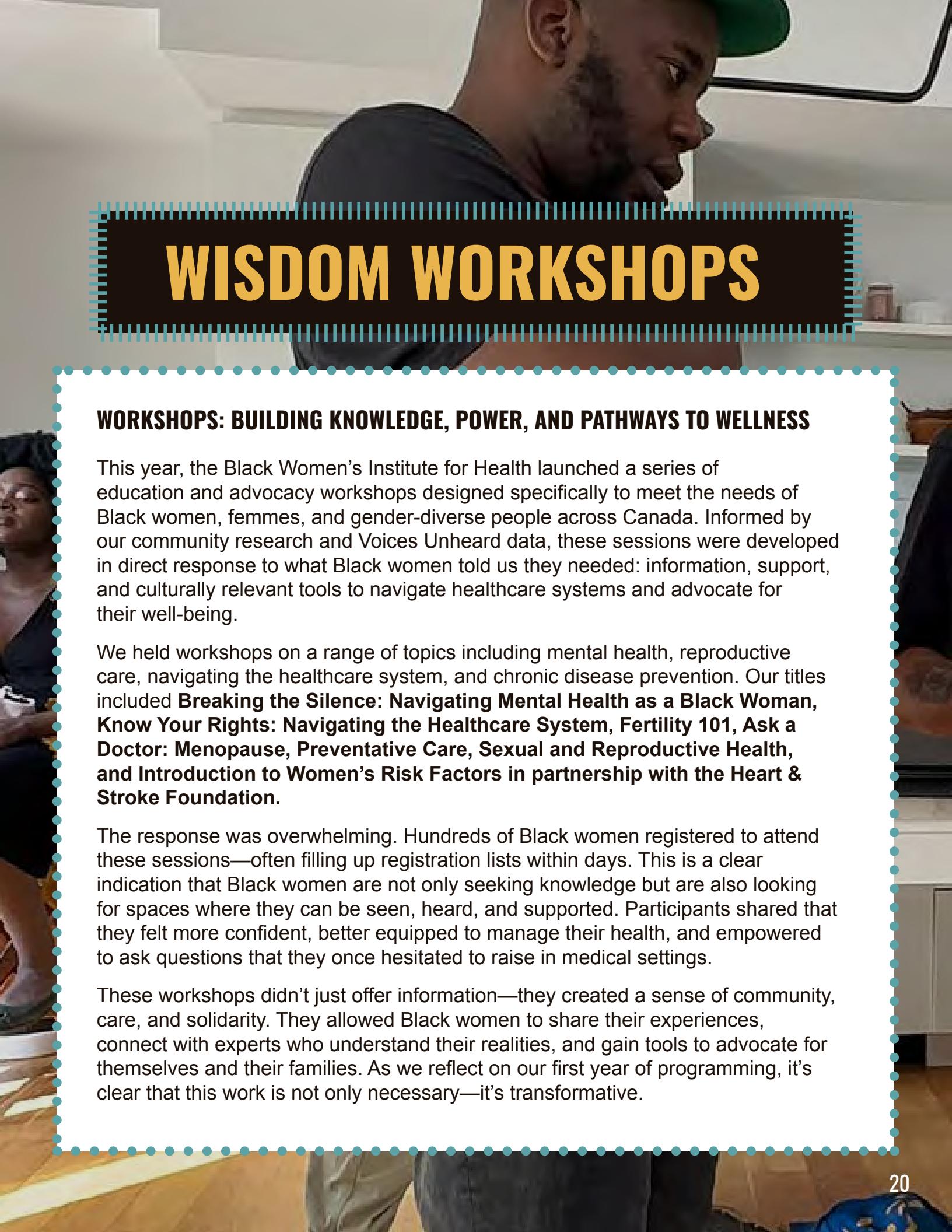
#### Education for Liberation

We promote quality education that's crucial for informed health decisions and better job prospects

#### Accessible, Culturally Sensitive

We fight for healthcare that meets our needs

# THIS WAS A BREAKTHROUGH.



# WISDOM WORKSHOPS

## WORKSHOPS: BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, POWER, AND PATHWAYS TO WELLNESS

This year, the Black Women's Institute for Health launched a series of education and advocacy workshops designed specifically to meet the needs of Black women, femmes, and gender-diverse people across Canada. Informed by our community research and Voices Unheard data, these sessions were developed in direct response to what Black women told us they needed: information, support, and culturally relevant tools to navigate healthcare systems and advocate for their well-being.

We held workshops on a range of topics including mental health, reproductive care, navigating the healthcare system, and chronic disease prevention. Our titles included **Breaking the Silence: Navigating Mental Health as a Black Woman**, **Know Your Rights: Navigating the Healthcare System**, **Fertility 101**, **Ask a Doctor: Menopause, Preventative Care, Sexual and Reproductive Health**, and **Introduction to Women's Risk Factors in partnership with the Heart & Stroke Foundation**.

The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of Black women registered to attend these sessions—often filling up registration lists within days. This is a clear indication that Black women are not only seeking knowledge but are also looking for spaces where they can be seen, heard, and supported. Participants shared that they felt more confident, better equipped to manage their health, and empowered to ask questions that they once hesitated to raise in medical settings.

These workshops didn't just offer information—they created a sense of community, care, and solidarity. They allowed Black women to share their experiences, connect with experts who understand their realities, and gain tools to advocate for themselves and their families. As we reflect on our first year of programming, it's clear that this work is not only necessary—it's transformative.



# BREAKING THE SILENCE: A CASE STUDY IN IMPACT

One of the most impactful workshops in this series was ***Breaking the Silence: Navigating Mental Health as a Black Woman***. This session provided Black women with the space to openly discuss mental health challenges, gain insight into systemic barriers, and learn practical tools for self-advocacy.

The demand for this session was overwhelming, with over 400 registrants joining the conversation, proving that these discussions are not only needed but long overdue.

## THE IMPACT OF THIS WORKSHOP WAS CLEAR:

- ✓ **84%** of attendees would absolutely recommend this workshop to others.
- ✓ **83%** of participants rated the workshop as **Very Good or Excellent**, stating they found it engaging, insightful, practical, and left feeling significantly better equipped to manage their mental health.
- ✓ **77%** of participants reported an improvement in their mental health after attending the workshop, with **58%** feeling more in control and equipped with new tools, and **19%** feeling empowered, supported, and mentally stronger



## THE MOST VALUABLE TAKEAWAYS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

- Understanding how to navigate the healthcare system **(84%)**
- Connecting with other Black women and feeling seen **(71%)**
- Gaining insight into their own mental health challenges **(68%)**
- Learning practical mental health strategies **(58%)**
- This feedback reinforces the importance of culturally responsive spaces for Black women—where we are not only heard but provided with the tools to advocate for ourselves and improve our health outcomes.

## WHAT'S NEXT: EXPANDING OUR EDUCATION & ADVOCACY WORK

- Black women have made it clear: they need more spaces like this.
- When asked what they would like to see covered in future workshops, participants identified:
  - Managing stress and anxiety **(65%)**
  - Navigating mental health as a Black woman in the workplace **(61%)**
  - Healing from racial trauma and racial violence **(52%)**
  - Financial stress and mental health **(52%)**
  - Dealing with depression and mood disorders **(48%)**



## BWIH IS COMMITTED TO MEETING THESE NEEDS.

**With the continued support of the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, we will:** Expand our workshops to include topics directly requested by Black women.

- ✓ **Strengthen advocacy** training so that Black women feel empowered to challenge discrimination in healthcare and workplace settings.
- ✓ **Continue amplifying Black women's voices**—ensuring that our stories, struggles, and solutions remain front and center in conversations about health equity.
- ✓ **Through education, advocacy, and action**, we are breaking the silence so that Black women can reclaim their health, their voices, and their power.



## 3. PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP: ADVANCING BLACK WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE



Workforce Funder  
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Black women in healthcare do not just face barriers to care—they face barriers to leadership. While overrepresented in frontline roles such as nursing, social work, and personal support work, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions, often stalled in middle management with no clear pathway forward.

Funded by **Workforce Collaborative**, the ***Pathways to Leadership*** initiative was designed to identify and dismantle the systemic barriers that prevent Black women from advancing in healthcare leadership. Through focus groups, town halls, and quantitative research, BWIH gathered critical data to document these barriers and propose actionable solutions.

# KEY FINDINGS: BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP FOR BLACK WOMEN IN HEALTHCARE



The data collected from **Black women in the healthcare workforce** ranging from frontline workers to senior managers in the Greater Toronto Area—revealed persistent **systemic discrimination and limited opportunities for career advancement**.

**55.3%**

of Black women in healthcare have never applied for senior roles, citing: Lack of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities

## MANY HAVE SPENT 10+ YEARS IN MIDDLE MANAGEMENT WITH NO PATHWAY TO ADVANCEMENT



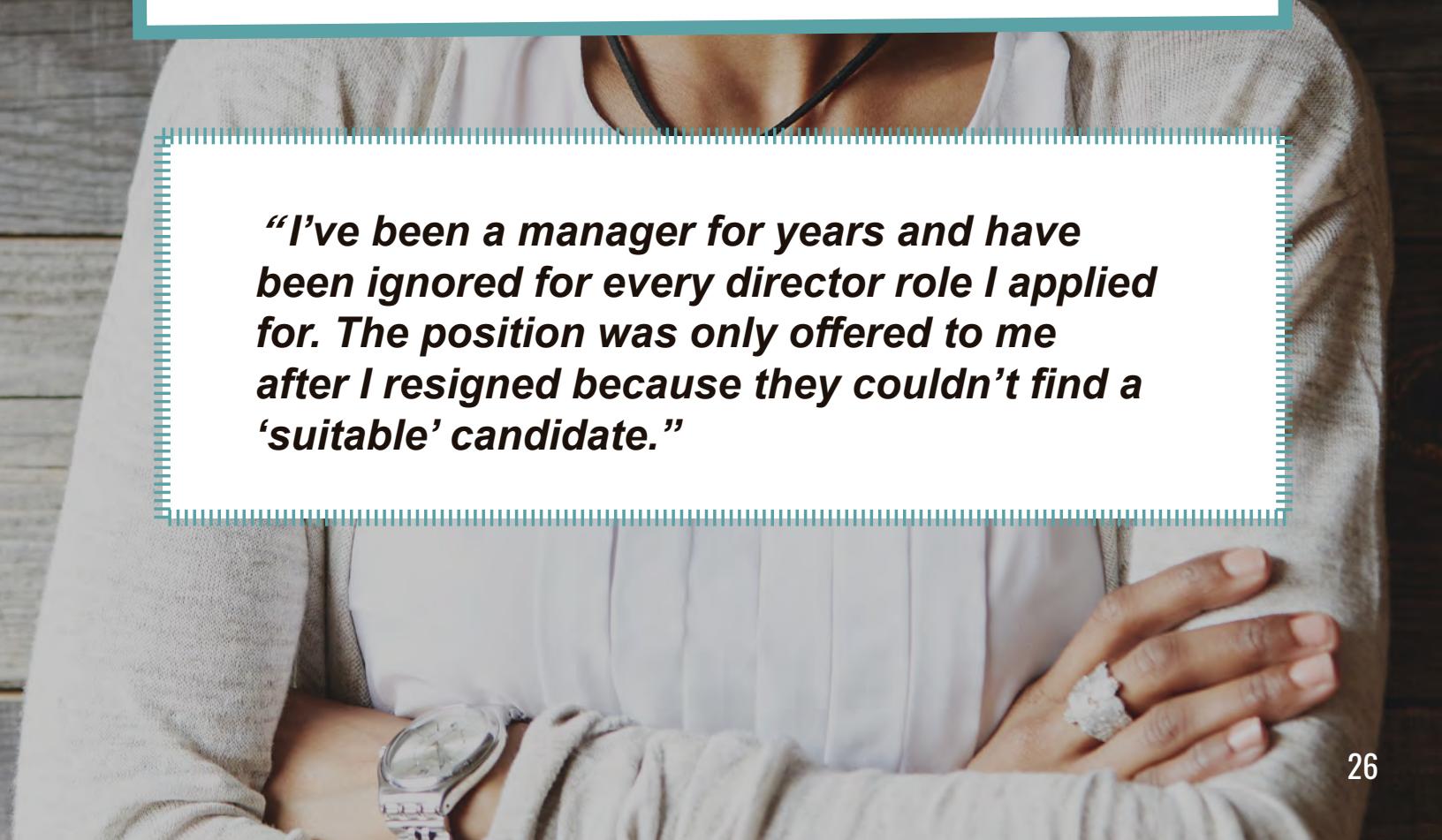
**28.4%**

of Black women in healthcare have considered leaving the field, with reasons including:

- ✓ Burnout (**63.8%**)
- ✓ Inadequate anti-racism measures in their workplaces (**63.3%**)
- ✓ Lack of Black leadership representation (**58.2%**)



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS:



***“I’ve been a manager for years and have been ignored for every director role I applied for. The position was only offered to me after I resigned because they couldn’t find a ‘suitable’ candidate.”***



***“I’ve worked in healthcare for over a decade, yet every time I apply for a leadership role, I’m met with silence. Meanwhile, my white colleagues, with fewer years of experience, are fast-tracked.”***

## **ADDITIONAL THEMES:**

### **LEADERSHIP HIDING BEHIND POLICIES AND EXCLUSIONARY HIRING PRACTICES**

- ✓ Black women in healthcare report that hiring and promotion policies lack transparency. Many are discouraged from applying for leadership roles they are already performing, only to be offered the same position after resigning when no other candidate is found.

### **THE INTERSECTION OF DISABILITY AND LEADERSHIP BARRIERS**

- ✓ Black women with disabilities in healthcare face additional barriers to leadership due to lack of accommodations and workplace support.



# PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP: MOVING FROM DATA TO ACTION

**Pathways to Leadership: Moving from Data to Action** BWIH understands that Black women in healthcare do not need more mentorship programs—they need systemic change. Pathways to Leadership is not just a research initiative—it is an action-driven framework for transforming healthcare institutions.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024:

- ✓ Held focus groups and town halls to gather firsthand accounts of workplace discrimination and leadership barriers.
- ✓ Created a leadership development framework to provide Black women with tangible career advancement strategies.
- ✓ Established a Healthcare Committee to push for policy changes in hiring, promotions, and leadership representation.



# WHAT'S NEXT?

## BWIH WILL CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR:

Equitable hiring and promotion policies that eliminate discriminatory barriers for Black women in healthcare leadership.

- ✓ Industry-wide accountability to ensure healthcare institutions prioritize racial and gender equity at the leadership level
- ✓ Policy changes that address the root causes of exclusion, rather than simply increasing capacity-building programs for Black professionals

*Through Pathways to Leadership, BWIH is not just documenting barriers—we are demanding change.* We will continue to challenge institutions, advocate for policy reform, and push for a healthcare sector where Black women are not just present—they lead.



## 4. WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE: A PARTNERSHIP WITH SUN LIFE



With dedicated support from **Sun Life Financial**, we were able to take a closer look at one of the most underexplored aspects of Black women's health in Canada: access to private health insurance. Through the **Voices Unheard survey**, we collected detailed data from Black women across the country that revealed not only who has coverage, but also the limitations of that coverage and the systemic barriers to accessing it.

What we learned was both affirming and urgent. While a majority of respondents reported having private insurance, mostly through employer-sponsored plans, many described it as inadequate or inaccessible when it mattered most. Mental health services, for example, were often capped at just two to three sessions per year, and very few plans offered access to culturally competent care. For the **24%** of respondents without insurance, the reasons were clear: precarious work, self-employment, unemployment, and unaffordable premiums, all issues shaped by broader systems of anti-Black racism and economic exclusion.

This data is foundational. We cannot transform healthcare access for Black women without understanding how structural inequities show up in insurance systems. This year's work, made possible through **Sun Life's partnership**, has positioned us to **advocate for more equitable benefit structures, improved mental health coverage, and responsive policy change**.



# WHAT'S NEXT?

As we move toward the public release of the full Voices Unheard report, we hope to continue our collaboration with Sun Life to push these findings further, into boardrooms, government tables, and benefit plans, where they can begin to shape real, lasting change.



# 5. MOTHERING MINDS: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR BLACK MOTHERS



## MOTHERING MINDS: A MENTAL HEALTH LIFELINE FOR BLACK MOTHERS

IF VOICES UNHEARD WAS  
ABOUT NAMING THE PROBLEM,  
MOTHERING MINDS WAS ABOUT  
PROVIDING A SOLUTION.

**Black mothers experience disproportionately high rates of postpartum depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges, yet they remain the least likely to receive adequate care.** Many suffer in silence, navigating racism in healthcare, financial stress, and the pressures of motherhood without the support they deserve.

***Mothering Minds*** was designed to change that. Funded by **Shoppers Drug Mart**, ***Mothering Minds*** is a culturally responsive, therapist-led mental health support program for Black mothers, providing a safe, community-centered space for healing, connection, and advocacy.

## HOW IT WORKS: A THREE-COHORT MODEL

The program is structured into three key cohorts, ensuring Black mothers receive targeted support at every stage of their journey:

### Cohort 1:

**Expecting Mothers & New Moms (0-4 years postpartum)**  
– Focus on postpartum mental health, self-care, and navigating healthcare systems

### Cohort 2:

**Mothers of School-Age Children (Ages 5-12 years)**  
– Centering emotional resilience, parenting strategies, and breaking generational trauma

### Cohort 3:

**Mothers of Older Children & Adolescents (Ages 13+)**  
– Addressing self-advocacy, education systems, and balancing motherhood with personal well-being

Each session is therapist-led and supported by peer networks, ensuring that Black mothers have access to mental health care, emotional support, and culturally informed strategies for healing.

# PROGRAM IMPACT IN 2024:

- ✓ 80+ BLACK MOTHERS REGISTERED ACROSS THREE COHORTS
- ✓ THERAPIST-LED HEALING SESSIONS OFFERING CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE
- ✓ PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS TO BUILD LONG-TERM COMMUNITY CARE

## MEET OUR THERAPISTS!

1. **Marsha Hibbert:** Registered Clinical Social Worker/Psychotherapist who specializes in child psychoanalysis and family therapy (**Cohort 1**)
2. **Denise Reid:** Registered Social Worker (**Cohort 2**)
3. **Valerie Williams:** Child and Youth Worker and Parent Educator (**Cohort 2**)
4. **Shanna-Kay Stephens:** Registered Social Worker/ Specializes in Conflict ReMeet Our Therapists (**Cohort 3**)



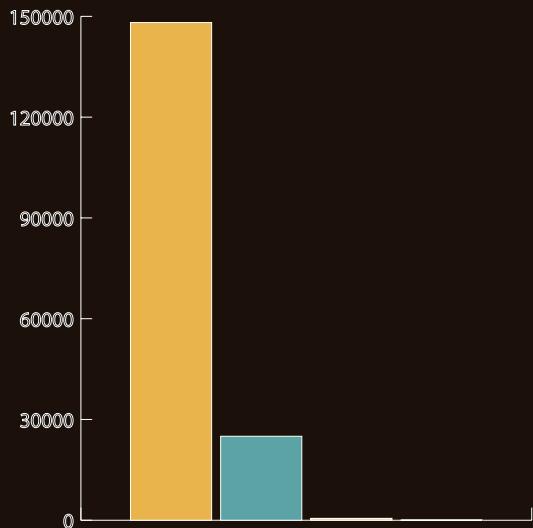
# MORE THAN A PROGRAM—A MOVEMENT TOWARD HEALING

*Mothering Minds* is about more than temporary relief—it is about building a culture of care and healing for Black mothers. In 2025,

## BWIH will:

- ✓ **Expand the program** to serve more Black mothers across Canada
- ✓ **Build additional peer support networks**
- ✓ **Advocate for stronger policies** addressing Black maternal mental health

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY



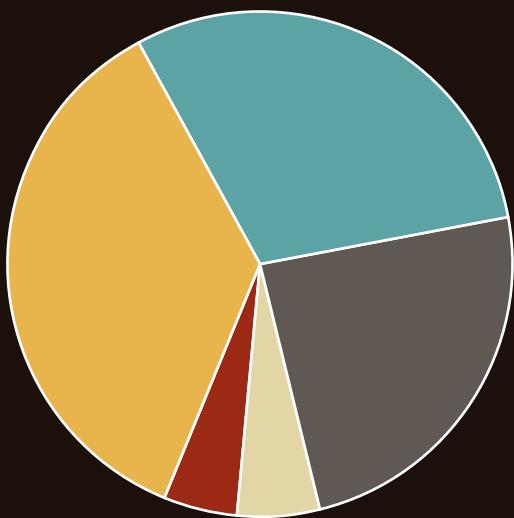
## REVENUE SOURCES

(July 2024 - December 2024)

Grants **\$148,154**  
Corporate Sponsorships **\$25,000**  
Donations: **\$564**  
Interest Income: **\$69**  
**Total Revenue: \$173,787**

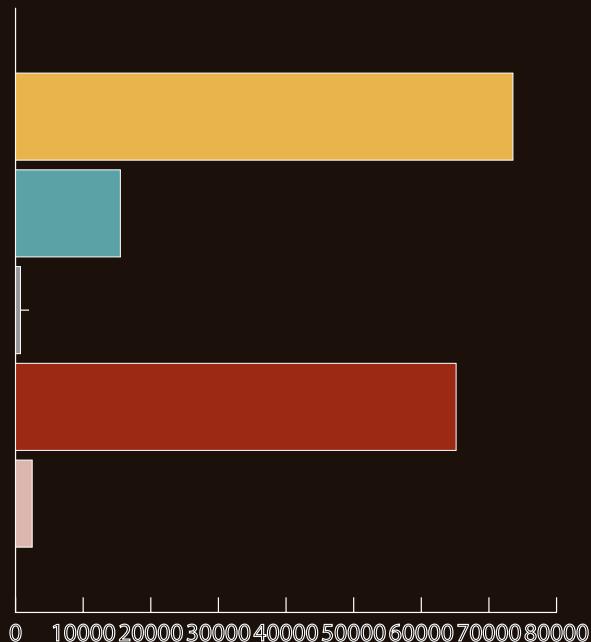
## EXPENSES BREAKDOWN

Funds were allocated across key operational areas as follows:



Research & Data Collection: (36%)  
Salaries & Related Benefits: (30%)  
Health Education & Awareness Programs: (24%)  
Professional Fees: (5.5%)  
Office, General & Administrative Expenses: (4.5%)

## FINANCIAL POSITION (As of December 31, 2024)



Cash Balance: \$73,549  
Grants Receivable: \$15,500  
GST/HST Receivable: \$725  
Deferred Contributions: \$65,146  
Net Assets: \$2,461

**THIS WORK IS BY BLACK WOMEN,  
FOR BLACK WOMEN—AND IT IS UNSTOPPABLE.**

# WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO:



# **SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Beyond financial support, there were many individuals and organizations who lent their time, skills, and expertise to help build, amplify, and sustain this work.

**We wish to recognize and thank:**

## **COLLABORATIVE & COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

- Canadian Prosperity Project Team
- Ford Global Group
- P.E.A.C.H Toronto

## **BRANDING, VIDEO & DIGITAL SUPPORT**

- Noya Designs
- Quammie Digital
- Roberta Quammie Photography

## **PR AND COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT:**

- Dayo Media

## **LEGAL SUPPORT & ADVISORY**

- Miller Thompson LLP
- McMillan LLP

# A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO AKILAH DRESSEKIE, ANYA HENRY, SIOBHAN STEWART

**Our work is mission-driven, but we cannot fulfill our mission without the courage of those willing to step forward and share their stories.**

The Voices Unheard survey was groundbreaking, but it would have been impossible without the bravery of Akilah, Anya, and Siobhan, who became the faces of this movement.

To tell your story—to stand in front of the nation and say, “This is my truth”—is an act of profound courage. It is not easy. It requires a willingness to be vulnerable, to be seen, and to expose the realities of what it means to be a Black woman navigating systems that were not designed for us. These three women shared their experiences so that no other Black woman would feel alone.

**They gave voice to the stories of thousands who have been ignored.  
They put a face to the systemic injustices we are fighting to change.  
Their honesty, authenticity, and sheer bravery made it possible for others to feel validated, to step forward, and to demand better.**

**To Akilah, Anya, and Siobhan—thank you.**



**Thank you for your strength.**

**Thank you for your vulnerability.**

**Thank you for trusting us to amplify your voices.**

**We are forever grateful**

**You are part of the story of BWIH, and we are grateful.**

# A COLLECTIVE EFFORT FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

The Black Women's Institute for Health (BWIH) would not be where it is today without the unwavering support, belief, and generosity of the funders, sponsors, partners, and individuals who stood by us in our inaugural year.

**This organization was founded on the principle that Black women deserve to be seen, heard, and cared for, but bringing that vision to life required a collective effort.**

## **WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO:**

- Our Board of Directors, for their leadership and commitment
- Our advisory Committee
- Our funders and donors, for believing in this work
- The thousands of Black women who shared their voices in Voices Unheard
- Every individual and organization that contributed to making 2024 a success.

This has never been just about funding or resources, it has been about belief. The people and organizations named here believed in our mission when all we had was faith, determination, and a deep understanding that Black women in Canada deserve better. They stood with us, offered their expertise, shared their networks, and used their platforms to ensure that this work was not just possible but impactful.

To every person within these organizations who helped us  
**we see you, we appreciate you, and we honor your contributions.**

**To every Black woman, femme, and gender-diverse person who  
shared their story,**

**To every partner, funder, and advocate who supported this work,  
To our entire community—this is just the beginning.**

**Together, we will make Black women's health a national priority.**

# JOIN US IN BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH IS SEEN, VALUED, AND PROTECTED

We invite you to be a part of this journey. Your support ensures that Black women and gender-diverse people receive the healthcare, mental health support, and advocacy they deserve. Together, we are creating a future where our health, our voices, and our stories are no longer ignored.

## WHY INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS MATTER

Individual donations are the backbone of nonprofit organizations. While grants and sponsorships provide crucial funding, it is individual donors—people like you—who help sustain and expand our work. Your contributions allow us to respond quickly to urgent needs, fund critical advocacy efforts, and ensure that our programs remain accessible to those who need them most.

## EVERY DOLLAR YOU GIVE HELPS US:

- ✓ Expand mental health programs for Black women and mothers
- ✓ Support community-led workshops and advocacy initiatives
- ✓ Continue collecting data that drives real policy change
- ✓ Ensure that Black women's health remains a national priority

Your support is more than a donation—it is an investment in health equity, justice, and lasting systemic change.

## DONATE TODAY.



We invite you to be a part of this journey. Together, we will create a future where Black women's health is seen, valued, and protected.

<https://bwhealthinstitute.com/donate/>





## Final Words:

**2024 WAS A YEAR OF BREAKING THE SILENCE.**

**2025 WILL BE A YEAR OF BUILDING THE FUTURE.**

**[www.healthforallblackwomen.com](http://www.healthforallblackwomen.com)**

**[info@healthforallBlackwomen.com](mailto:info@healthforallBlackwomen.com)**