

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**BLACK ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE**

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## 1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Black Environmental Initiative (BEI) is a Toronto-based non-profit dedicated to fostering environmental engagement within Black and immigrant communities. In the past year, BEI has empowered over 200 individuals through programs, partnerships, and community-driven initiatives—despite operating with a modest \$32,000 budget.

## 1.2 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Roots for Resilience – An urban agriculture program tackling food insecurity, social isolation, and environmental education.
- ✓ Community Advocacy – Partnering with the City of Toronto to ensure Black Torontonians have a voice in environmental policy, including the Parkland Strategy, Parks & Recreation Plan, and the Anti-Black Racism Strategy.
- ✓ Afro-holistic Environmental Education – Partnering with the African Canadian Heritage Association (ACHA) to teach environmental stewardship through African cultural perspectives.
- ✓ Mental Wellness & Nature – Collaborations with Black Men’s Therapy Fund, Diverse Nature Collective, and Black Canadian Hikers to connect Black men with nature as a form of therapy.
- ✓ Arctic Expedition – In partnership with Adventure Canada, we sent six Black environmental leaders to explore Arctic Canada and Greenland, increasing representation in environmental leadership and exposing inequities in these exclusive spaces.



BEI’s growth despite financial limitations showcases the power of collaboration, innovation, and resilience. Moving forward, we remain committed to amplifying Black and immigrant voices, fostering environmental stewardship, and strengthening communities through Black-led environmental programming.





## 2. MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & FOUNDER

### Celebrating Five Years of Impact

2024 marks five years since BEI's inception. What started as a vision to address environmental inequities affecting Black and marginalized communities has grown into a movement for change.

Building a sustainable foundation remains our focus. Research shows it takes 6–7 years for ethnocultural organizations to establish stable partnerships and funding. BEI exists precisely to break these systemic barriers. Despite challenges, we've made remarkable progress, proving what a small, dedicated team can achieve without major institutional backing.



### This Year's Impact

Urban Agriculture for Youth – Connecting diverse youth, including newcomers, to nature through community-driven farming.

Afro-holistic Environmental Education – Blending Black cultural heritage with environmental literacy.

Arctic Expedition – Providing six Black environmental leaders with a transformative learning experience.

Community Consultations – Engaging Black, immigrant, and low-income communities in policy advocacy.

Mental Health & Nature – Creating spaces for healing and well-being through nature.

At BEI, environmental action is also community action. We serve over 150 Afro-descendant communities across Canada—communities often facing immediate crises that overshadow environmental concerns. Tragic events, like the killing of Erixon Kabera, remind us of the systemic threats Black communities navigate daily. Addressing violence, oppression, and systemic barriers is essential before we can expect communities to prioritize environmental justice.

### As one civil rights leader said:

*"If we are not careful, the television and newspapers will make us love the oppressors and hate the oppressed."*

At BEI, love is our foundation. It drives our mission to heal, empower, and uplift Black communities through environmental justice.





## A Year of Transition and Growth

2024 was a transformative year for BEI. We achieved two key milestones:

1. **Registered Nonprofit Status:** BEI became a standalone nonprofit, transitioning from the MakeWay platform, which was instrumental in our early years.
2. **Strategic Refocus:** We stepped away from the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice, a project we co-founded that achieved Canada's first environmental justice law.

These transitions enable us to focus fully on BEI's growth. In 2025, our newly formed board has convened to establish a strategic direction, prioritize key partnerships, and strengthen leadership capacity. This transition is essential, as BEI requires sustainable resources to thrive, and I can no longer volunteer my time in the same capacity.



## Acknowledgement

I want to highlight the extraordinary contributions of Muzamil Gadain, a young leader whose dedication exemplifies the power of BEI's Green Jobs Program. Muzamil's ability to implement complex projects with precision has been a cornerstone of our success. His story underscores the immense potential of Black youth, a resource too often overlooked.



## 3. ABOUT BEI

### Introduction to BEI

The Black Environmental Initiative (BEI) is a Toronto-based non-profit dedicated to advancing environmental justice and activating the power of Black communities, in solidarity with other communities, to energise a successful multicultural environmental movement.

### 3.1 Our Mission

We empower Black communities through environmental action by providing the knowledge, resources, and opportunities to lead.

We work to:

- Reconnect Black Canadians with nature and their ancestral role as environmental stewards.
- Advocate for Black inclusion in the green economy, promoting access to careers in climate science, renewable energy jobs and environmental professions.
- Foster leadership in environmental decision-making, ensuring Black voices shape policies and initiatives.
- Promote a future where Black communities and others facing similar barriers lead a bottom-up renewable energy transition.
- Build bridges within the African diaspora, creating a global movement for environmental justice and collective action.

### 3.2 Our Vision

We envision a future where environmental action strengthens Black communities in Canada, fostering both community power and cultural revival. This revival will be inspired by ancestral African traditions of environmental stewardship.

We also see a future where the green economy creates meaningful jobs for Black Canadians. These opportunities will span environmental policy, green construction, and climate science, ensuring active participation in the global shift to renewable energy.

Finally, we dream of a world where environmental action unites the African diaspora, forging connections across continents through a shared commitment to the environment.

### 3.3 Core Values

- Equity: Advocating for fair access to environmental resources and opportunities.
- Community: Strengthening bonds and fostering collaboration for collective growth.
- Innovation: Developing creative, culturally relevant solutions to environmental challenges.
- Resilience: Empowering communities to adapt and flourish in the face of change.





## 4. PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

PROGRAMS	KEY IMPACT
<p><b>Roots for Resilience Program (June – November 2024)</b></p> <p>A hands-on urban agriculture initiative addressing social isolation, food insecurity, and environmental stewardship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 80+ Black &amp; Brown youth engaged in sustainable food-growing practices.</li> <li>● Weekly workshops at Maloca Community Garden, in partnership with Many Green Hands (York University). Stronger community connections, fostering mental well-being, leadership, and self-sufficiency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adventure Canada Arctic Expedition (August 27 – September 12, 2024)</b></p> <p>A first-of-its-kind program increasing Black representation in Arctic environmental exploration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Six Black environmental leaders explored Arctic Canada &amp; Greenland traditionally exclusive spaces.</li> <li>● Challenged the narrative of expedition travel, making it more inclusive.</li> <li>● Strengthened leadership, networks, and environmental advocacy for Black professionals. Inspired new eco-travel opportunities for Black communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Town Halls (Ongoing)</b></p> <p>BEI facilitated community conversations ensuring Black voices shape Toronto's environmental policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engaged 50+ community members on the Parklands Strategy, Parks &amp; Recreation Plan, and Anti-Black Racism Strategy.</li> <li>● Elevated Black voices in urban planning.</li> <li>● Strengthened city-community relationships, securing commitments for more inclusive public spaces. Fostered long-term civic engagement &amp; advocacy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Afrocentric Environmental Education (April – May 2024)</b></p> <p>Delivered culturally relevant environmental education, connecting sustainability to African heritage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engaged 35+ community members through interactive workshops.</li> <li>● Highlighted African environmental traditions such as traditional farming and sustainable living.</li> <li>● Increased awareness of environmental justice from an Afro-holistic perspective.</li> <li>● Inspired youth toward careers in environmental fields.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Black Men Healing in Nature (September 28, 2024)</b></p> <p>A groundbreaking event combining nature engagement with mental health support for Black men.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 50 Black men participated in hiking, gardening, and wellness discussions.</li> <li>● Created a safe space for open conversations on mental health.</li> <li>● Strengthened peer support networks &amp; emotional well-being.</li> <li>● Reduced stigma surrounding mental health in the Black community.</li> <li>● Led to plans for future nature-based healing programs.</li> </ul>



5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

BEI’s digital & in-person outreach expanded our reach and deepened community connections.

Key Highlights:

- Instagram-driven engagement: Increased visibility, promoting events & advocacy efforts.
- Direct outreach: Mobilized community members for policy discussions & events.
- Youth empowerment: Roots for Resilience connected Black & Brown youth with environmental leadership opportunities.

6. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

Strategic partnerships amplified BEI’s impact and expanded access to resources, expertise, and funding opportunities.

Key Collaborations & Impact:



PARTNER	KEY CONTRIBUTION
Maloca Community Garden (York University)	Hosted Roots for Resilience, supporting urban agriculture for 80+ youth.
City of Toronto	Co-facilitated policy town halls, elevating Black voices in urban planning.
Adventure Canada	Sponsored six Black leaders for Arctic exploration.
African Canadian Heritage Association (ACHA)	Delivered Afrocentric environmental education.
Canadian Meteorological & Oceanographic Society (CMOS)	Launched a scholarship program for marginalized students in environmental science.
Canadian Water Resource Association (CWRA)	Provided Project WET tools to enhance environmental education workshops.

Collaborative Impact:

- Strengthened advocacy & civic engagement.
- Increased educational opportunities in environmental fields.
- Fostered inclusive environmental leadership.



## 7. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

From December 2023 to February 2025 BEI secured grants totalling \$31,400.00, enabling us to deliver impactful programs and sustain organizational operations. These funds were pivotal in advancing our mission to empower marginalized communities through environmental education, urban agriculture, and leadership development. However, they were not enough to ensure long-term success.

Black Environmental Initiative  
Profit and Loss  
December 9, 2023 - February 12, 2025

Income	Total
Grant Income	\$27,200.00
Non-Profit Income	\$4,200.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$31,400.00</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$31,400.00</b>
Expenses	
Accounting Fees	\$3,390.00
Bank charges	\$73.60
Computer and Internet Expense	\$51.93
Contractor	\$1,071.23
Honorarium	\$2,300.00
Insurance	\$1,491.48
Office expenses	\$397.95
Payroll Expenses- Muzamil Gadain	\$15,136.25
Reimbursement Expense	\$149.81
<b>Total Payroll Expenses- Muzamil Gadain</b>	<b>\$15,286.06</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$24,062.25</b>
OTHER INCOME	
Training Income	\$650.00
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>\$650.00</b>
<b>Profit</b>	<b>\$7,987.75</b>

Black Environmental Initiative  
Balance Sheet  
As of February 12, 2025

Assets	Total	Total
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalent		
Chequing	7,428.03	
<b>Total Cash and Cash Equivalent</b>		7,428.03
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>7,428.03</b>
Non-current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment		
Computer Equipment	559.72	
Total Property, plant and equipment		559.72
Total Non Current Assets		559.72
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$7,987.75</b>
Liabilities and Equity		
Liabilities		
Total Liabilities		
Equity		
Retained Earnings	12,489.94	
Profit for the year	-4502.19	
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>\$7,987.75</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Equity</b>		<b>\$7,987.75</b>



## 8. IMPACT METRICS AND SUCCESSES

In 2024, BEI achieved significant milestones, highlighting our dedication to fostering environmental education, mental health support, and community engagement. Below are key metrics showcasing our impact:

- **Roots for Resilience**

- Duration: 7 months (June–November).
- Youth Engaged: 80 predominantly Black and Brown youth.
- Outcomes: Participants learned practical urban agriculture skills, addressed food insecurity, and experienced improved mental health through ecotherapy and community building.

- **Environmental Education Workshops with ACHA**

- Workshops Delivered: 2.
- Participants: 20 individuals, including children, youth, and seniors.
- Focus: Afrocentric environmental education, hands-on activities, and culturally relevant content, incorporating Project WET certification.

- **City of Toronto Consultations**

- Sessions Held: 3.
- Participants: 50 community members.
- Highlights: Feedback influenced updates to the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Plan and the Parklands Strategy, ensuring Black voices shaped municipal policies.

- **Adventure Canada Arctic Expedition**

- Participants: 6 BEI representatives.
- Outcomes: Participants described the experience as life-changing, fostering greater Black representation in Arctic exploration and environmental stewardship, while deepening connections with Indigenous communities.

- **Black Men Healing in Nature Event**

- Participants: Close to 50 Black men.
- Activities: Gardening, hiking, and facilitated discussions exploring themes of masculinity, softness, and self-care.
- Impact: Participants reported enhanced mental well-being, a deeper connection to nature, and a sense of camaraderie and healing in a safe and supportive environment.



### Additional Impact

These programs collectively engaged over 200 individuals, creating lasting value through education, collaboration, and tangible actions that promote environmental stewardship and community resilience.



## 9. CHALLENGES

2024 brought both significant achievements and notable challenges for BEI, underscoring the resilience and dedication of our team. The primary obstacles we faced were:

- **Funding and Resource Mobilization:** Securing consistent and sufficient funding remains a key challenge. With limited resources, it has been difficult to stabilize the organization and ensure long-term sustainability. This has also limited our ability to expand programs and fully meet the growing demand for our initiatives.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Operating with a single employee has created challenges in our capacity to properly prepare our most ambitious initiatives to make sure we offered experiences that align with BEI's values. The lack of a larger team limits the ability to scale programs and take on new opportunities. Despite these challenges, BEI has made remarkable strides. We've extended our reach across Toronto, engaged marginalized communities, and delivered impactful programs that promote environmental stewardship. These successes demonstrate the effectiveness of our work and the community's trust in our vision.

## 10. LESSONS LEARNED

**1.Importance of Collaboration:** Partnerships have been a critical factor in overcoming resource limitations. By strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, we've amplified our impact and maximized available resources.

**2.Building Organizational Capacity:** Expanding our team and enhancing internal capacity is a priority for 2025. A better funded team will enable greater innovation, preparation and risk management in our most ambitious initiatives, allowing BEI to ensure our beneficiaries can be change agents while being properly guided and protected.

**3.Sustainable Funding Strategies:** Diversifying funding sources and applying for larger, multi-year grants will be essential to ensuring the organization's stability and growth. With these lessons in mind and additional resources on the horizon, BEI is poised to achieve even greater success in the coming year, further engaging communities in the fight for environmental justice and sustainability.

## 11. LOOKING AHEAD

As we step into 2025, BEI is poised for a year of growth and greater impact. Building on the successes of the past year, our focus will be on expansion, innovation, and deepening community engagement.

### Key Objectives:

#### 1. Program Expansion:

We will broaden the reach of our existing initiatives, such as Roots for Resilience, to engage more youth and communities across Toronto. By increasing workshop frequency and diversifying topics, we aim to inspire even more individuals to embrace environmental stewardship.

#### 2. Strengthening Organizational Capacity:

Implementing new systems and structures will be a top priority to ensure BEI operates efficiently and effectively. By securing additional staff and refining internal processes, we will build a strong foundation for sustainable growth.

#### 3. Forging New Partnerships:

Partnerships have been vital to our success, and we aim to cultivate more relationships with organizations aligned with our mission. Through collaboration, we will co-create programs that address pressing environmental challenges and empower marginalized communities.

#### 4. Community-Centered Solutions:

Our focus will remain on addressing food insecurity, promoting urban agriculture, and supporting climate action through tailored initiatives that reflect community needs.





## 12. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

With a strengthened organization and an ambitious roadmap, 2025 will mark a pivotal chapter for BEI. We envision a thriving network of communities actively engaged in environmental justice and sustainability. We invite our stakeholders and supporters to join us in this journey. Your continued involvement will help us unlock new possibilities and create lasting change. Together, we can build a greener, more equitable future. Learn more on some of our past work: [www.beinitiative.com](http://www.beinitiative.com)

