



2017-2022 Impact Report



BLACK
WOMEN
CONNECT
VANCOUVER

Who We Are

Black Women Connect Vancouver is a collective of Black women who come together to inspire, empower, leverage our strengths and embrace our diverse experiences. It's a community where we can build meaningful relationships, and celebrate the beauty of Black womanhood.



Vision & Mission

VISION

We want to see Black women and femmes inspired and empowered to build community. To connect with each other for support to overcome disenfranchisement within our community. We want Black women and femmes to live out their full potential as they are taught to apply practical tips on life, wellness, and leadership choices; and empower Black women and femmes with resources that will equip them to flourish in their various environments.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a space for Black women and femmes to develop community through events, mentorship, wellness support and resources.



Vision & Mission

Black Women Connect Vancouver (BWCV) provides platforms and opportunities for Black women and femmes to strengthen their networks, improve their mental and physical wellness and learn relevant skills to enable them to achieve their fullest potential. BWCV creates value in the community by fostering an inclusive network of women with diverse experiences.

Since Black people in Greater Vancouver are not geographically located together like some other ethnocultural groups, a gap has been created such that Black people feel a lack of cultural and racial identity and connection with their neighbourhoods. This lack of connection in most cases leads to a feeling of isolation.

BWCV, in a bid to bridge this gap, created spaces and platforms which provide opportunities for Black women and femmes to interact socially and have conversations about social issues that affect them, especially those arising from the feeling of being isolated from communities and neighbourhoods to which they are culturally and ethnically accustomed to meet in person)

Started in 2017 as an informal collective of Black women, BWCV has grown to be a major community advocate for Black women and girls in the Greater Vancouver area. The organisation is governed by a Board of Directors and supported by 20 regular volunteers. Since its inception, BWCV has served over 500 women

and 40 girls. In August 2020, BWCV was incorporated as a nonprofit and a registered charity in British Columbia.

The mission of Black Women Connect (BWCV), Vancouver is to inspire, and empower Black women and femmes by leveraging their strengths and embracing their diverse experiences thereby leading to self-growth. BWCV provides access to a holistic array of services including various mental health and wellness programs for Black women as well as mentorship programs for girls (grades 8 – 12).

At BWCV, we believe that Black women and girls should have access to culturally and racially sensitive platforms that provide safe spaces for them to express themselves and show up authentically. We inspire Black women so they can leverage their strengths, and embrace their diverse experiences. BWCV responds to the needs of the Black women and femmes in the community in Vancouver by raising resources to help those who are marginalised in the community.



Programs

EVENTS

BWCV events are versatile. We have events that are for Black women and their mental health, physical health and soul health like our Exhale Wellness Conference. We also do networking events where Black women can showcase their businesses and leadership in their respective fields. BWCV also should experience Black joy and that is why we have events like High Tea, Holiday Party, Sip and Paint, etc.

GIRL! YOU KNOW IT...

is a podcast started and made by Black Women Connect Vancouver. The podcast's aim is to have a space to have deeper conversations and to have guests join in these conversations.

EMPOWERED BLACK GIRL

is a leadership conference for Black girls in British Columbia, Canada. The program will provide a platform for Black girls to interact & have empowering discussions with leading Black women from the private and public sectors in Canada.

MOMS CONNECT

Is a group that was created out of a need in BWCV. Black mothers find themselves at a disadvantage for support and resources and this support group will help build community.

CHOP IT UP

BWCV also partners with Asha Wheeldon (Kula Kitchen) & Chris Boreland (Elbo Patties) to host Chop It Up! a monthly community-based cooking class that features guest chefs from the BIPOC community. Chop It Up! brings people from all races and genders together through their common love for food and culture. The class, which teaches participants how to prepare 100% plant-based recipes, highlights the cultural relevance of nutrition and provides education on cooking techniques and nutrition as well as access to fresh food. The classes provide ingredients, recipes, refreshments, and all cooking equipment for attendees so that they can focus on community and learning.



Message From Founder

NATAIZYA MUKWAVI

I can't believe it's been 5 years since the start of Black Women Connect Vancouver. When I first began doing events it was called Black Girl Magic and I was hosting holiday parties in my condominium clubhouse. I would have never thought BWCV would be where it is today. It has been my joy and honour to volunteer with BWCV for the past 5 years. The support we have received from community sponsors and individual sponsors has been overwhelming but, I do not stand alone building BWCV. I am grateful for our BWCV team and Board of Directors, who continue to lead BWCV with wisdom. To all the Black women and femmes in the lower mainland, BC, across Canada and even USA, thank you for joining us on this journey. This place was created for you and it will continue to make space where you feel welcomed, heard and empowered. Nothing fills my heart more than hearing that Black women are making friends, have their own group events, and hear that it was the first time you've been in a room full of Black women.

In 2023 we are working on restructuring our plans to make sure we are listening to our community. We want to provide services and events that will continue to impact our community.

Thank you for your support!

Nataizya Mukwavi

Black Women Connect Vancouver Founder



Message From Board of Directors

On behalf of Black Women Connect Vancouver's Board of Directors we would like to wish our vibrant community, Happy Holidays! As we arrive at the close of another eventful year, we positively reflect on the memories and opportunities we have shared together. This year marks Black Women Connect Vancouver's five year anniversary! A truly remarkable milestone. What began as one woman's vision to create spaces for Black Women to join together in sisterhood and celebration, free to be their authentic selves and develop new skills, has flourished into a thriving organization with over 6000 community members. Although the road has certainly been difficult, nonetheless, we have been triumphant in our trials. Throughout the years we have experienced an outpouring of interest in our social gatherings, with excellent attendance, developed meaningful collaborative relationships with grassroots and community organizations, secured strong partnerships with Black-owned vendors and entrepreneurs and established important media relations to showcase the history and evolution of BWCV.

The success of these ventures has resulted in a number of incredible personal and professional opportunities. The Black Women Connect Vancouver Team has organized over 20 social networking events, including our annually sold out holiday christmas galas, summer rooftop bashes and blockbuster movie nights! We have also worked to host three financial literacy workshops and three conferences on mental health and wellness. In line with our tradition of pairing business with pleasure, we have arranged a number of skill building activities, including

but not limited to, our Paint and Sip nights, fitness programmes and culinary classes. Throughout our tenure we have maintained our dedication to creating novel ways to connect with one another. As such, BWCV has branched off to create Empowered Black Girl (2021); a free leadership conference for Black girls from grade 8-11, focused on sponsoring mentorship and leadership. This past year we also launched BWCV Moms Connect Group (2022), a in person meeting space for mothers to interact and plan playdates. Our latest initiatives work to target some of the most vulnerable and overlooked members within our community and offer a platform in which they can learn from one another and build a reliable network of resources and community.

The global pandemic and increasing threats of anti-Black racism have only served to strengthen BWCV's commitment to fostering community and connection. Together, we have shown we present a powerful force against Black erasure, division and deprivation. We look forward to continuing to bring you the events and workshops that you have grown to love at the caliber you have come to expect. We hope to keep raising the bar on community engagement, as we think through new ways to bring entertainment, education and enrichment to the lives of our community members. We wish everyone and their loved ones a very peaceful and safe holiday season and best wishes for 2023. We hope to see you all in the New Year!

In solidarity and service,
Board of Directors

Message From Team



ELLE

I am so appreciative and honoured to have been a part of BWCV's leadership for the last 3 years as it has given me the opportunity to make a community with Black women and femmes in Vancouver where I thought I didn't have one. Being surrounded by and creating opportunities of connections for us has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. The expansive reach and the different types of events that have drawn out so many Black women and femmes has been incredibly encouraging, seeing so many friendship groups begin at many BWCV functions. I am truly excited for what the next 5 years will bring!



KAWIRA

Being a part of BWCV for the past 5 years has been really fulfilling. I've made lifelong friendships/sisterhood bonds with some of the women that I've met here. Having grown up in spaces where I didn't see others that looked like me besides family, it's been worthwhile to help facilitate new connections that many who attend our events have made. Our events are always a good time from our Exhale: Mental Health Panels to our High Tea Party. I'm really excited about the future of the EBG program and the future success of the young girls we've helped bring together in community!

Message From Team



ABIGAIL

Being a part of BWCV for the past 5 years has been an amazing experience. The relationships that have been cultivated throughout these years have been pivotal; in my career, and personal life. From first being a member, to a volunteer, and now a team member, my time with BWCV has been a gift. As this organization has grown, I have been able to grow alongside it. BWCV has given me the opportunity to learn about how to take care of my mind and finances; with events like our CIBC Virtual Event in Jan 2021, and our Rooftop parties that we hold annually. As we continue to grow and expand on each of our programs, like our Empowered Black Girl Conferences. I can't wait to see what connections we will make and what we will be able to accomplish in the next 5 years.



THANDI

I have so appreciated cultivating a relationship with some of the most amazing women through BWCV. Being part of this community has given me an opportunity to connect and build relationships with like-minded women and more so do life together with all the mamas. Having been given the opportunity to be part of the Moms Group has been such a blessing for me because we get to provide a community for our mamas to feel safe, loved, and welcomed. We get to build a sisterhood through a season in our lives that is so important as we raise our kids together.

Testimonials



"Born and raised in Vancouver, I didn't have a close friend until I moved to NYC. When I moved back here, it took two more years to connect with Black women. Thank you Black Women Connect for creating a space with so many black women, talking about mental health was absolutely therapeutic. It was something I didn't even know I needed"

"I wanted to thank you so much for hosting such a wonderful event. It meant so much for me to be in a room of women that were able to articulate the thoughts I've been having, that resembled me, and that I could relate too."

"It's amazing to be surrounded by women who get me. We all have unique differences but similar experiences. Attending Black Women Connect Vancouver events is more than a momentary instance, it's a chance to create authentic connections with amazing people."

"Tonight I had the privilege to meet with a group of women whose connection was undeniable. With whom friendship, sisterhood, partnership, understanding, security and home was forged immediately. I am so grateful for the space Black Women Connect Vancouver created. Grateful for the apologetically spectacular in their blackness. My heart is truly overflowing with admiration, gratitude, love, pride and joy."

"To new friendships! Thank you Black Women Connect for creating a space for black women to come together."

Testimonials



"I subscribed today after seeing the one about fathers which I have yet to listen to cause today is the first day I ever used extensions and I saw the one on hair journeys & can relate to a lot of it!! Egyptians are all about straight flat hair! And my dad once yelled at me so bad because my older cooler sister taught me how to use mousse for my curls & he was ably the straight ruled hair not my unruly frizz. So I ironed my hair until a few years ago! All because of that European ideal engrained in so many cultures."

"Our hair stories/journeys always amaze us. Sending so much love to all Black Women out there! You are QUEENS!"

"Really good interview; I love listening to this podcast. It's very informative. Being a man, I like learning by hearing perspectives from different women, especially Black women in various fields of work. Thank you for this channel. I feel the maturity of you all also plays a role in delivering a solid message. Good job ladies. Keep up the great work."

"I love the episode. Keep it coming. What is on top of my bucket list. Would be nice to have a bucket list going into 2021. Covid or not. Something attainable. I would like to learn how to play musical instruments. Learn a thing or two about video editing. I guess these counts as a bucket list."

"This is the first time I ever commented on a youtube video but this one- thank you so much! I can relate to so much of what I heard!"

Empowered Black Girl



EMPOWERED BLACK GIRL

Empowered Black Girl (EBG) was launched in 2021 in a collaborative effort between Adaeze Oputa-Anu (Creator & Program Director) and Black Women Connect Vancouver in recognition of the gap in programming to support and grow the leadership of Black girls in Vancouver.

Empowered Black Girl is a conference for Black girls in the Vancouver lower mainland area of British Columbia between grades 8 - 12. The program was created to provide a platform for Black girls to interact & have empowering discussions with Black women to promote representation and provide resources for different aspects of daily life.

PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

Community Development 📌

Social support theory, intersectionality theory and participant statements all emphasize the importance of community to mental health. It is with this understanding that EBG create spaces for open conversation

between participants, mentors, and program facilitators. EBG participants also build community through 1:1 and group interactions during programs. Post event, participants are invited to join a group chat platform that allows everyone from that cohort to stay in touch.

Personal Development 📌

EBG hosts workshops that cover topics like goal setting, emotional intelligence, and vision board exercises. The goal is to provide the necessary tools for participants to manage their own personal development journey effectively. Participants are also encouraged to participate in the EBG internship program which exposes participants to their career fields of interest.



Empowered Black Girl



Health & Wellness 📌

There are several factors intersect to influence the mental health of Black girls in Canada, including racism and discrimination, gender inequity, stigma, low income, and societal pressure. More than ever before stress and anxiety around these issues increased in recent times due to the pandemic and the human rights violations brought on Black people in and outside Canada. The importance of access to health and wellness tools are glaringly evident and to this end, EBG has identified industry professionals that will guide our participants as they build their own stress management toolkit by teaching mindfulness meditation sessions, breathing techniques and self-affirmation practice.

Informal Mentorship 📌

One of the projected outcomes for EBG is mentorship, and within our community there are women with professional and life experiences who are qualified to offer informal mentorship. During the program we encourage participants to make these important connections, EBG will facilitate and monitor the process. Since the launch of the program, we have

successfully hosted conferences in 2021 and 2022 consecutively. In 2023, we hope to expand our program offering beyond the annual conference to provide more opportunities for our participants to interact with each other and BWCV's network of professionals.

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Join us as we continue to build an inclusive and equitable future that incorporates the untapped leadership potential of Black Girls. For partnership/sponsorship information please email director.ebg@gmail.com



Message From Program Director

ADAEZE OPUTA

It is an honor to partner with Black Women Connect Vancouver in the creation and implementation of this much-needed program. Our lived experiences and the shared experiences of the participants have informed the consistent growth and development of Empowered Black Girl. Our vision is an inclusive and equitable future that incorporates the untapped leadership potential of Black Girls and Youth. We sincerely appreciate the support of our community, sponsors, donors and partners as we continue to grow of the program and support impact through mentorship in Vancouver lower mainland and beyond.

Adaeze Oputa

Empowered Black Girl Program Director



Testimonials



"Thank you, I definitely felt like something was missing in my life and preventing me from being the best version of myself. I realised that part of it was because I don't have a lot of strong black role models around me for six hours a day. Now I can work on familiarising myself with the black community, and pushing forward in school. I keep reminding myself that high-school doesn't last forever. Thank you"

-Participant

"Here at the EBG conference, everyone is amazing. The mentors are amazing, there are so many things to do, and it's a comforting space."

-Participant

"I want to see this event go on every year. My daughter will attend this event to keep her community of Black friends. A place which offers them a space of belonging and knowing that people care for them and that their lives matter within this context. Kudos to the Empowered Black Girls (EBG) team."

-Participant's Parent

"It was such a pleasure leading the morning meditation & breathwork sessions for days 1 and 2 of the conference as well as staying to volunteer and be part of this experience with the girls. EBG held the perfect space for an impactful event, and it was so amazing to watch the young beautiful Black girls step out of their comfort zone and into their light while engaging and sharing their truths. EBG has the potential to impact young women across the country. I will be glad to take part again next year."

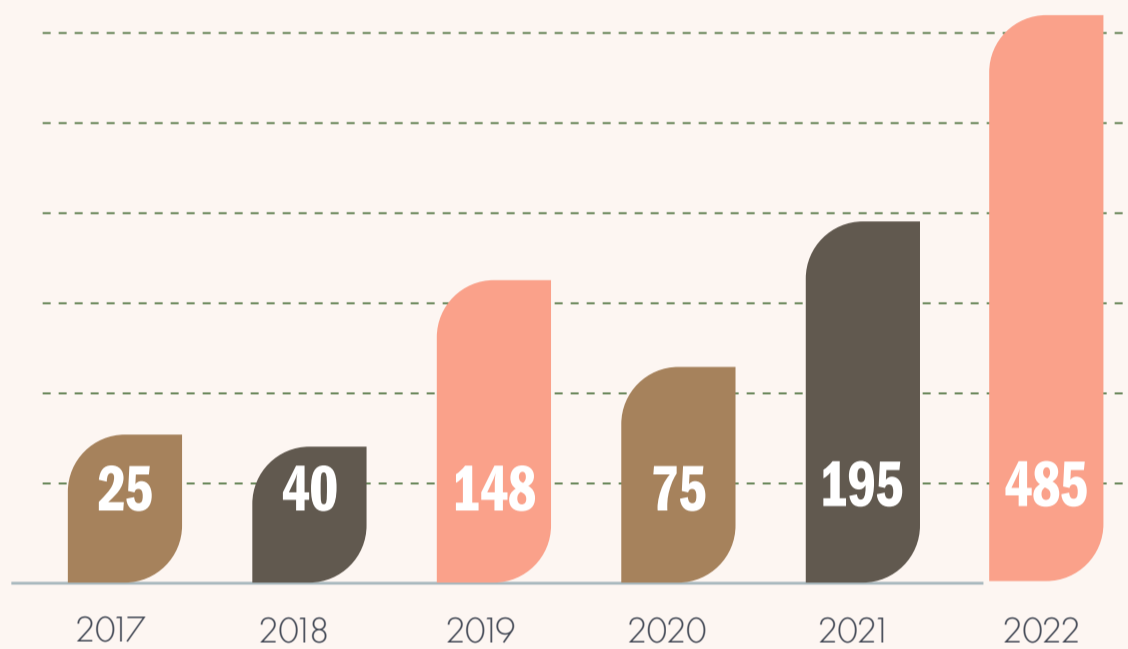
-Panelist

"My biggest takeaway is that it's okay to feel emotions but labelling and navigating them is the key to emotional intelligence."

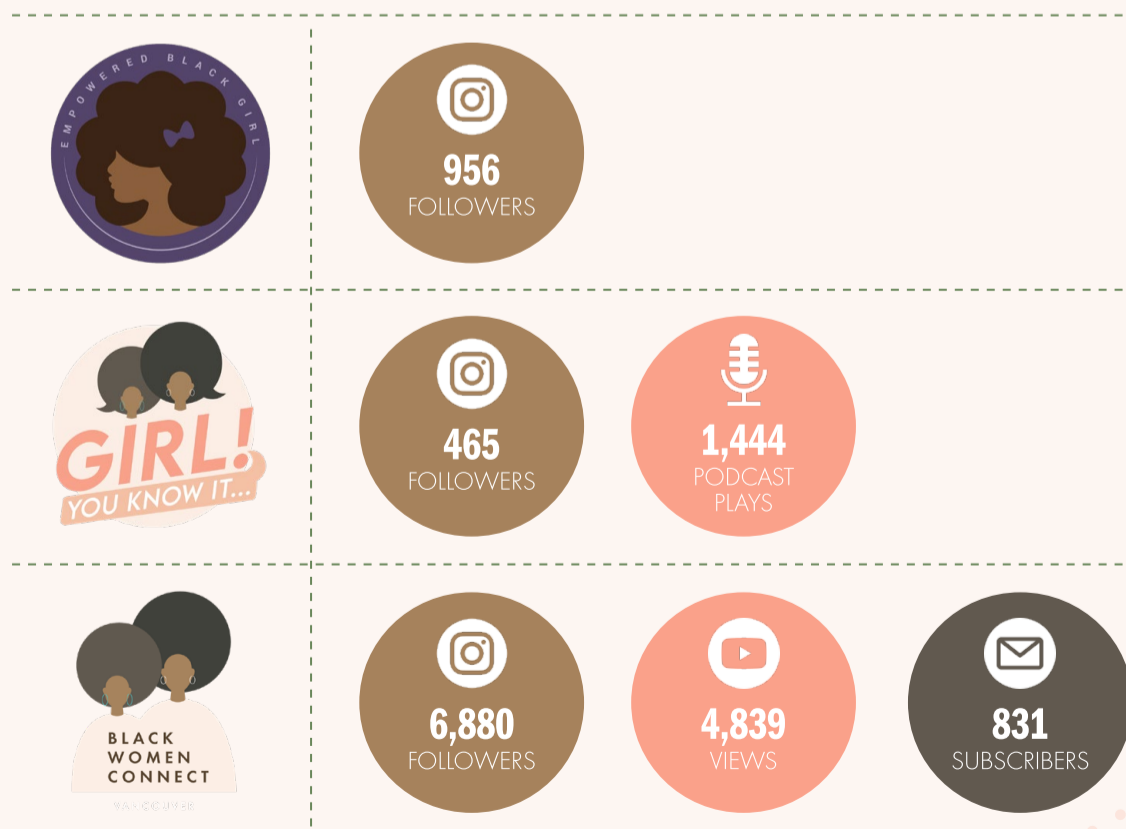
-Participant

Statistics

EVENT ATTENDEES PER YEAR



SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS



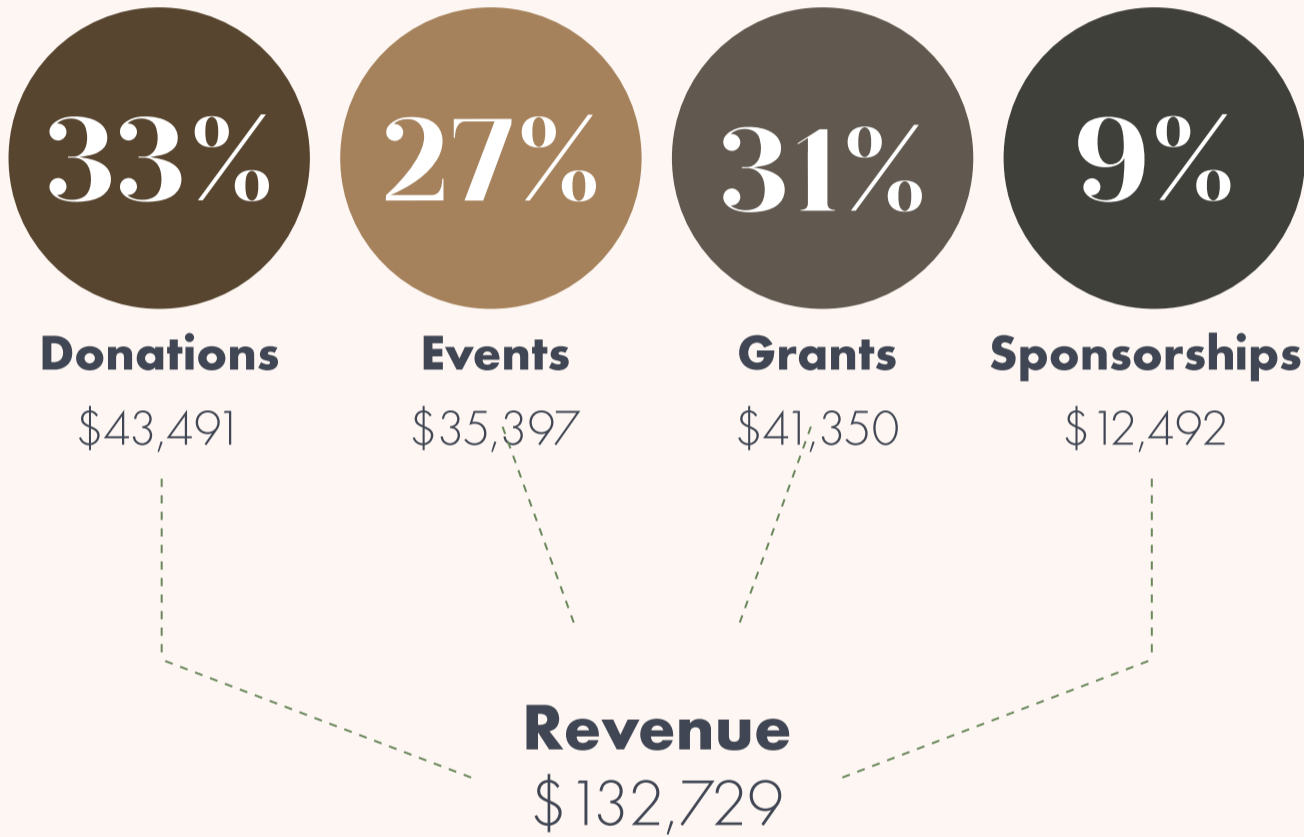
Events

BWCV EVENTS 2017-2022

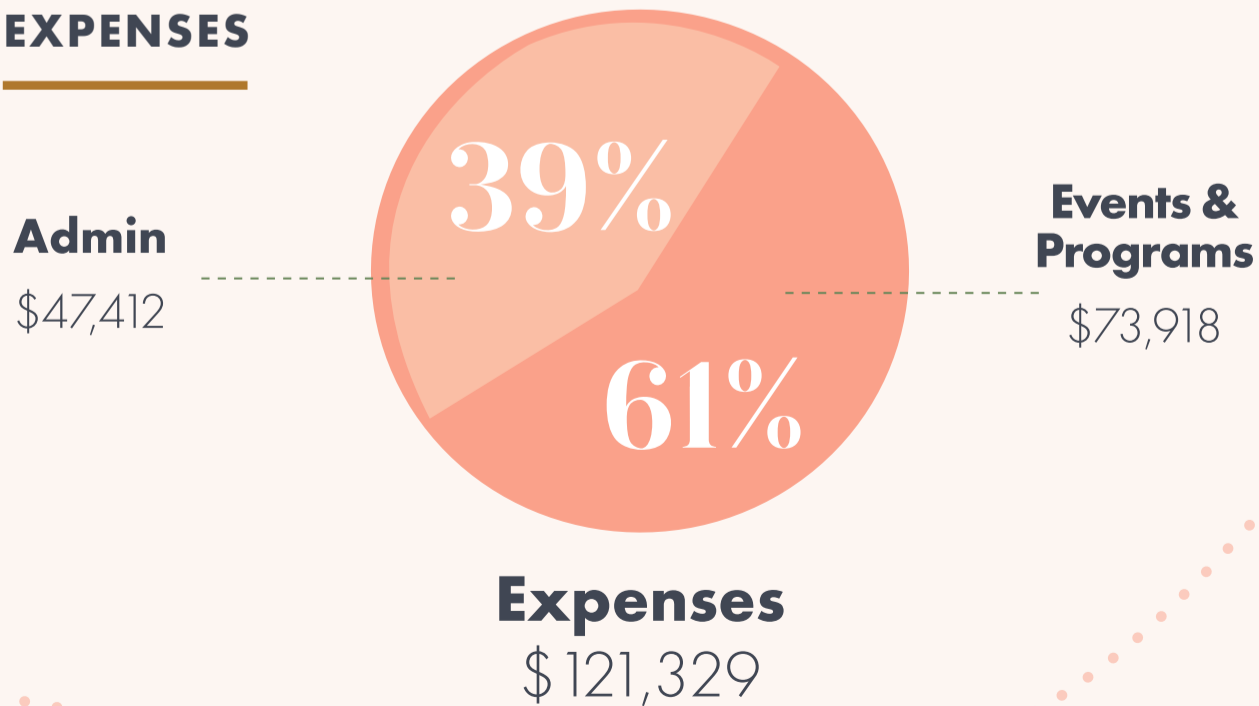
Event Name
5 Year Anniversary Holiday Party!
Sip and Paint
Black Women Connect Vancouver: Holiday Party
Women in Leadership: Connect with Leaders
Exhale Wellness
KIKI IN THE PARK: Hosted by Charla Lauriston
Exhale x Kunye Wellness Conference
BWCV & Arreglo Presents: Uthando
Black Women High Tea
BWCV x LinkUp Van Black Panther Movie Premier
Insecure Virtual Watch Party
BWCV x Pitch Better: Secure the Bag
Sisterhood Night Out
Champagne Rooftop Party
Summer Patio
Private Movie Screening of "The Woman King"
Mental Health Panel Discussion
BWCV Moms Connect Play Date
Black Panther Pre-release Screening
BWCV: Mom's Connect Brunch
CIBC: Financial Literacy Event

Financials 2017-2022

REVENUE



EXPENSES



Future Plans

The programs that have been delivered by BWCV over the past 5 years have been very impactful to the participants it has reached. The programs have drawn participation not only from the Greater Vancouver area but from other cities in British Columbia and in some cases, from other provinces.

BWCV EVENTS

Health & Wellness Sessions:

BWCV plans to hold these sessions in 2023 to strengthen participants' minds and bodies. Industry professionals will teach mindfulness meditation sessions and breathing techniques as a way to expand our participants' stress management toolkit. Other topics will include but not be limited to nutrition, exercise, and reproductive health.

BWCV's future programming includes partnering with Battered Women's Support Services to hold a campaign and an event to support Black women and femmes who are victims of domestic violence, abuse, or sexual assault. This program is very important to BWCV because of its mandate for holistic wellness for Black women.

MEMBERSHIP

BWCV plans to launch our membership platform in 2023. We understand that to grow our community and for our community to have access to our services, membership is important. Our membership platform will have partnerships with other companies and organisations, As well as discounts on BWCV merch, events and other pop up ventures. The purpose of the membership is for our community to feel that they belong.

CITY CHAPTERS

BWCV has had a high demand to be in other cities in BC. In 2023 we will be launching our Victoria chapter.



Future Plans

EMPOWERED BLACK GIRL

Panel Discussions: Through his platform, Black women professionals provide mentorship to Black girls by sharing their stories and experiences and encouraging girls to aspire to greater heights, dream big and pursue their passions without any limitations.

Workshops: These sessions provide opportunities for girls to build skills in leadership development to prepare them for future leadership roles and responsibilities. The workshops cover relevant topics such as strategic thinking and visionary leadership, emotional intelligence, habits of highly effective leaders, communicating with confidence, goal setting, time & energy management, and executive presence.

Group projects: Also planned for 2023, these projects will provide participants with the opportunity to raise awareness on issues affecting Black girls. This will be done using traditional media and with mentorship provided by media professionals (from TV, radio, print, and social media).

Peer Support & Networking:

This is also planned to hold in 2023. These sessions will provide opportunities for participants to bond with their peers and build relationships with potential mentors while also growing a strong support system with other girls.

EBG Internship Program:

EBG Internship Program has been designed as a practical solution to enable Black girls to develop hands-on skills in their industries of interest. The EBG team is currently engaging interested corporate partners across various industries (Tech, Healthcare Services, Journalism, Finance, and Entrepreneurship) Candidate interns will be matched with hosts for internships of up to 4 to 6 months. All interns will participate in leadership and entrepreneur development training offered by EBG. The interns will also receive counselling and coaching for resiliency and managing the internship demands. Internship applications will open in March 2023.



TEAM MEMBERS

Nataizya Mukwavi - *Founding Executive Director*

Abigail Kibarita-Martens - *Project Assistant*

Kawira Murithi - *Administrative Assistant*

Adaeze Oputa-Anu - *EBG Program Director*

Thandi Watkins - *Moms Connect Coordinator*

Elle Wayara - *Volunteer & Community Engagement
Coordinator*

BOARD MEMBERS

Ruth Unaegbu - *Vice President*

Ainsa Hepburn - *Secretary*

Damilola Abimboye - *Treasurer*

Njavwa Muwkavi - *Board Member*

Winnie Keji Lole - *Board Member*

Michelle Sraha-Yeboah - *Board Member*



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