

CANADIAN WOMEN OF COLOUR LEADERSHIP NETWORK



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025–2029

*Cultivating Change.
Strengthening Community.
Shaping What Comes Next.*

Board Adopted September 25, 2026

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CANADIAN WOMEN OF COLOUR LEADERSHIP NETWORK (CWCLN)

5-Year Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029

Cultivating Change. Strengthening Community. Shaping What Comes Next.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CWCLN acknowledges that our work takes place on lands that have been stewarded by Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island. In Ottawa, where CWCLN is headquartered, we acknowledge that we gather and work on the unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation.

We recognize the enduring presence, knowledge systems, governance, and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, as well as the ongoing impacts of colonization, displacement, and dispossession.

As an organization committed to justice and systems change, we recognize our responsibility to continue learning, building respectful relationships, and supporting meaningful action toward reconciliation and Indigenous sovereignty.

ANCESTRAL & AFROCENTRIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving organization, CWCLN honours the ancestral wisdom, resilience, resistance, and knowledge systems of African, Caribbean, and Black communities across the diaspora.

Our work is rooted in ancestral memory, collective survival, and culturally grounded ways of knowing and being. We recognize that healing, leadership, community care, economic resilience, and liberation are not new concepts to our communities—they are inherited practices.

We honour the longstanding presence and contributions of Black communities in Canada, whose histories on these lands predate Confederation, while recognizing the continuing impacts of anti-Black racism, colonialism, displacement, and systemic exclusion.

We carry this lineage forward with care, responsibility, and purpose.



MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER & CEO



As the Founder and CEO of the Canadian Women of Colour Leadership Network (CWCLN), I am deeply proud to present our 2025–2029 Strategic Plan.

CWCLN was created from lived experience, community wisdom, and a clear understanding that Black women and femmes have long been navigating systems that were never designed with us in mind. From the beginning, our work has been grounded in justice, cultural integrity, and the belief that our communities hold knowledge, strength, leadership, and solutions.

Today, CWCLN is a national, Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving (B3), women-led organization. Our B3 identity is foundational to who we are and how we work. Black women, femmes, families, and communities are centred in our leadership, programming, partnerships, advocacy, and systems-change efforts, while our work also creates meaningful and inclusive pathways for racialized women and femmes more broadly.

This Strategic Plan reflects both where we have come from and where we are going. It honours the growth of CWCLN while keeping us accountable to the communities at the heart of our work.

Our four pillars—Wellness, Leadership, Economic Development, and Community Partnerships—continue to guide us, strengthened by our five guiding principles and a clear justice lens.

Across these pillars, we understand change as interconnected. Supporting an individual can strengthen a family or community. Strengthening communities can influence institutions. Changing institutions and systems can create conditions in which individuals and communities have greater opportunity to thrive.

Over the next five years, CWCLN will deepen its national presence while sustaining meaningful local and regional impact. We will continue to deliver hybrid programming that meets people where they are, expand pathways for leadership and economic justice, strengthen culturally grounded approaches to wellness, and build ethical partnerships that support collective liberation.



As CWCLN grows, we are also intentionally strengthening the organizational infrastructure, partnerships, revenue pathways, and internal capacity required to sustain that growth. We will continue developing mission-aligned approaches to sustainability while ensuring that growth remains grounded in community, care, justice, and accountability.

This plan is intentionally accessible. While it is stewarded by our Board of Directors, it belongs to our broader community—our partners, funders, collaborators, and, most importantly, the people and communities whose lives, leadership, knowledge, and resilience shape CWCLN every day.

It is a living document that will guide our decisions, hold us accountable, and support our continued growth.

I am grateful to our Board, staff, partners, and community members who continue to walk alongside us with trust and care. As we move forward, we do so grounded in ancestral wisdom, guided by justice, and committed to building a future where Black women and femmes—and the communities alongside whom we work—can thrive, lead, and live free from systemic harm.

***With purpose and gratitude,
Sophia Jacob
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Women of Colour Leadership Network***

WHO WE ARE



The Canadian Women of Colour Leadership Network (CWCLN) is a national, Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving (B3), women-led organization committed to advancing justice, leadership, wellness, and economic empowerment.

Our B3 identity is foundational to who we are.

Black communities, Black lived experience, Black leadership, and culturally grounded knowledge are centred in how we design programs, build partnerships, develop leadership, respond to inequities, and advocate for systems change.

Our work centres Black women and femmes while also creating inclusive spaces, opportunities, and pathways for racialized women and femmes more broadly.

CWCLN operates at local, regional, and national levels, delivering hybrid programming that responds to community realities while influencing broader systems. Our work is grounded in lived experience, cultural knowledge, community leadership, and a deep commitment to challenging systemic barriers.

CWCLN exists to move beyond inclusion toward structural transformation—supporting people and communities while working to change the systems and conditions that affect their lives.

OUR MISSION

To advance justice by supporting the leadership, wellness, and economic empowerment of Black and racialized women and femmes through culturally grounded programming, ethical partnerships, community-led approaches, and systems-level change across Canada.

OUR VISION

A Canada where Black and racialized women and femmes live free from systemic harm, are economically secure, culturally affirmed, and equitably represented in leadership, decision-making, and community life.



OUR VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES



CWCLN's work is guided by five core principles that inform our governance, programming, partnerships, organizational culture, and accountability.

Women-Led	CWCLN is women-led, with leadership grounded in lived experience, community accountability, representation, and collective care.
Good Stewardship	We foster an environment of respect, transparency, and accountability, stewarding resources, relationships, community trust, and organizational responsibilities with integrity.
Cultural Competency	We commit to culturally responsive, linguistically respectful, and faith-conscious approaches that honour the diverse identities and experiences of the communities with whom we work.
Anti-Racist & Anti-Oppressive Practice	We actively challenge anti-Black racism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and oppression in all forms—within systems, institutions, communities, and our own organizational practices.
Empowerment	We believe in knowledgeable, resourced, connected, and empowered communities and in creating conditions that support agency, leadership, dignity, and collective liberation.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT: WHERE WE ARE NOW



CWCLN enters this strategic period from a place of growth, learning, and increasing organizational maturity.

Since our founding, CWCLN has grown from a community-rooted vision into a national B3 organization delivering programming, building partnerships, developing community-informed models of support, and contributing to broader conversations and action related to mental health, leadership, economic justice, health equity, community care, and systems change.

Our growth has reinforced what communities have long known: culturally grounded, community-led approaches matter.

Wellness, peer-based support, navigation, leadership development, economic empowerment, community education, partnership, advocacy, and systems change increasingly intersect across our work.

This interconnected approach allows CWCLN to respond at multiple levels.



INDIVIDUAL

We support people with knowledge, resources, skills, culturally grounded spaces, connections, leadership opportunities, and pathways that strengthen well-being, agency, economic security, and belonging.

COMMUNITY

We strengthen relationships, networks, community capacity, peer leadership, mutual support, collective knowledge, and opportunities for communities to identify and advance their own priorities.

SYSTEMS

We work with partners, institutions, decision-makers, and community to challenge systemic barriers, elevate lived experience and community knowledge, improve access and accountability, and contribute to changes in policies, practices, systems, and structures.

This approach is consistent with CWCLN's longstanding understanding that meaningful change requires work at individual, community and systems levels. Our earlier logic-model development similarly connected economic development to individual empowerment, community mentorship and systems accountability, and connected community partnerships to collective action and systemic change.

Our growth also brings responsibility.

As our reach, partnerships, programming, funding relationships, and influence expand, CWCLN must continue strengthening the organizational capacity that supports this work.

This includes sustainable and diversified revenue, strong governance and financial stewardship, effective organizational systems, staff and community capacity, meaningful evaluation and learning, and infrastructure that can grow alongside the organization.

The 2025–2029 period is therefore not simply about doing more.

It is about deepening impact, strengthening what works, growing responsibly, and ensuring that CWCLN's organizational foundation remains strong enough to sustain the work and communities entrusted to us.



OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



CWCLN's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan is organized around four interconnected pillars, grounded in our B3 identity, guided by our principles, and rooted in justice.

OUR B3 FOUNDATION

Black-Led • Black-Focused • Black-Serving

OUR FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



Wellness



Leadership



**Economic
Development**



**Community
Partnerships**

OUR LEVELS OF IMPACT

Individual • Community • Systems

Together, these elements reflect CWCLN's commitment to culturally grounded, holistic, sustainable, and systems-informed change.



PILLAR 1: WELLNESS



Promoting holistic well-being and resilience through culturally grounded, trauma-informed care.

CWCLN understands wellness as both an individual and systemic issue.

Black women and femmes experience health and wellness within social, cultural, economic, and institutional environments shaped by anti-Black racism, gendered inequities, and other intersecting forms of oppression.

Our approach therefore extends beyond individual wellness to the conditions and systems that influence health, safety, dignity, belonging, and access to care.

Over the next five years, CWCLN will:

- Strengthen access to culturally responsive mental health, wellness, and peer-based support.
- Create safe and affirming spaces that support healing, connection, rest, resilience, and belonging.
- Advance Black maternal health and reproductive justice through education, advocacy, community knowledge, and systems-level engagement.
- Centre Afrocentric and culturally rooted approaches to wellness that honour ancestral knowledge and lived experience.
- Strengthen community knowledge and capacity related to health, wellness, navigation, and access to supports.
- Address wellness as a justice issue connected to social determinants of health and broader systemic inequities.
- Work with communities and partners to improve the systems and conditions that influence health and wellness outcomes.

CWCLN's earlier logic-model work similarly envisioned wellness across mental, physical, sexual, reproductive and cultural dimensions and connected culturally responsive support with resilience, belonging and freedom from systemic harm.



PILLAR 2: LEADERSHIP



Building pathways for Black women and femmes to lead, influence, and transform systems.

CWCLN understands leadership as both formal and informal. Leadership exists in workplaces, communities, families, institutions, movements, entrepreneurship, advocacy, and everyday acts of change.

Our work centres the leadership of Black women and femmes while creating pathways through which racialized women and femmes more broadly can build knowledge, skills, networks, confidence, and influence.

Leadership development is not only about individual advancement. It is also about shifting representation, access, influence, and power.

Over the next five years, CWCLN will:

- Expand leadership-development opportunities that build confidence, skills, knowledge, and agency.
- Support pathways from precarious and frontline employment toward leadership, advancement, and greater economic security.
- Increase access to gate-kept knowledge, training, professional development, and networks.
- Strengthen mentorship, peer learning, professional connections, and leadership networks.
- Support community leadership and opportunities for lived experience to inform decision-making.
- Equip participants with knowledge and tools to influence change within workplaces, institutions, communities, and systems.
- Contribute to greater representation and meaningful participation of Black and racialized women and femmes in leadership and decision-making spaces.

This reflects CWCLN's longstanding leadership goals, which connect professional development and access to gate-kept knowledge with career advancement and greater representation in leadership positions.



PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Advancing economic justice, opportunity, and dignified pathways to financial security.

CWCLN understands economic inequity as more than an individual financial issue.

Historical and ongoing systemic barriers have shaped access to employment, income, wealth creation, entrepreneurship, education, professional networks, and economic opportunity for Black communities.

Our economic-development work therefore connects individual economic empowerment with community opportunity and systems change.

Over the next five years, CWCLN will:

- Deliver accessible financial literacy and economic empowerment opportunities.
- Increase awareness of historical and systemic barriers to economic security and wealth creation.
- Support entrepreneurship, employment pathways, career development, and transferable skill development.
- Increase access to resources, knowledge, networks, mentorship, and opportunities that support economic advancement.
- Strengthen CWCLN's social enterprise as a strategy for economic justice, sustainability, workforce development, and community investment.
- Use social enterprise to create dignified income and skill-development opportunities aligned with CWCLN's mission and values.
- Collaborate with partners to challenge policies, practices, and systemic conditions that perpetuate economic exclusion.

Social enterprise is anchored within this pillar and connected across the organization as a sustainability and empowerment strategy.

CWCLN's logic-model development similarly connected financial literacy and economic empowerment at the individual level with mentorship and entrepreneurship at the community level and systems accountability for economic inequities.



PILLAR 4: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Cultivating ethical, justice-driven partnerships that strengthen community power, collective impact, and systems change.

CWCLN believes meaningful and lasting change happens through relationships grounded in trust, reciprocity, mutual respect, accountability, and shared purpose.

Our partnerships span Black-led and community-rooted organizations, grassroots groups, institutions, public systems, funders, service providers, and broader regional and national networks.

We recognize that partnership should not simply mean bringing community into existing systems. It must also create opportunities for community knowledge, leadership, priorities, and lived experience to influence how those systems operate.

Over the next five years, CWCLN will:

- Build and sustain ethical partnerships at local, regional, and national levels.
- Prioritize meaningful relationships with Black-led, Black-focused, Black-serving, grassroots, and community-rooted organizations.
- Support mutual aid, solidarity, knowledge sharing, and collective capacity.
- Convene inclusive spaces that elevate community voices, leadership, knowledge, and lived experience.
- Strengthen cross-sector collaboration to improve access, navigation, supports, and outcomes.
- Engage in advocacy and systems-change initiatives that address structural inequities.
- Build partnerships that strengthen community influence within institutions, policies, programs, and decision-making.
- Support collective action that advances justice and strengthens community-led solutions.

Ethical partnership, mutual aid, collective action and systems change were already central themes in CWCLN's earlier development of this pillar.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & CAPACITY



CWCLN recognizes that long-term community impact requires a strong and sustainable organization.

Sustainable growth means ensuring that our internal capacity develops alongside our community reach and impact.

As CWCLN grows, we will continue strengthening the people, systems, resources, partnerships, and infrastructure required to support responsible growth while protecting the B3, community-rooted identity and values at the heart of our work.

Over the 2025–2029 period, CWCLN will:

- Strengthen and diversify revenue through government and foundation funding, philanthropy and donations, strategic partnerships, earned revenue, social enterprise, and other mission-aligned opportunities.
- Strengthen mission-aligned earned revenue and social enterprise as part of CWCLN's broader approach to organizational sustainability and economic empowerment.
- Strengthen organizational systems and infrastructure that support effective program delivery, financial stewardship, administration, communications, evaluation, and accountability.
- Invest in staff, peer leaders, facilitators, volunteers, and community capacity through appropriate training, development, mentorship, and leadership opportunities.
- Strengthen pathways for Black leadership and community expertise within the organization and its work.
- Use technology and appropriate organizational tools to strengthen coordination, information management, monitoring, learning, and organizational effectiveness.
- Maintain responsible growth that reflects available resources, organizational capacity, community needs, and CWCLN's mission and values.
- Continue strengthening governance, accountability, financial stewardship, and organizational resilience as CWCLN evolves.

For CWCLN, sustainability is not solely financial.

It means building an organization with the relationships, leadership, systems, resources, community trust, and capacity necessary to remain responsive to community while advancing long-term systems change.



NATIONAL SCOPE & IMPACT



CWCLN is a national B3 organization with deep community roots.

Our national identity does not mean applying one approach everywhere. It means carrying a shared commitment to justice, culturally grounded practice, Black community leadership, and community accountability while remaining responsive to different regional and local realities.

This Strategic Plan affirms our commitment to:

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP & COORDINATION

Contributing B3 leadership, community knowledge, learning, advocacy, and collaboration to conversations and initiatives that extend across Canada.

REGIONAL RESPONSIVENESS

Building relationships and approaches that recognize differences in communities, systems, resources, and realities across regions.

LOCAL IMPACT

Remaining grounded in community relationships and ensuring that our work responds meaningfully to the people and communities with whom we work.

As CWCLN's national presence develops, growth will remain intentional and grounded in meaningful relationships, community knowledge, partnership, demonstrated need, and organizational capacity.



IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & LEARNING



CWCLN recognizes that a Strategic Plan must remain connected to action, learning, and accountability.

The Strategic Plan will guide organizational priorities, decision-making, partnerships, program development, resource allocation, and growth throughout the 2025–2029 period.

The Chief Executive Officer and organizational team will translate the strategic direction of the plan into annual priorities, work planning, programming, partnerships, and organizational development activities.

Our approach to understanding impact will reflect the interconnected nature of our work. We will consider change across:

1. **Individuals:** including access, knowledge, skills, wellness, leadership, economic opportunity, agency, connection, and belonging.
2. **Communities:** including strengthened networks, community capacity, peer and community leadership, partnerships, mutual support, collective knowledge, and opportunities for community voice and action.
3. **Systems:** including changes in relationships, access, institutional practices, policies, decision-making, accountability, representation, and the ways community knowledge and lived experience influence systems.

Progress will be monitored through a combination of organizational and program information, financial reporting, community and participant feedback, partnership learning, program outcomes, and reflection on emerging community needs.

CWCLN will:

- Review progress against strategic priorities on a regular basis.
- Use community and participant feedback to support learning and improvement.
- Monitor organizational capacity and sustainability alongside program growth.
- Consider individual, community, and systems-level change when assessing our impact.
- Share relevant progress, learning, and impact through organizational reporting and communications.
- Adapt priorities and approaches where community realities, emerging opportunities, systemic changes, or organizational learning require a different response.

This approach allows CWCLN to remain accountable to its strategic direction while retaining the flexibility required of a community-rooted organization working within changing environments and systems.

GOVERNANCE, STEWARDSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY



The Board of Directors holds stewardship and oversight of this Strategic Plan.

The plan is intended to be:

- A living document.
- Accessible to community, partners, and funders.
- Grounded in accountability, reflection, learning, and responsible stewardship.

The Board will maintain oversight of the Strategic Plan and receive information on its implementation and progress as part of its governance responsibilities.

The Chief Executive Officer provides organizational leadership for implementation of the Strategic Plan and supports the Board in carrying out its oversight responsibilities.

CWCLN will steward this plan with integrity, using it to guide decision-making, partnerships, resource development, organizational growth, and community impact while remaining responsive to community needs and systemic shifts.



CLOSING COMMITMENT



This Strategic Plan reflects CWCLN's collective vision for the next five years—rooted in Black community, guided by justice, and committed to transformation.

Our B3 identity—Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving—is foundational to this work.

It is reflected in whose knowledge we centre, whose leadership we strengthen, how we understand community accountability, and how we approach the systems and structures we seek to change.

At the same time, our commitment to justice creates space for solidarity, partnership, and meaningful opportunities for racialized women and femmes whose experiences intersect with our broader work.

As a national organization with deep community roots, we move forward with clarity, courage, and care, honouring our ancestors while building pathways for future generations to thrive.

Our growth will remain grounded in the communities that shaped CWCLN.

We will continue to listen and learn.

We will strengthen individuals while recognizing the communities around them.

We will strengthen communities while challenging the systems affecting them.

And we will work toward systems change while remaining accountable to the people whose lives those systems impact.

The 2025–2029 period represents both continuity and possibility: continuing the work communities trust us to do while building the sustainability, capacity, partnerships, leadership, and collective power necessary for the future.



CONTACT US



We welcome connection, collaboration, and partnership.

Canadian Women of Colour Leadership Network (CWCLN)

Black-Led • Black-Focused • Black-Serving

Canada — National, with hybrid programming

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 **Website:** canadianwomenofcolour.ca

For partnership inquiries, media requests, or to learn more about our work and national initiatives, please contact us using the information above.