

PROJECT  
*Agape*

# *Annual Report*

## 2025



LOVE STARTS WITH YOU



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# Deep Gratitude and Acknowledgment

Project Agape offers deep gratitude to the unceded, unsurrendered Anishinaabe Algonquin territory and its people who are the rightful owners and keepers of the land where we work, play and connect.

As Black people, as immigrants, this especially involves taking into account how our presence as folks who did not arrive here in the same way as settlers, and instead were most likely forced here (directly or indirectly) by factors of white supremacy, still perpetuates harm against Indigenous people that we are responsible for. This also involves acknowledging the often overlooked presence of Black Indigenous people who have to deal with both anti-Black racism and colonialism in very different ways than others.

In this spirit of reconciliation and healing, we commit to being allies in the fight for Indigenous sovereignty, to learning, unlearning, and uplifting the voices and stories that have been silenced.

***May we build a future where all peoples, Black, Indigenous, and beyond can walk in unity, freely, and mutual respect.***





**“Healing is not a straight path, and the challenges we face are so deeply rooted. Our communities continue to encounter numerous barriers, and the work to dismantle them requires persistent effort.”**

**Esther Fagbola  
Executive Director**



## A Message from Project Agape's Board Co-Chairs

This year, Project Agape has continued to affirm what we have always known: when Black women and gender-diverse survivors are supported to take up space, fully, unapologetically, and without fear, the possibilities for collective healing and liberation expand.

For the folks we serve, taking up space is an act of resistance and restoration. It can look different depending on one's lived experiences, but within the work of Project Agape, it means asserting the right to exist visibly, speaking truths that have long been silenced, and prioritizing healing and safety without navigating the compounded weight of racism, sexism, and misogynoir. These systemic forces have historically pushed Black survivors to the margins, demanding silence, invisibility, or constant resilience without rest.

At Project Agape, we are reminded every day that centering joy and creating brave, intentional spaces for Black women and gender-diverse survivors is our birthright. When we place joy, rest, connection, and self-expression at the centre of our work, we interrupt generations of messaging that tell us to shrink, to stay quiet, or to carry our pain alone. Together, we *reclaim our stories*. We affirm with our actions and our presence that healing and joy are not luxuries. They are legacies we are meant to inherit. At the heart of everything we do is community, and we believe that community itself is healing in action.

As Co-Chairs, we are deeply grateful to the courageous survivors who entrust us with their stories and healing journeys. Your presence, trust, and bravery are at the heart of everything we do. We also want to thank Project Agape's dedicated staff, facilitators, volunteers and our fellow Board members, whose commitment and care bring our programs to life, and our community partners and funders, whose collaboration and support make this work possible. You help make Project Agape a space where Black survivors can reclaim voice, agency, and belonging.

The work happening through Project Agape reminds us that the *liberation, healing, and empowerment of Black communities, especially Black women, girls, and gender-diverse people, is not a distant vision*. It is unfolding now, shaped by the courage of survivors and the commitment of our community, staff, partners, funders, and volunteers. We are inspired every day by what is possible when leadership, advocacy, and lived experience come together to build spaces of care, support, and empowerment. We are honoured to walk this journey alongside all of you.

**Roselin Dixon & Nora Elmi**  
Co-Chairs, Project Agape



Roselin Dixon - Board Co-Chair



Nora Elmi - Board Co-Chair



## A Message from Project Agape's Executive Director



**Esther Fagbola - Executive Director**

This year, Project Agape turns 6 and it has truly been our best year yet. When I created Project Agape, it was out of a deep need I saw in my own life and in the lives of those around me. As a Black survivor, I knew how difficult it was to find spaces where our healing, our voices, and our joy were centered. I am filled with an immense gratitude and pride for the incredible work we've accomplished as an organization. This year has been one of growth, learning, and connection, and none of it would have been possible without the PA community, the dedication of our team, and the unwavering support from our partners.

From our Let It Heal workshops to the nurturing spaces of Black Joy and Healing, we've seen how powerful it is when we come together to heal, to share, and to hold each other up. We've seen participants reclaim their voices, their joy, and their sense of self, and I am honored to have witnessed these moments of transformation.

While we have made significant strides, there is still so much to be done. Healing is not a straight path, and the challenges we face are so deeply rooted. Our communities continue to encounter numerous barriers, and the work to dismantle them requires persistent effort. We remain committed to advocating for the systemic change needed to ensure Black survivors have access to the support and resources they deserve. Our vision is a future where no one faces their trauma alone, and where healing is always accessible to all.

What sets Project Agape apart is our commitment to elevating the voices of those who have lived through trauma, and community members who inspire our work. As a Black-led, survivor-led, immigrant-led organization, we understand that healing must be rooted in the cultures and histories of those we serve. We believe in healing that honors our collective care and the unique journeys of each individual, with respect for their autonomy and lived expertise.

To our supporters, our team, our volunteers, our board and every single person who has walked with us this year, thank you. Your belief in this work, your commitment to our mission, and your kindness have made all the difference. Together, we continue to create a world where Black survivors can heal and thrive, and for that, I am incredibly grateful.

With all my gratitude,



# About Us

Project Agape (PA) is a Black-led, Black-serving, and survivor-led nonprofit organization that creates wellness and community-building programs for Black women and gender-diverse individuals who have experienced trauma and oppression. Project Agape was founded in 2019 by Esther Fagbola after she struggled to access support as a young Black immigrant survivor of intimate partner violence. We promote the well-being of Black survivors through supportive, collective care that centers community connection, education, advocacy, and survivor justice.



## Our Vision

A world where Black women and gender-diverse individuals are empowered, supported, and free.

## Our Mission

We create culturally affirming, brave spaces for Black women and gender-diverse people to heal, connect, and thrive.



# The Project Agape Team



**Esther Fagbola**  
Executive Director



**Eniola Owabumowa**  
Programs &  
Operations Manager



**Ségolène Dibayula**  
Communications &  
Outreach Coordinator



**Joy Otundo**  
Advocacy & Innovation  
Coordinator

## Project Agape's Board of Directors

**Nora Elmi**

Co-chair

**Roselin Dixon**

Co-chair

**Jade Sullivan**

Vice-chair

**Michelle Musindo**

Treasurer

**Areena Antoine**

Secretary

**Pamela Twagirayezu**

Board Member at Large

**Lyeth Tchitembo**

Board Member at Large



# Highlights from the Year: Organizational

This year has been one of growth, connection, and collective care at Project Agape. Together with our community, we:

**Expanded Programs:** Delivered multiple cohorts of Let It Heal, hosted Healing Circles across Ottawa, created the Blooming Space program and launched the Black Joy & Healing Project with a community showcase and publication.

**Deepened Community Roots:** Strengthened engagement through the May Wellness Series, grassroots outreach, and the creation of Project Agape's first program-specific Advisory Board.

**Built Strong Partnerships:** Collaborated with the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre, The Grove, Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women to advance survivor-centered, Black-centered advocacy across Ottawa.

**Amplified Survivor Voices:** Released Season 3 of Take Up Space and continued to create platforms where survivors lead conversations with power and clarity.

**Celebrated Recognition:** Received Youth Action Now awards and participated in key community, policy, and advocacy gatherings.





# Highlights from the Year: Operational

Behind every program is the work that keeps our organization strong. This year, we invested in the systems, people, and tools that help Project Agape continue showing up for Black survivors with care and intention.

**Strengthened Infrastructure:** Secured office space at Impact Hub Ottawa, and welcomed new staff and board members to support programs and policy development.

## Training & Development:

- Participated in trauma-informed, Afrocentric professional development throughout the year to deepen confidence and skills across our team.
- Completed Public Speaking & Advocacy Training, where staff and board strengthened storytelling, facilitation, and community-to-policy communication skills.

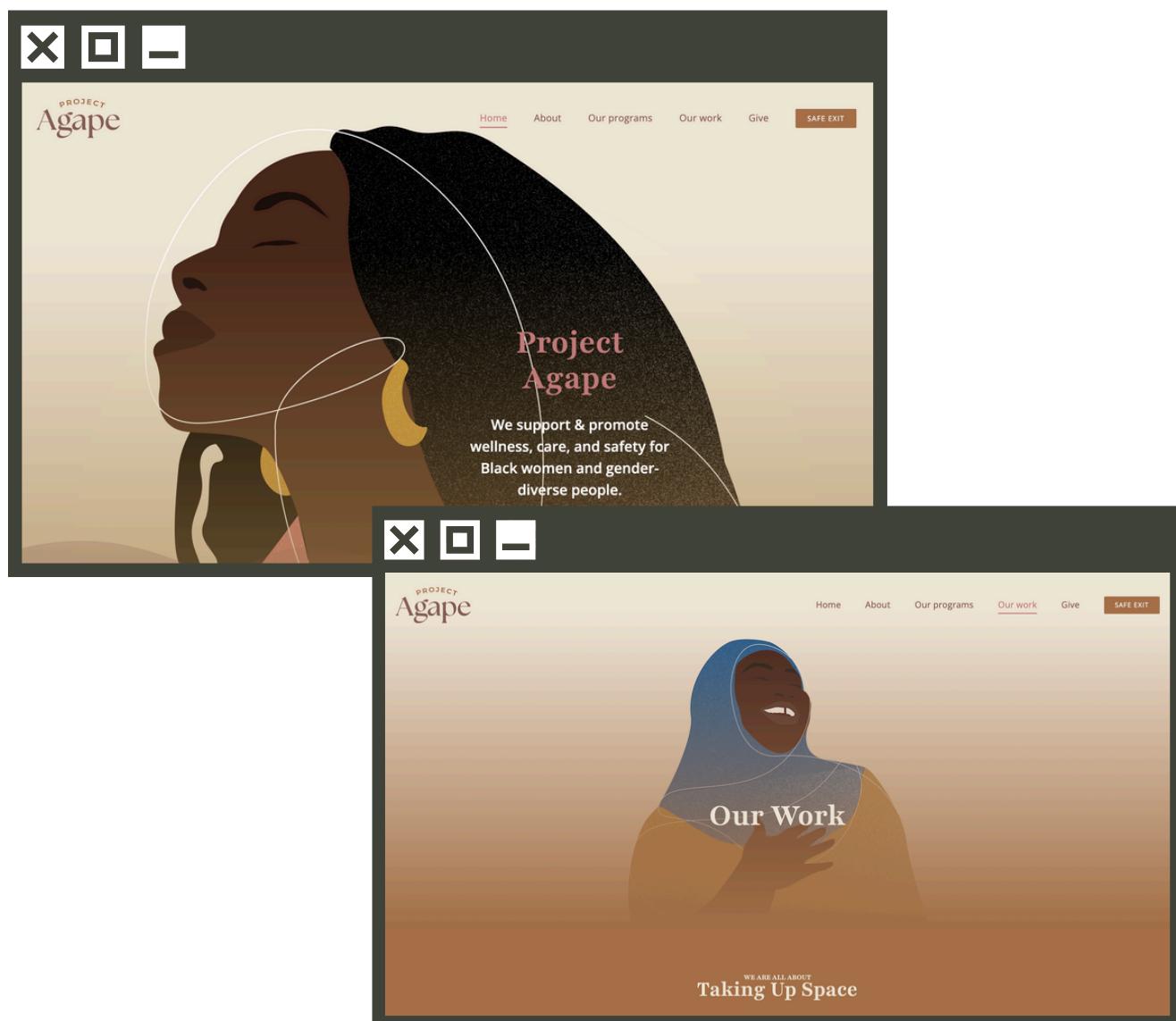
**Strategic Planning Launched:** Began a multi-stage strategic planning process with Sayid Consulting to guide the next five years. This work centers survivor voices, Black-led leadership, and trauma-informed, sustainable growth.





# Highlights from the Year: Our New Website

Project Agape's new website, [projectagape.ca](https://projectagape.ca), was redesigned with our community at the center. Built for clarity, accessibility, and ease of use, the updated site creates a welcoming entry point for survivors, partners, and anyone seeking to learn, heal, or connect. We extend our deepest gratitude to **Avo Webworks** and **THM Designs** for their thoughtful collaboration, creativity, and care throughout this process. Their work helped us create a digital home that truly reflects our values and serves our community with intention.





# Programs, Events & Community at Project Agape

***“Healing through movement, joy, community and connection.”***





# Let it Heal

Let It Heal is Project Agape's multi-week in-person wellness series designed to support Black women and gender-diverse individuals. Each session blends trauma-informed discussions, embodied practices, and collective healing rooted in Black cultural and feminist frameworks.



## HIGHLIGHTS

6 six-week cohorts

150 participants across all cohorts

5 retreats



*All cohorts are facilitated by Black therapists, community leaders, and wellness practitioners.*

**Funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation**

Ontario  
Trillium  
Foundation



Fondation  
Trillium  
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



# The Blooming Space: *Cohort I*

***Funded by Laid Law Foundation***



The Blooming Space is a 10-week healing and settlement-support program designed for Black immigrant women and gender-diverse people, combining culturally grounded wellness practices with practical tools for navigating life in Canada. Each week explores a different theme- from belonging, cultural nourishment, safety, and mental health, to movement, self-care, healthcare navigation, immigration pathways, creative storytelling, and community celebration.

Led by Black facilitators and rooted in trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches, the curriculum blends hands-on workshops, circle discussions, creative expression, and resource-sharing.

***A special thank you to our Advisory board:***

**Ebby**  
**Maëlle Pierre**  
**Marina Toure**  
**Metty Afework**  
**Uvie Ojakovo**





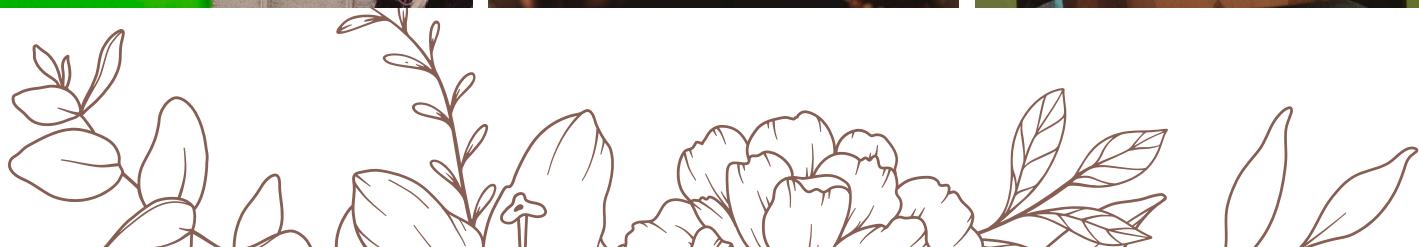
# Black Joy & Healing Project + Àdúró

**Funded by the Enchanté Network**



The Black Joy & Healing Project was a free six-week wellness and creativity program for Black 2SLGBTQ+ community members. Fifteen participants explored art, rest, joy, and storytelling, each receiving a \$400 honorarium. Their collective work was showcased in a publication previewed in February 2025 and released on YouTube in March.

To close the project, Project Agape hosted a showcased called Àdúró (**pronounced ah-DOO-roh**), a Yoruba word meaning “community” or “those who stand together.” Held on February 16, 2025 at SAW Centre, the celebration featured performances, a panel, food, raffle prizes, and a preview of the [publication](#). Àdúró honoured the brilliance and care that shaped the entire project.





2024

# May Wellness Series

In May 2024, Project Agape launched its first May Wellness Series to reconnect with the community and introduce our summer programming. The series hosted three movement-based sessions (pole fitness, pilates, and yin yoga), each with about 14 participants. These gatherings offered grounding, joy, and accessible wellness, affirming that healing can be playful, embodied, and shared in community.



The 2025 May Wellness Series brought the community together for three joyful, movement-focused events: a Burlesque class, a Yin Yoga session, and a Cookout x Games Day. Participants reconnected with their bodies, celebrated joy, and built community through movement and play. The series saw strong participation and received sponsorship from a local cold-pressed juice company.

2025



# Participant Reflections

“ Being around so many black women who were also actively and intentionally looking for a space to unpack, heal and re-write their narrative, was so empowering. It reminded me that I am not alone. It reminded me of the importance of community and how we weren't meant to heal in isolation.

“ I cannot stress enough how this is an amazing space to hold for us- black women. I am amazed with the attention to detail and how welcoming everybody has been from the programmers to the facilitator involved. Happy to attended the rest of the cohort :)

“ I loved being a participant. I was so honoured to be chosen. I learned so much and was able to expand on a lot of my views (of the world and of myself). I am so much more whole, confident, calm, strong and peaceful.”

“ I learned how to be a better listener, human, friend, parent and mother. I made life long friends and I walked away with so much knowledge. Every lesson I shared what I learned with family and friends.

“ I felt at home participating in this program. It was so easy to connect with all the women. I felt safe and supported. I was able to speak my truth and be received, seen, understood and held.





# Community Engagement & Outreach

This year, Project Agape showed up across Ottawa in grassroots gatherings, cultural events, and health-focused spaces making sure survivors could find us wherever community lives. Our outreach was joyful, relational, and rooted in meeting people where they are.

## Our Voices Symposium - Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women and WomenattheцентрE



Through Reimagining Justice with the Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women and WomenattheцентрE, community voices highlighted anti-Blackness, economic abuse, housing precarity, and language justice, calling for youth programs, intergenerational dialogue, and healing-centered justice. At Our Voices Symposium, storytelling, art, and lived experience were amplified as tools for policy change, emphasizing ethical organizing, coalition-building, and survivor leadership.



# Community Engagement & Outreach

## Queens Connected - Navigating Harmful Workplaces



At QueensConnected's Navigating Harmful Workplaces, Black and racialized women shared strategies to address racism, tokenism, and pay inequities, reinforcing that workplace equity and economic security are essential to healing. These conversations echo what we see at Project Agape: Black survivors often navigate not only interpersonal harm but also structural barriers that make it harder to rebuild stability, confidence, and safety.

## KOKUMs of Sisters in Spirit - Red Dress Day

Project Agape stood in remembrance, resistance, and solidarity with Families of Sisters in Spirit on Parliament Hill for Red Dress Day, joining communities in honouring the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S+). The red dresses stood as powerful symbols of the lives stolen and the ongoing impact of colonial violence. We shared space, and held the stories, grief, and strength of Indigenous communities with care and respect.





# Community Engagement & Outreach

Across every event, Project Agape strengthened trust, expanded awareness, and ensured survivors experienced safe, affirming, culturally grounded spaces. This past year, you could also find us at:



*Immigrant Women Services Ottawa's  
Women's Health Fair*



*OCTEVAW's  
Pride is Political*



*OCTEVAW and Support Sistem's  
Sip and Swap*



*OCTEVAW's  
Gathering in Grief: End Femicide Now*



# Advocacy and Policy Work: The Healing Circles

## Community-Led Healing for Black Women & Gender-Diverse Survivors

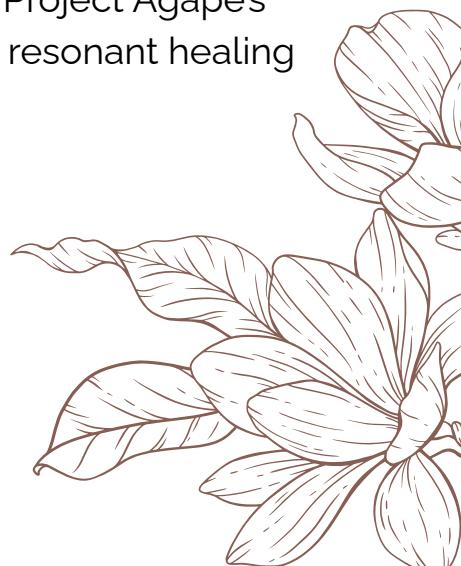
The Healing Circles initiative was created to offer Black women and gender-diverse survivors a culturally grounded space to reconnect, reflect, and heal. Through storytelling, movement, and shared wisdom, Project Agape held space for participants to process their experiences gently and in community.



This report captures the themes, insights, and needs that emerged throughout our 2024–2025 circles, highlighting the collective care we witnessed in every session. The report also offers recommendations for service providers to better support and advocate for Black survivors. This work reflects Project Agape's ongoing commitment to building safe, accessible, culturally resonant healing pathways for Black survivors across our city.

**Click [here](#) to view the full Healing Circles Report**

**The Healing Circles were made possible through funding from the *City of Ottawa*.**





# Key Financial Highlights 2024-2025

This year, the Project Agape community carried us forward. Every dollar entrusted to Project Agape became a moment of care, a door opened, a Black survivor supported, and a story held with dignity. Our first audited year reflects not just numbers, but a deeper commitment to transparency, accountability, and collective healing.

**\$271,556**

*Total Revenue*

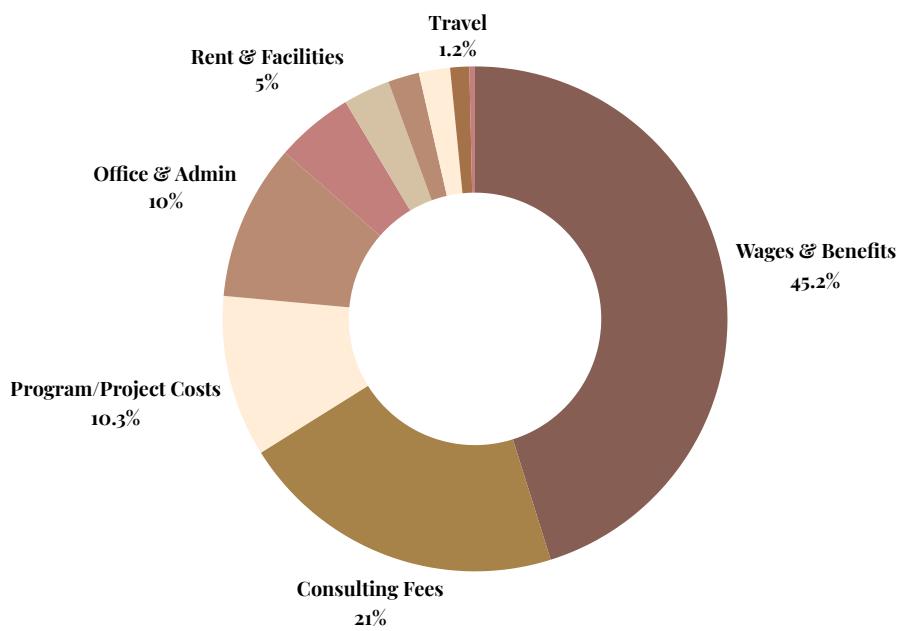
**\$268,220**

*Total Expenses*

## Revenue Sources

Grant partnerships remain the backbone of our work, ensuring Black survivors continue receiving trauma-informed, culturally grounded support.

## Expenditures Breakdown





# Communications and Media



## Take Up Space: Season 3

Season 3 of Take Up Space brought survivors, community members, and experts together to explore the realities of gender-based violence- covering trauma bonds, codependency, toxic masculinity, and systemic barriers.

Each episode offered culturally grounded insights and healing practices, blending lived experience with professional knowledge. The season reinforced Take Up Space as a vital platform for storytelling, education, and advocacy within Black and survivor communities.

## Defining Our Brand: Branding Session with Strast Media

Ahead of our rebranding photoshoot, we partnered with Adrienne Row-Smith of Strast Media (and The Grove) to refine Project Agape's identity. Guided by a collaborative visioning session, we identified themes of empowerment, solidarity, and intersectional justice—building a cohesive brand voice that reflects our values and strengthens our connection with funders and community.





# Recognition and Awards

## Celebrating Community Impact: Youth Action Now – The YANNIES

Project Agape was recognized with two Youth Action Now awards: the **2021 Grantee of the Year Award** and the **Community Building Award** during **The YANNIES** on November 30, 2024.

These honors recognized our ability to transform microgrant funding into impactful programming, strengthen community connections, and amplify the voices of those who are often excluded. This recognition validated our survivor-centered approach and demonstrated to funders and partners the tangible impact of our work in the Ottawa-Gatineau region.





# With *Deep Gratitude*

To our community, funders, partners, and every person who has poured into Project Agape this year, *thank you*. Your support is a deep act of belief in the power of Black-led, survivor-centered healing. Because of you, our programs continue to grow, our communities continue to gather, and survivors continue to access spaces where they are seen, affirmed, and supported with dignity.

This work is only possible through community. Every grant, partnership, donation, and gesture of solidarity helps us build safer futures, expand our capacity, and create programming that meets people where they are. You stand with us in the vision that healing is a community practice.

From our team, our board of directors and the communities we serve: thank you for choosing to invest in this work, to walk alongside us, and to believe in the world we are building together. We are grateful for your trust, your partnership, and your unwavering commitment to ensuring that every survivor has the space, support, and love they deserve.

With deep gratitude and solidarity,



THE  
HOUSSIAN  
FOUNDATION



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

YOUTH ACTION NOW  
LA JEUNESSE PASSE AUX ACTES



LAIDLAW  
FOUNDATION

THE GROVE

Ottawa  
RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

THE  
Enchanté  
NETWORK | LE  
RÉSEAU  
Enchanté

Ottawa



# Contact & Engagement

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**Operations & Programs Manager:** eniola@projectagape.ca

**Communications & Outreach Coordinator:** segolene@projectagape.ca

**Advocacy and Innovation Coordinator:** joy@projectagape.ca

Find us on Instagram, Tik Tok, LinkedIn and YouTube **@projectagapeca**

Website: [projectagape.ca](http://projectagape.ca)

## How to *Support*

Individual well-being is inseparable from the collective. Support and uplift Project's Agape work to end gender-based violence and support survivors.

[Click here to support our work](#)