



2015 - 2024  
INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF  
**AFRICAN DESCENT**



# AFRICAN DESCENT FESTIVAL



## 2023 IMPACT REPORT



## WELCOME TO ENGLISH BAY - JOE FORTES' BEACH

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The African Descent Festival (ADF) was held on August 12 and 13, 2023 -two full days of celebrating the cultural diversity of people of African Descent.

The festival was a live event, taking place in person at its new venue of English Bay Beach, Vancouver. Aside from the breathtaking scenery, the ADF came home to Joe Fortes' beach: Vancouver's legendary lifeguard and hero. Bringing the ADF to this venue created an opportunity for festival goers to learn more about Vancouver's African Descent history and create more awareness of the Black pioneers who helped found our city and province.

The ADF was a great success with over 30 live performances, providing local and international artists the opportunity to perform live, through our African Descent Live Music Tours in Vancouver, BC, as well as Africa - Canada Live Music Tour.

There were close to 20,000 visitors in 2023. The event is a family friendly and fun-filled extravaganza consisting of five main areas: The Main Stage, Youth Stage, Fashion Show stage, Seniors Engagement, Drum Circle Zone, Children Village, Youth Stage, and Vibrant marketplace, which included a delectable selection of food vendors from across Metro Vancouver.

There was an estimated audience of close to 20,000 guests who attended the two-day event. The event had a reach of over 500,000 people on Facebook.



# WHO WE ARE

**The African Descent Festival is one of Vancouver's leading arts festivals, bringing together communities from across Vancouver and Canada, promoting tourism, and reflecting Vancouver's values as a harbour for celebrating diversity, arts, ideas, and culture. Two full days of the festival celebrate the cultural diversity of people of African Descent.**

The African Descent Festival is directed by Yasin Kiraga Misago, Frontline Productions/ Frontline Public Relations, and presented by the African Descent Society of British Columbia, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting African Descent arts, culture, heritage, and tourism in Vancouver, BC, and Canada. Our programs include African Descent Youth Engagement, Africana School of Performing Arts, and African Descent Live Music.

The festival aims to reinvigorate the history of African Descent in British Columbia, and Vancouver, notably in areas like African Descent Communities in Vancouver which include Strathcona and Hogan's Alley - the once thriving African Descent Community from 1858-1859-1900 until 1972 following the construction of Georgia Viaduct.

The ADF is the product of Mr. Misago's vision, as a young African refugee-immigrant in Vancouver, who wanted to not only promote arts and culture for people of African Descent, but to raise awareness for/of:

- The history of the first black people to settle in Vancouver in the 1880's.
  - The people of African Descent community that thrived in the Vancouver from 1900-1971 and were desecrated by the City of Vancouver in 1972 with the construction of the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts.
  - The United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024 and UNESCO General History of Africa Project. Promote the arts and culture of people of African Descent in Vancouver and BC.
- Arts and Culture of people of African Descent.
  - The first exodus of Black settlers in British Columbia who were invited to Salt Spring Island and Vancouver Island by Sir Douglas in 1858.





## OUR VISION

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Drawing from Canada's Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), the African Descent Festival is a Vancouver-based global leader in the presentation of education and culture. We have created an innovative and exceptional musical experience, using both outdoor and indoor stages, representing a wide variety of musical genres. From traditional percussions, reggae, drumming, Afrobeat, Soukous, Rhumba, Dance Hall and so many more, the African Descent Festival speaks to professional artists, internationally acclaimed stars and emerging artists alike - hailing from across the globe. The ADF aims to spread awareness and build a strong, sustainable community for people of African Descent in British Columbia.

We want to bring all people together while showcasing our unique culture in Vancouver as a blueprint for building a healthy community. We are the largest African Descent Festival

across Western Canada, BC, and Metro Vancouver. We are diverse, multicultural and leaders in promoting Heritage and cultural diversity in the Vancouver African Descent Community. We educate and raise awareness and showcase Vancouver African Descent Pioneers since 1859 - extraordinary people who made Vancouver the entertainment and music centre that it is today - and pay tribute to their legacy. We are the largest representation of people of African Descent and different cultural identities in Western Canada and we are one of the top biggest events of African Descent in Canada.

The ADF is a Vancouver-based event, presented by the African Descent Society BC and is registered under the BC Society Act as S-0063022.

# OUR MANDATE

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## The African Descent Festival and African Descent Society BC are Dedicated to:

- Promote a spirit of unity and cordial relations among Canadians of African descent through multiculturalism and cultural diversity;
  - Promote and facilitate the participation of Canadians of African Descent in Canadian society through live music, culture, and educational history presentations;
  - Produce and present cultural, heritage, education, and social events that profile and celebrate Canadians of African descent;
  - Research, educate, and provide information and consultation to the community as a whole with respect to people of African Descent heritage, culture, and immigration;
  - Creating relationships and networking with government agencies and departments to provide music, culture, heritage, and education about people of African Descent, as well as services that support the quality of life of Canadians of African Descent;
  - Procure or acquire such funds as may be necessary for the fulfillment of said purposes through voluntary contributions, grants, bequests, provision of services, entertainment, and other means;
  - Provide similar and related services as determined by the membership;
  - Building and nurturing an appreciation for the vibrant history of African Descent music and culture in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and beyond;
- Presenting the finest African, Canadian, and international superstars coming to perform and tour Canada through diverse live music concerts, cultural, music genres, and cultural educational activities;
  - Supporting and promoting the development of arts, through local and international talent who tour Canada and other cities to showcase their work, mentoring artists and creating unique artist collaborations via cross-cultural music genres with the ability to cross geographic and cultural boundaries.;
  - Building Vancouver as a destination for World and African Descent live music;
  - Promoting youth engagement and supporting emerging African Descent Artists about the history of African Descent music across all different creative arts and music genres;
  - Increasing audiences through education, high quality live performances and productions, and education and community engagement;
  - Promoting the Canada International Decade for people of African Descent and its theme of recognizing Justice and Development.





# IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

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The African Descent Festival leaves a positive and lasting impact every year. Lots of people got to learn the importance of Joe Fortes in African Descent history. Furthermore, people were able to enjoy African culture, Music, dance, food, and heritage.

The festival was also an avenue for people to relax with their families while enjoying the entertainment and learning more about the importance of African History.

Despite the heat wave conditions, there was a high attendance at the beach as more than 10,000 attended the festival. We were able to get different food and clothing vendors involved.

Over 40 volunteers signed up to be part of the festival which shows how inspiration this festival is. A lot of people got to learn the importance of JOe Fortes to African Descent history. There was also high user engagement in terms of likes, shares, reposts and comments. Here are some of the comments and feedback we got from the attendees;

## MUSIC & ART EDUCATION

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We have run an extensive series of programs:

- The annual African Descent Festival
- Live music and music workshop series from a year of music and artist development
- Emergency Artist development
- Africana School of Performance and Music
- Music and Heritage Keepers
- Music, arts, dance, and live recording at Frontline Records music program
- Public outreach music program
- Fashion shows
- Music Africa Canada international touring program
- Sound of African Descent Youth cultural showcase

The African Descent Festival broadens and brings a deep understanding of Canadian African Descent arts and culture through a variety of music genres, which showcase the history and music originating from Africa.

The festival helped to enrich a wide audience and bring more cultural awareness through a variety of multi-cultural programs.



# THE EMERGING ARTIST ON STAGE (TEAS)

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The Emerging Artist on Stage program presented new and emerging dancers and new artists on stage by showcasing talents in dance, music, and performance arts to a wide audience. These emerging and young talents got the chance to not only perform, but to experience other new talents and dance from the community, especially from African Descent Community.

We are especially proud to support youth and emerging talents in the community. Under the direction of N’Nato Camara, one of Vancouver’s international dancers and music instructor, she led a group of dancers and artists who collaborated on stage. Her music, dance, and performance expertise had a profound impact on the crowd by bringing African music dance styles not seen normally in Vancouver. The Vancouver music dancers, artists, and audience got the opportunity to explore new opportunities and challenges through dance techniques and really learned what it means to be an artist and dancer and how dance can bring people together.



# MUSIC & ARTIST COLLABORATIONS

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It is a tradition for the African Descent Festival to bring professional artists and dancers to collaborate with local and emerging artists in order to share the stage together. It is a huge opportunity for some to be able to open the show for international headliners as a way of promoting artists’ collaboration.

The ADF worked in partnership with many local, national, and international artists to bring them together for performance collaborations and networking. The Festival worked with dozens of promoters, booking

agents, independent artists, music producers, DJs, and different partners and stakeholders in order to extend our reach and develop a wide and diverse audience in the community.

The festival featured over 35 performers in live bands totaling about two hundred individual participants artists about 98% were Canadian artists.





# SOME OF OUR PARTNERS INCLUDE:



MARLOSS LIVE INC

FRONTLINE RECORDS

AFRO MUSIC EMPIRE

PAN-AFRICAN FESTIVAL

OTTAWA AFRICAN FESTIVAL

BCAH PROGRAM

OPEN MIC PRODUCTIONS

OPEN MIC PRODUCTIONS

VANCOUVER SPECIAL  
FILMING EVENTS

VANCOUVER SOUND  
AND LIGHTS

EP PROMOTIONS

AFRICAN INDEPENDENT  
MUSIC



## FESTIVAL SUCCESSES

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Our team was so proud of the 2023 festival, despite the early morning rain on both days. There was rainfall during the morning to almost midday, which destabilized the decoration and early morning festival-goers, but this later cleared, bringing the festival back to normal.

Cultural activities, vendors and live music continued until closing time. This success is attributed to the many community sponsors, funders, artists, volunteers, and the professional production team.

We wish to give a huge thanks to everyone who made the festival such a massive success again in 2024!

The festival's success can also be attributed to a large group of dedicated volunteer team leaders and staff members, as well as committed board members of the African

Descent Festival who spent hours recruiting and training new volunteers to work in various festival positions.

A Festival is a special event that requires a community's participation. This requires a great contribution for volunteers to engage with community members such as food vendors, community booths, logistics, artists, and many more components of the festival. We thank our volunteers for their time, compassion, and dedication!







## FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

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The African Descent Festival is privileged to introduce and help support emerging artists by offering them a chance to perform live in front of large audiences and open for major headliners.

The ADF had a great financial year as it managed to achieve close to 90% of the planned budget, obtaining community support

from all levels of government, corporate sponsors, volunteers, and local businesses. The festival's success can also be attributed to a large group of dedicated volunteers and staff members, as well as committed board members of the African Descent Festival and other community partners.

**We wish to give a huge thanks to the production and technical team who made the festival such a massive success again in 2023!**

# LIVE MUSIC BANDS & FASHION SHOW

The 2023 African Descent Festival included about thirty-five live music bands over two days with over 90% percent of them comprised of local artists. The festival gave more opportunities for female artists on stage over the previous year.

The ADF presented internationally acclaimed Master KG, producer of “Jerusalema,” certified diamond by FRA and topping Billboard’s World Digital Song Sales chart. The festival presented two other female international superstars Makhadzi and Zanda Zakuza, both from South Africa. Local Artists such as Safi Madiba, Mazacote, the Boom Booms, Chelsea Johnson, Samba Fusion, dominated the two days, alongside cultural dancers who made the festival an exciting event.

Apart from live music, the African Descent Festival presented one of the best Fashion shows in. Over the two days, th ADF collaborated with Mawogan Fashions, a Vancouver Fashion company. The Fashion show is one of the best components of the African Descent Festival as it is mainly organized to promote Multiculturalism and cultural diversity through fashion and cultural expression, bringing various cultural groups all together to promote inclusivity and diversity.

The African Descent Fashion is non-exclusive to which culture or where you come from. It is an event where every person and nationality is invited to participate to wear an African-designed cultural outfit to promote African Fashion or the spirit of African Descent cultural identity.



# CULTURAL DANCE & DRUM CIRCLE

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Not only is World Music largely showcased at African Descent Festival, but our identity and cultural traditions are shown through the expression of our heritage cultural dance and drumming. Drumming together and spiritual dance leads to community healing and unity in the community.

Isa and Josephine are among the African Cultural dancers who performed during the percussion event. Their dance was highly appreciated by African Descent Festival fans.



# HERITAGE WALKING TOURS

Th African Descent Festival, through the use of a digital LED wall, displayed a presentation about African Descent History in Vancouver and British Columbia. This display highlighted the history of our pioneers and their contribution since 1858.

This unique exploration, shown during each live performance over the two days, offered audiences a glimpse of the History of the people of African Descent. Starting with five hundred years of trans-Atlantic trade from Africa to the Americas to a history of African Descent pioneers, audiences audiences could learn something new while listening to world class performances. This is a great piece of history that attracted so many community members - youth, adults, and elders - who are always eager to learn about this great hidden history and aim to promote anti-racism, diversity, and multiculturalism.

There was a walking tour led by Yasin Kiraga Misago in the former African Descent History communities with over fifty-five people attending to learn about the history of African Descent pioneers and about anti-racism. There was a History of African Descent Exhibitions live at the park about the trans-Atlantic slave trade with maps and many other learning materials. Communities shared interactive stories about the longest immigration and slave trade in the history of global immigration.



# DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS

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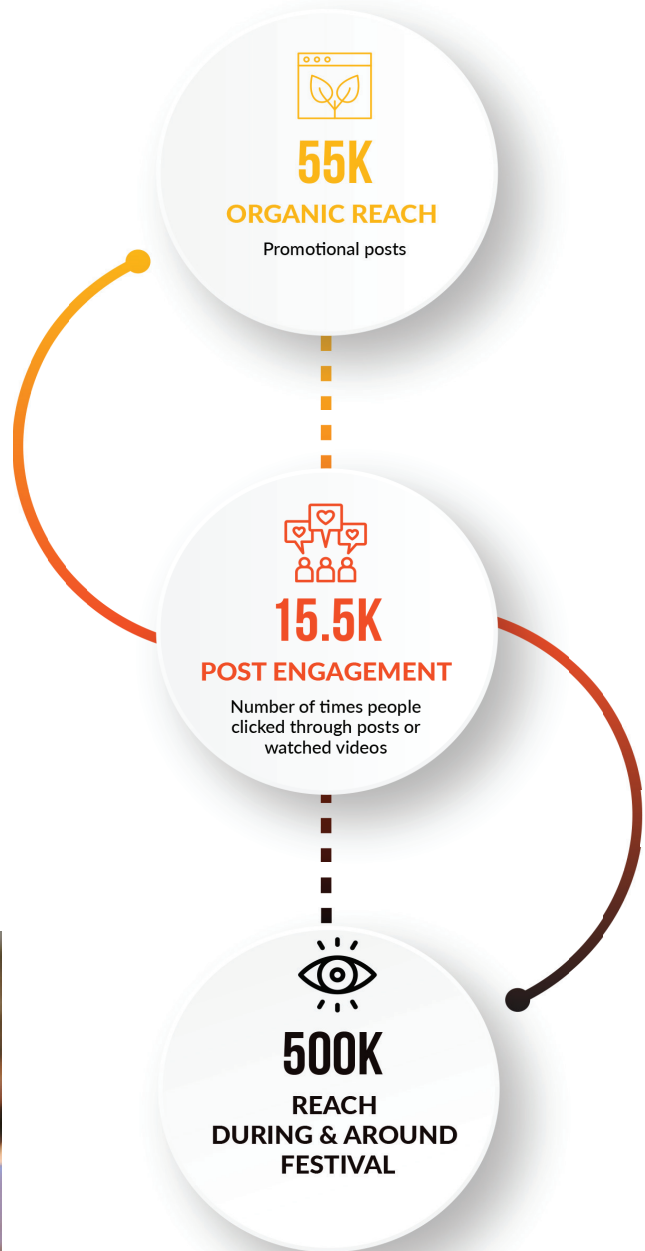
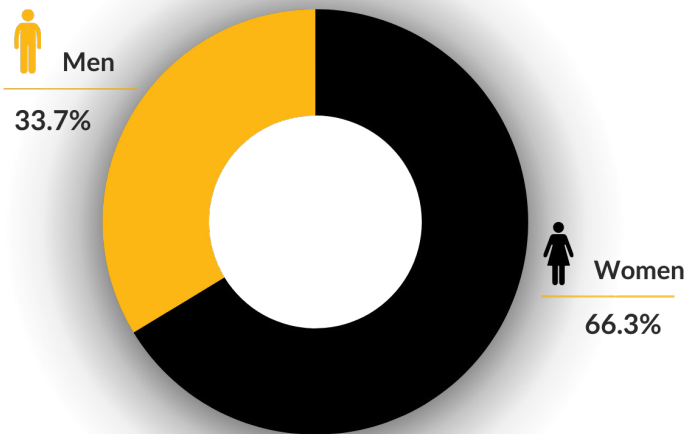
- The ADF Facebook page was filled with thousands of audience videos. One video for our headliner, Makhadzi, was viewed by over one million people.
- The festival saw an estimated attendance of 20,000 people at the beach, and over a half a million online, making the event very successful both online and in person.
- The Festival worked with several bloggers and social media promoters who helped the ADF reach a geographically diverse audience.
- The festival partnered with two local Vancouver small businesses for printing and design: East Van Graphics and The Press Room, in order to produce professional media to reach out to our target audience.
- The ADF is considered to be one of the fastest growing city arts and cultural festivals and the leading arts and cultural festival for people of African Descent, attracting high-quality local, national and international artists who made Vancouver their summer destination.
- The festival featured over 35 performers in live bands totaling about two hundred individual participants artists about 98% were Canadian artists.
- Due to live streaming, the ADF attracted a much more geographically diverse audience, which saw people not only from various Canadian cities but the USA, South America, and Africa.
- The ADF garnered in-kind contributions of over \$140,000 which include volunteers in marketing, production, community outreach, research, and development, fundraising, planning, and artists liaison.
- The festival conducted the Black Strathcona Heritage Walking Tour as part of the arts, culture, and historical education of African Descent in Vancouver.
- The ADF presented a number of emerging local artists as part of its Artist Development Program.
- The festival presented four hundred Drums for the African Descent Drum Circle for each day of the two-day festival, led by Munkie and Sarah West Coast Drumming. This brought various multicultural groups drumming together as well as workshops on African drumming.
- The performances were amazing! Because of the support received, the ADF has been able to consistently grow and inspire everyone who experiences it.





## PROMOTIONAL & LIVE REACH

### ONLINE ENGAGEMENT BY DEMOGRAPHIC



# HEADLINING TALENT

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## EDDIE KENZO

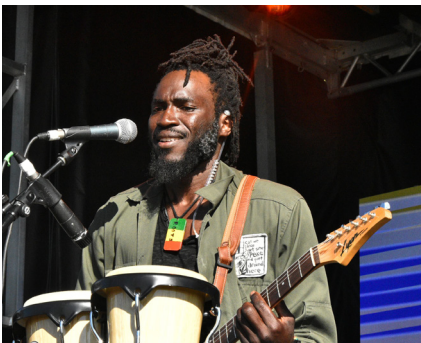




*The Boom Booms*

## LOCAL TALENT

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*Brian Baroda - Mivule*



*Chelsea Johnson*



*Kara Kata*



*Mazacote*



*AfroCity*



# IMPACT ON TOURISM

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Through the help of the Canada Council for Arts, the ADF sponsored its headliners, Master KG alongside Makhazi, who came from South Africa. The artist's live performance online now have over 1.3 million live views on the internet. These artists toured other parts of Canada: Edmonton, Ottawa, Regina, Prince George, Ottawa and Toronto where they performed to a live audience of close to a million. Making this festival a very important event in promoting tourism across Canada.

Through its live-stream, the festival was once again able to attract visitors from different parts of Canada, as well as garnering an international audience online. Those who watched the event from afar were able to connect to Vancouver, BC, with the African Descent Society BC sending its brand to international communities all over. The festival production staff continues to invest heavily in quality production, mobile internet, and streaming technology.

The festival continues to develop a large section of tourists in Vancouver and BC, which is a positive indication that the festival is able to increase opportunities for the local economy. Community events such as the Heritage Walking Tour continue to attract visitors, but also highlights the need for Black-owned business in historic African-Descent areas in Vancouver.

## SENIORS ENGAGEMENT

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The African Descent Festival, in partnership with a Vancouver seniors centre presented a great community booth for the seniors and contributed to the development of seniors centres. African Descent seniors all participated. We also invited them to facilitate spoken word workshops. Other activities seniors did was fundraising and were so proud to contribute to the cause chosen, which was a charity in Rwanda.

### The information gathered during and after the Festival about the impact of tourism indicated that:

- The Festival brought several thousand online visitors to "visit" Vancouver while watching the festival for two days. This sparked a genuine curiosity to learn more about our city.
- Motivation to visit Vancouver was influenced by the African Descent Festival, and many expressed a positive attitude towards the artists' performances.
- International touring artists rated the African Descent Festival highly, as it created a great platform for artists to come together and collaborate. Artists and visitors all agreed to return back to the festival in 2024.
- 100% of performers and artists believe that the festival pays well and they would like to come back in 2024.



# CELEBRATING 10 YEARS IN 2024

To commemorate its 10th anniversary, the African Descent Society BC and African Descent Festival program will be revamped to include more activities and cover a wider geographical area. The ADF also aims to celebrate the ending of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. Some of the initiatives include:

- Highlighting the key achievements of the African Descent Festival in the past years.
- Keeping the new venue at English Bay Beach, where we continue to build relationship with the City.
- More youth-oriented activities in a designated specialized space.
- Attracting local and international partners, building a strong relationship with major partners around the globe.
- A celebration of the 10th anniversary activities including special guest speakers.

**2024 Headlining Talent will include international reggae stars, Nkulee & TK Dube, international sensation Jose Chameleon, Toronto native Emmanuel Jal and Vancouver natives, Mivule**



A promotional poster for the 10th Annual African Descent Festival. The background is a dark, moody photograph of a man in the water, smiling. The text is overlaid on the image. On the left, it says "10TH ANNUAL" in yellow, "AFRICAN DESCENT FESTIVAL" in large white letters, "PRESENTED BY AFRICAN DESCENT SOCIETY BC" in yellow, and "LEARN MORE AT WWW.ADSBC.ORG" in white. On the right, a yellow diagonal shape contains the text "Welcome to Joe Fortes' Beach!" in bold black letters. There are decorative orange and white diagonal lines on the right side of the poster.





**Local tourism remains a major goal of the African Descent Festival.**

## FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

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The African Descent Festival will continue to be both in-person and live-streamed, expanding our audience reach.

The Festival needs more funding, sponsorships, and local partnership development for growth and further expansion.

The African Descent Festival was rated as one of the top live virtual festivals in Vancouver. We will continue to invest in top production

and live-stream technology, making sure the event is produced to a high professional standard.

The festival leadership appreciated all of the volunteers' contributions throughout the whole year with regard to planning and production.



**The festival outlined clients' and community satisfaction with the event, with the goal of increasing the number of attendees for future sustainability as well as attracting local, regional, national, and international artists with a role in sharing art and culture with local festival visitors.**





## ECONOMIC IMPACT

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The festival supported hotels in Vancouver contracted by the African Descent Society to house our artists, especially those touring international artists visiting to perform in Canada. We spent money on hotels, restaurants, and other venues as well as caterers that provided food and drinks for our guests touring in Vancouver.

With the ongoing pandemic, Festival revenue was affected once more. Many sponsors had either deferred their funds from the previous year or decreased them outright. Being able to host the event at Thornton Park came as somewhat of a surprise, which came with its own challenges. As such, the ADF was not able to raise enough funds or garner enough sponsorship in time for the event.

The ADF garnered in-kind contributions of over \$200,000 which include volunteers in marketing, production, community outreach, research, and development, fundraising, planning, and artists liaison.

The Festival was able to create employment opportunities for local businesses like production companies, print media, designers, artists and professionals. The Festival contributed to the gross domestic product, taxes to the City of Vancouver and to industry players, building large sources of revenue generated from locally made products and many local business vendors as a way of developing and supporting local entrepreneurs, especially small business owners.





# AFRICAN DESCENT SOCIETY

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OUR DIRECTORS WORK YEAR-ROUND TO CREATE CULTURALLY ENRICHING PROGRAMMING TO BRING ABOUT AWARENESS AND EDUCATION OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN DESCENT CULTURE IN BC.



On behalf of the African Descent Society BC  
Board Members & Festival Management Team,

Yasin Kiraga Misago  
Executive Director & Founder  
African Descent Society BC

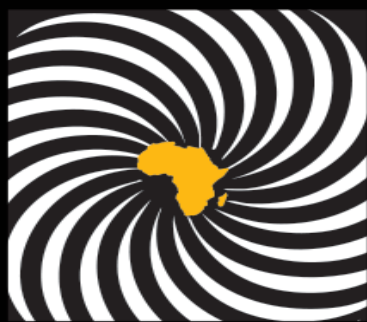
African Descent Festival  
#600 - 777 Hornby Street,  
Vancouver, BC, V6Z 1S4 Canada

Phone: +1 604 355 4434

President: Brian Baroda  
Operations Manager: Adewale Alao

[ADSBC.ORG](https://adsbc.org)

[WWW.AFRICANDESCENTFESTIVAL.COM](https://www.africandescentfestival.com)



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