

ANNUAL REPORT

Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta (CAAC) operating as Africa Centre

2012—2013



Children at play during the Out of School Time program

The Council for Advancement of African-Canadians (CAAC), operating as Africa Centre, was launched in 2006. It is a one-stop multi-purpose centre, an Edmonton based non-profit organization where culturally appropriate programs, services and activities are delivered to members of the community, and serves as the hub of the African community. Africa Centre is also a hospitable place for new African immigrants.

Celebrating Achievements

- Over **2000** children and youth were served
- Over **3000** women and men were served in conversation cafes and community events
- All our programs are popular and over subscribed
- Moving forward with a new Multicultural Centre
- Our programs and services are open to **ALL**

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Message from the Chairperson

It is my pleasure to present you with the 2012 – 2013 Annual Report for the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta (CAAC) operating as Africa Centre. The report documents another outstanding and very busy year outlining the progress the organization has made in meeting our goals and objectives for 2012 - 2013. We worked towards enhancing our services in 2012 through new initiatives such as the Conversation Cafés for youth and women. We are also moving forward with the necessary steps that are required for the realization of the new African Multicultural Centre to be built at the current Wellington site.

Our successes were not without challenges. Similar to the previous year, we were faced with financial strain and an increasing demand for programs and services. Despite these challenges, we are pleased to report that we met and exceeded our goals with a shoe string budget. We achieved that through dedication, common sense and prudence. We made new alliances with other organizations and initiated steps to diversify our resources.

It is important for me to share with you all some of the recent accomplishments of Africa Centre:

- Over 2000 children and youth were served through our summer camps that run for six weeks and cater to over 120 children and our Rotary Early Learning & Family programs continue to serve many children and their families in our community.
- Over 3000 women and men were served in conversation cafes and community events. Conversation cafés specifically continue to mobilize, connect and empower the women, men and youth in our community.
- Black History Month celebrations are now hosted annually to showcase the contributions of Canadians of African descent.
- Mother's Day, has also become an annual event that is a great celebration honouring the contributions of our African mothers.
- Our annual Africa Day and All Africa Games have grown successfully and keep uniting and bringing together Africans from many countries to share their cultures and enjoy music, dance, food and healthy sports competition with Edmonton residents and friends of Africa Centre.
- The celebration of cultures continues to be a special occasion for sharing amongst the African, the Aboriginal and the Chinese communities in Edmonton.

In the years to come we may face new hurdles, but Africa Centre will continually evolve and develop new strategies, building an even greater tomorrow for the African Canadians in our city.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to making Africa Centre a growing success in this beautiful city of Edmonton. We are now well positioned to empower our people and leave behind a legacy for future generations.

My sincere appreciation also goes to the City of Edmonton, the City Administration, the City Council and all our friends and partners who have supported us, our community and believed in our organization through the years.

God bless you,
Charles Balenga
CAAC Board Chairperson



Charles Balenga, CAAC Chairperson



Tesfaye Ayalew, Executive Director

Message from the Executive Director

I am very pleased and honored to share with you all Africa Centre's progress for the year 2012-2013. As a centre, we continue to provide important educational, recreational and social opportunities for children, youth and their families. Children and youth have specifically been targeted in our strategy as they are the future leaders of the community.

We have supported thousands of families through our *Early Learning and Family Program* and the *Out of School Time* program in addition to various community engagements and events. The pages that follow detail more of our accomplishments in 2012.

We sincerely appreciate the leadership of our Board of Directors; and along with our staff and volunteers, together we pledge to continue our mission to improve the quality of life of refugees and immigrants of African origin. Particularly those who have experienced wars and persecution, with a special focus on children, youth and their families. It is both an honour and a privilege to work with a team of dedicated staff, the board, volunteers and community partners in facilitating change in the lives of families who use our services and facilities each day. The support received from all of them gives me confidence in the continued success of Africa Centre.

I believe we can continue to build this momentum and garner even wider support to achieve real and enduring changes in the lives of African Canadians in Edmonton.

Moving into 2013, we do so with the optimism that our innovative initiatives such as the conversation cafes will help us gather feedback from the community on their needs and in turn develop long-term strategic priorities to support youth, women, families and seniors. We will respond with action through engagement, appropriate program and service delivery, advocacy, outreach, and education. We will commit to whatever it takes to create a future that will improve the social and economic inclusion of African Canadians in order to enable them to become contributing members of society and to live in dignity.

On behalf of our staff, the Board of Directors and our volunteers, I would like to thank our funders, supporters, community members, service providers, and our clients who have been our partners throughout last year's journey. *Prosperity through hard work and cooperation* is our motto and the very foundation that is reflected in every relationship that makes and forms our programs and services.

As we look forward to another rewarding year, I wish to leave you with a quote from Booker T. Washington: "*Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.*"

My best Regards,
Tesfaye Ayalew,
Executive Director

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

To establish an African Centre that will serve as the hub of the community and provide an atmosphere that is welcoming, show respect for diversity and support members of all interests and abilities.

Mission

The organization strives to create opportunities for access and full participation of members of the African community in all aspects of society including economic, social, cultural and educational endeavors and contribute to the holistic development and wellness of the African individual, family and community.

Motto: Prosperity through hard work and cooperation.

Values: The council is committed to diversity, accessibility and social justice. All policies, rules and regulations respect people of all races, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status and ability. As an organisation and individuals, we value:

- *Integrity and Honesty:* We demonstrate honest, ethical behaviour in all transactions.
- *Openness and Respectfulness:* We believe that all people should be treated with consideration and dignity.
- *Responsiveness:* We strive to be accessible, flexible, and transparent and to demonstrate a sense of urgency in our resolve and decision making.
- *Accountability:* We are committed to donors/funders, members, partners, employees for commitments, results, quality and to responsible use of funds.
- *Team work:* We are committed to effective partnerships between volunteers and staff, and we seek opportunities to form alliances with others as well as continual improvement and personal renewal .

Our Team

Board of Directors

Charles Balenga:	Chairperson
Meheret Worku:	Vice Chairperson
Mukadi Samy:	Secretary
Mohammed Hassan:	Treasurer
Ghettuba Beatrice:	Director
Isaac Dawit:	Director
Khamisi Muru:	Director
Tamaklo Keli:	Director
Tamanikwa Tichanowa:	Director

Staff & Supports

Executive Director: Tesfaye Ayalew
Rotary Early Learning and Family Program Manager: Roman G. Mariam
Facility Coordinator: Jean Pierre Valois
Administrative Assistant: Eve Uwamahoro
City of Edmonton CRC - Africa Centre Liaison: Tim O'Donnell
City of Edmonton Asset Management & Public Works: Lynda Nelson

We Cook & Learn Together

Cooking and Learning Together provides an opportunity for women from various African nations to come together to plan, prepare and share nutritional, low cost foods appropriate for their families.

The objectives of this program are:

- To provide nutritional, low cost cooking and food selection skills that are adapted to Canadian culture for recently settled African women.
- To create a welcoming environment that fosters friendship, community and family support for participants while reducing isolation.
- To create opportunities for English language, reading and Math skills enhancement.
- To honor and celebrate the many diverse languages and cultural heritage.

The class is a space for the women to gather together to support each other socially, to support their families, to preserve their cultures through the sharing of food knowledge, and to learn more about Canadian cuisine.

Programs

Africa Centre focuses on programs and services that create economic, educational, social, cultural and professional opportunities for its members. The centre also addresses the diverse needs of African youth including after school programs, stay-in-school initiatives, peer support and mediation, crime prevention, business training, the environment, health, leadership development, recreational and sports activities. Africa Centre encourages voluntarism and increased civic understanding.



Children in the ACOST program benefit from a mix of activities including academic, recreational and cultural.

Africa Centre Out of School Time program (ACOST) provides a mix of academic, recreational and cultural activities for school aged children in grades 1 to 12. This program runs during critical hours after school on Tuesdays Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Although the program focuses on African immigrants/refugee children, it is open for anyone interested in the program. There is no cost for the program; snacks and meals are provided as needed. Led by volunteers, different themes are applied to the program schedule. More than 100 children per month benefited from ACOST program and 210 children participated in summer camps.

AT A GLANCE

100 children per month are registered in the ACOST Program

210 Children are registered in Summer Camps



Children being kept safe and engaged as part of the Africa Centre Drop In Program.

Rotary Early Learning and Family Programs

The Rotary Early Learning and Family Program is one of our programs that fosters family and community connections. Families are often enrolled in multiple programs. The need for every program we deliver comes from the families we serve and all the programs are designed to contribute to the holistic wellbeing of children and their families.

Early Learning Children Drop In

African families with young children are immigrating to Edmonton from various countries. This Drop-in program gives parents an opportunity to drop off their children at Africa Centre for a few hours, a couple of times a week. Its objective is to keep children safe while it assists them to learn in all aspects of their development, integrate and mix with other children in a diverse environment.

Remarks from Parents who have been part of the Rotary Early Learning Program:

"My main concern is my child's socialization. When he plays with children at the centre; it will be smooth for him to socialize with children in his Soccer team."

"I want my child to play with her peers because she is a bit shy."

"I would like my child to obey an adult when directed by a teacher."

"My child faced a delay in developing his speech. After coming to this program, he made a lot of friends and talks a lot."

"My son likes Africa Centre because he makes new friends, learns how to share, to be polite and friendly."

Rhymes That Bind

The Rotary Early Learning Program at Africa Centre brings other programs to the centre in order to benefit the children and their families. Rhymes that Bind is offered in partnership with the Centre for Family Literacy for children under the age of three and their families. It is an oral language development program that also promotes positive parenting. The program focuses on rhymes, stories and songs. It runs every Wednesday 1pm-2pm.

Beneficiaries in Numbers

Drop In: 620 Children

Rhymes: 18 women **35** children

Rotary Early Learning Spring & Summer Camps

The spring break camp runs for one week in March and summer camp for six weeks. Both camps were designed for children of four and five years of age to provide educational and recreational activities. The camps run at a maximum capacity of 24 children per day and the activities are child centred and child directed. Working parents have specifically acknowledged that this was a great service that the Africa Centre provided. **Details on page 8.**

Remarks from participants of the Women's Active Healthy Living program:

"I get to exercise while my children are looked after by qualified childcare professionals, I cannot ask for more."

"Zumba fitness is the best thing I have done for myself, I would not have been able to have access to such a fun class if it was not for the Africa Centre."

WAHL has benefited 120 women and 140 children

Women's Active Healthy Living Program

African women want programming where they can get together for fun, exercise and to safely share experiences and information. It is also well documented that people benefit from culture-specific programming. Women who frequent the Africa Centre for various programs asked for an exercise program where they can also access child care. As a result, Africa Centre introduced the Women's Active Healthy Living program.

The objectives for this program are:

- To encourage women in the community to gather, socialize and exercise while their children are cared for
- To enhance the fitness level and healthy lifestyle for immigrant women in a group setting
- To provide a platform for women to better care for themselves and their families
- To provide women with a safe space to discuss, identify and take action on their needs and strengths within the Community.

The program has been running for several sessions and includes childcare, a Zumba fitness class led by a certified instructor complete with a healthy snack and it is now followed by a participant led discussion group facilitated by a registered social worker. Africa Centre is happy to provide this program as it meets with its mission to reflect the needs of the community, to use the resources within the community, and to build the capacities of Edmonton's African community.



Under the WAHL program, women get to exercise while their children are safely looked after.



Teenagers enjoying a game of basketball in the summer camp program at Africa Centre

Summer, Spring Camp programs for school aged children

The Africa Centre hosted two summer camps in 2012, one was held at the Africa Centre site where children from grade 1 to 12 were registered. Another camp was held at McCauley School for children ages 12 to 16 years. McCauley summer camp's target was to teach young African girls and boys about African history and culture, to equip them with knowledge about their heritage, create an awareness of their identity and leadership. The McCauley camp was the first of its kind where Africa Centre worked in partnership with AMFA, KESHOTU and ASSIST.

This program also helps children to spend their day being physical, experience success and become more confident, gain resiliency, unplug from technology, develop life-long skills, grow more independent, have free time for unstructured play, and learn social skills and sincere communication. Camp builds teamwork and children get to reconnect with nature, and make true friends.

**180 children participated
30 at McCauley**

ACOST Spring Camp

Africa Centre's spring break camp for children aged 6 to 12 years was held from March 25-28, 2013. The program was designed to provide a safe and accountable environment and fun recreational activities for children in grades 1-8 during the Spring Break. During the program 50 children were encouraged to reach their highest potential during activities; they were provided with instruction in basic recreational skills, which can be used both immediately and in the future; activities were planned to integrate the children into the community; encourage participation in activities according to children's abilities; improve awareness of recreation, education and community resources; and offer high-quality programming. The camp activities are designed to enhance the development of leisure, social and physical skills. They are child-centered and child-directed. Recreation activities were planned and developed to meet children's needs or interests.



A young girl plays with her dog friend during the camp.

Conversation Cafés

Africa Centre initiated a series of conversation café style community engagement involving Youth, Post-Secondary students and Women of African heritage to assess needs and challenges, to build capacity within the community in order to address identified challenges/needs. They are also aimed at providing opportunities for networking and information sharing.

In addition to the above mentioned objectives the conversation cafes have a number of other goals which include the following:

- Empowering youth, post-secondary students and women with the knowledge and skills they need to successfully integrate into the Canadian system.
- Enhancing the skills/abilities of women and their communities through capacity building, knowledge and information sharing, and networking opportunities
- Increasing dialogue, support and cooperation between community members and organisations.
- Increased awareness of societal issues and community involvement in advocacy and civic engagement.



Women engaged in café-style information sharing at the Africa Centre.

Women Conversation Café

The Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta (CAAC), operating as the Africa Centre, held a number of Women's Conversation Cafés. This activity is increasingly becoming very important and beneficial to participants. This happens quarterly a year and these series of conversation café have helped Africa Centre to identify challenges/needs and solutions and now the women are in the process of developing Women Initiative Strategic plan.

After a grueling information sharing session, this group of women can now smile and relax.





“**50** youth per session attended the Youth Conversation Café-style dialogues”

A cross section of youth sharing information during one of the sessions under the Conversation Café programs

Youth Conversation Cafés

Africa Centre held a number of youth conversation cafes and they aimed at bringing together young African boys and girls to identify issues or problems that affect them in the areas of education, recreation & sports and employment. The challenges/needs were identified and solutions were suggested. The youth prioritized the challenges/needs for Africa Centre to come up with an action plan on how to support the youth in our communities. As part of this, Africa Centre also initiated Post-Secondary conversation cafes which identified challenges/needs faced by African post-secondary students in Edmonton. In response to this, the Africa Centre engaged them to understand their challenges as post-secondary students. Furthermore we made them part of the solutions of the challenges they face.

The post-secondary program was formed as a result of a lack of post-secondary student involvement at the African Centre. These conversation cafés were held in three sessions and each session had 40 to 50 post-secondary students in attendance.

Africa Centre also involved these post-secondary students in the existing programs at the centre as mentors to the children in our community and encouraged them to come up with more programs that can help them get involved with the community and Edmonton as whole.

EVENTS

Africa Centre events have seen tremendous success by attracting the interests of culturally diverse crowds, including the attendance of important dignitaries, the Mayor and councillors of the City of Edmonton and VIPs from the African-Canadian community. The centre hosts four major events throughout the year; Black History Month, Mother's Day, Africa Day and the weekend-long African Soccer Tournament.

Africa Day Gala

This event was held on June 30, 2012, the theme of the year 2012 was "Active and Healthy Living". This event was accompanied by showcasing the spectacular Juno Award Winning African music group - "AFRICAN GUITAR SUMMIT" to entertain the participants and Keynote Speakers. 300 people attended the event.

The objectives of this event are:

- To promote togetherness, unity, trust and establish networking among Africans in the city
- To share the African culture
- To heighten awareness and build appreciation for the contributions of African-Canadians to the local arts, culture and business
- To create opportunity for various immigrant and refugee groups, immigrant serving agencies and Government entities to develop viable working relationships
- To nurture young Africans into appreciating their African heritage.



African Guitar Summit with staff of the Africa Centre after entertaining 300 people.

All Africa Games attract 16 countries

The annual all Africa Games tournament organized by Africa Centre was held from June 30 to July 1, 2012. The tournament comprised various sporting activities such as basketball, volleyball, track and field and soccer. A total of 16 African nations were represented. Four teams participated in basketball and volleyball, soccer attracted 16 countries while we had eight individuals participating in track and field events. The three-day tournament brought together at least 700 to 800 people each day from all backgrounds including children. The objectives of the games are:

- To celebrate multiculturalism and diversity in our local African population through a variety of Sporting activities;
- Create a greater sense of tolerance and understanding, in building supportive relationships;
- Bring communities together-to Model cooperation through sports;
- Promote Active and Healthy life style among the various Targeted groups
- Provide direct contact with supporters and donors and, to attract publicity and expose the community to the Africa Centre



African youth at a crime prevention symposium.

Youth Crime Prevention Symposium

This event was initiated and coordinated by young African boys and girls to know how they can prevent crimes that happen in our society. Edmonton Police Service representative was the key presenter. Participants learned about crime prevention in their quest to make Canada a country where everyone is respected and treated equally. The talk encouraged youth to stay in school and work towards helping other youth groups in the community in order to avoid the potential of getting involved in criminal activities such as drug dealing and theft.

The event included a free BBQ and brought together different African youths from various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds together. African youths connected with one another and even got to play some basketball. The event was attended by 25 young boys and girls.

International Youth Day

This celebration was held on August 11, 2012. Africa Centre in partnership with many community organizations that work to enhance the lives and well-being of children, youth, and families in Edmonton hosted an outdoor festival for youth and their families. The day was filled with a mixture of fun activities, as well as learning opportunities for youth and their families.

The purpose of the festival is to celebrate young people in Edmonton, provide fun and interactive games for youth to engage with a diversity of youth as well as provide a forum for youth to learn about community resources that are available to them.



A fun-filled day belies the serious lessons in life for these youth during the International Youth Day

Provision of Space to Cultural Groups

In addition to programming and services, the Africa Centre also has a dual purpose in providing space to cultural organisations which helps these groups to provide their own services and programming to their communities. These groups include:

- Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton
- South Sudanese Canadian Community Association of Edmonton
- Oromian Community Association of Northern Alberta
- Edmonton Harari Community of Alberta
- African Cultures and Traditions Society of Edmonton
- United Bilal Community Association of Alberta
- Airport Taxi Drivers Group
- Association of Intercultural and Community Prosperity
- IGBO Cultural Society of Edmonton
- Alberta Somali for Support and Advocacy
- Ethiopian & Eritrean Soccer Team
- Floor Hockey Game - Rick Grebenstein



A cross section of attendees during the annual Black History Month events at the Africa Centre

Black History Month

The Africa Centre supported by the City of Edmonton organized a black history month celebration on February 23, 2013. The outcome of this endeavour is to connect various African ethno-cultural within Edmonton as well as mainstream communities with each other through a vehicle of cultural activities and events, and this is fully achieved. It helps to interconnect the various ethno-cultural groups with each other and to begin amplifying and articulating each other's needs within the community, potentially leading to future collective action.

By bringing together people from various cultural groups, public figures, members of main stream agencies and the larger community, the Black History Month helps all parties involved to learn more about the achievement of the organization, programs and services that are offered at the Centre, its challenges and the next steps that need to be taken to fully realize its purpose.

Africa Summit

Africa Centre in collaboration with African Canadian Professionals Network Association (ACPN) organised an event with the theme "Turning the Corner with Accountability". This event which took place September 8, 2012 provided a forum for Canadians, African professionals, entrepreneurs and friends of Africa Centre to network and connect with one another over lunch and entertainment.



Trooping of the color during the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation at the Africa Centre

National Day of Healing and Reconciliation

National Day of Healing and Reconciliation (NDHR) was organised by both Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta (Africa Centre) and the First Nations on June 8, 2012. This was a great celebration and cultural union. Africans and Aboriginal people came together introducing each other's culture through sharing, food, music drumming and dancing.

The event was well attended by more than 200 people. In collaboration with NDHR office in Edmonton, for the first time First Nation and African people came together to celebrate NDHR in our city. This event was aptly named "Dialogue of Drums" where we came together introducing each other's culture through sharing of our stories, drumming, dancing and cuisine.

Alberta Culture Celebration

This was a Dialogue of drumming - Celebration of Cultures that was held on September 29, 2012.

The event was enchanted and intrigued by the stories of the drum from three different cultures: Aboriginal, African, and Chinese.

An afternoon of storytelling, music and dance, the drum was celebrated by the peoples from three different continents that resulted in an entertaining and unique collaboration.

The celebration took a glimpse into the heart of Aboriginal, African and Chinese culture as we have come to share this territory and call it our home.

Over 180 people participated in this celebration.



Drummers entertain guests during the Alberta Culture Day Event at the Africa Centre

Volunteerism

Africa Centre has engaged community volunteers over the past few years, however, there is still a need to create a formal program for current and potential volunteers of the Centre and build a culture of volunteerism within the community.

By volunteering for the Centre, youth and adults alike will gain enjoyable work experience within a solid team environment that will boost their profile in the job market.

It is important for community members to make a positive contribution towards the Africa Centre programs and events and meaningful and positive impact on the African-Canadian community in Edmonton.

For youth specifically, this opportunity will provide them with access to endless networking opportunities, one-on-one mentorship for youth from professionals in various areas of study, an opportunity to secure internships with Africa Centre partner organizations, support to secure bursaries, scholarships and admission to certain faculties that require community involvement.

Volunteering will allow community members to enrich their lives in many ways and on many levels, while they also enrich the lives of others.

Africa Centre will launch a Volunteers Program and the very the very first Volunteer Orientation session in April 2013.

CAAC Strategic Priorities for 2012-2014

- CAAC will collaborate with its partners to secure funding that will be used to create additional office space, introduce new programs to make the existing facility more welcoming for community members or build a new facility at the existing location.
- CAAC will evaluate and strengthen its existing programs periodically to ensure they are high quality and appropriate for the children, youth and the families it caters for.
- CAAC will continue to assess community needs and consult with community members to identify gaps or needed shifts in program delivery.
- CAAC will pursue strategic alliances with complimentary partners that are aligned to its mission to identify and meet the needs of African children, youth and their families.
- CAAC will strengthen and expand the organisation's visibility in the community by making greater use of volunteers, establishing a strong online presence via the website and social media outlets, as well as the use of a newsletter and other promotional and marketing tools.
- CAAC will build on its financial resources to further invest in providing quality services. This will include fundraising campaigns, timely request for grants and increasing the in-house facility rental income.
- The CAAC board will remain focused on governance and policy matters, fundraising and expand Board of Directors to deepen its collective community and professional expertise and knowledge.
- CAAC will continue to develop a stable, highly qualified and motivated workforce that actively delivers the organisation's mission.

A special Thank you to our sponsors



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