

# AKOMA



## WRAPAROUND SERVICE RESPONSE CELEBRATING A YEAR OF SUCCESS WITH OUR COMMUNITY

The Black Community Action Network of Peel (BCAN), Free for All Foundation, Roots Community Services and Peel Children's Aid Society (Peel CAS) are proud to commemorate a year of success of their collective Akoma Wraparound Service Response. This initiative works to deliver culturally sensitive support to children, youth and families throughout Peel Region.

*Akoma* comes from the Akan word for *heart*, symbolizing endurance and understanding while representing love, unity, patience, tolerance and goodwill. Akoma launched as a pilot in January 2020 based on recommendations from a BCAN report outlining issues facing Black children and families.

"Through community consultations, agencies and families told us what they needed and we listened," said Sophia Brown Ramsay, Executive Director, BCAN. "In partnership with Free For All Foundation, Roots Community Services and Peel CAS, we are now collectively able to provide Afro-centric parenting support with improved access to employment, housing, education and child care while also enhancing mental health services."

With Akoma, families that come into contact with Peel CAS are paired with a cultural liaison, or wraparound worker, who supports the family within their cultural context. "Akoma provides a holistic and culturally enriched service to enable families to take charge of their future and be successful," stated David Green, Executive Director, Free For All Foundation. "The impact and gratitude has been tremendous."

Initiatives like Akoma recognize the systemic barriers and oppression racialized youth and families experience, and help to address them through cultural sensitivity and enhanced community partnerships. "Together we are amplifying the voices of our clients while listening and learning to ensure cultural needs are met," said Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS. "We have achieved a lot this past year, but there is much more work to do to better understand and address issues that impede the success of Black, Indigenous and racialized groups throughout the region."

Plans are in place to expand Akoma in 2021, thanks to additional funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The team appreciates this endorsement, recognizing that it is the hard work of many individuals that has allowed Akoma to succeed.

"The passion and talent of our workers is the driving force behind innovative services like Akoma; they are the spark that continues to advance change," said Angela Carter, Executive Director, Roots Community Services.

Future plans include developing community-based mentorship programs to empower youth, and creating a more restorative approach to family visits. The team looks forward to growing their network of community agencies while working together to ensure the well-being of children, youth and families.

**For more information and to get involved contact:**

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"Akoma is a testament to the strength of our community's collaboration to deliver culturally responsive supports that are accessible and helpful  
- Nando Iannicca,  
Peel Regional Chair"

