



MEHARI CENTRE
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STRATEGIC PLAN (2025-2028) MEHARI CENTRE

**Building a Thriving, Connected
Eritrean Community in Ottawa**





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ABOUT MEHARI CENTRE

Our Story

The Mehari Centre was founded to address the systemic service gaps affecting Eritrean newcomers in Ottawa. As a community-driven nonprofit, we provide culturally and linguistically appropriate programs to foster a strong, healthy, and connected Eritrean community. Led by an Executive Director and a dedicated volunteer Board, we focus on solutions rooted in community needs.

Why We Exist

Over the past decade, more than 60,000 Eritreans have settled in Canada, yet many still struggle with accessing essential services. Limited Tigrinya-speaking supports make it difficult to find settlement resources, secure housing, access food assistance, and navigate mental health services. The Mehari Centre fills these gaps by offering tailored programs and advocating for increased access to services.



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OUR MISSION AND VISION

Mission

The Mehari Centre's mission is to offer culturally and linguistically-anchored programs and services, grounded in evidence and community—that promote and improve the wellbeing of Eritreans living in Ottawa. The Mehari Centre provides a safe and welcoming environment to affirm the Eritrean identity and equip Eritrean newcomers with needed information and resources, giving them a space to heal and to connect with each other and the greater community.

Vision

The Mehari Centre's vision is to foster a holistic, healthy, flourishing, and harmonious Eritrean community in Ottawa.



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MEHARI'S VALUES

Wefera (ወፈራ) – Collective Support

A Tigrinya concept meaning 'working together for the common good.' It is a system of mutual aid where community members mobilize in times of need.

Justice (ፍትሒ)

We mobilize for fairness and equity. Our programs address systemic inequities, ensuring Eritreans in Ottawa have the right to timely, culturally appropriate services and opportunities for successful integration into Canadian society.

Gender Equality (ማዕርነት)

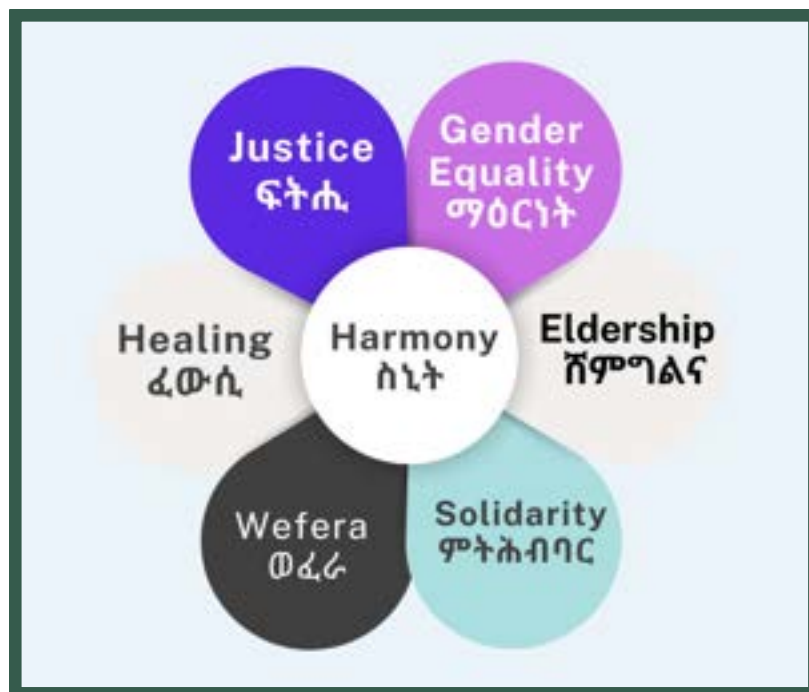
Women are the backbone of our community's survival and success. We commit to empowering women, addressing power imbalances, and fostering an equitable environment where women's leadership and contributions are recognized, amplified, and celebrated.

Healing (ፈውሲ)

Eritreans have endured hardship before, during, and after migration. Our generation has a responsibility to lay the foundation for healing, restoration, and reconciliation for future generations.

Harmony (ስኒት)

Our diversity—in language, beliefs, culture, and political views—is our strength. We celebrate differences while working toward one united goal: the wellbeing and flourishing of Eritreans in Ottawa.



WHAT WE DO: SERVICES, SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

Programs & Services

- **Financial & Employment Support:** Tax clinics, job search assistance, and financial literacy.
- **Housing & Tenant Rights:** Guidance on finding safe housing and understanding legal rights.
- **Mental Wellness & Health Promotion:** Workshops and resources for emotional well-being.
- **Cultural Adaptation:** Support for navigating cultural differences and Canadian laws.
- **Education & Youth Support:** School readiness programs and family support.
- **Rights & Responsibilities:** Legal education on citizenship and workplace rights.
- **Community Engagement:** Orientation sessions and connections to local services.
- **Children's Program:** Weekly interactive programs for children under 10, focused on supporting social/emotional development and enhancing school readiness.
- **Women's Circle:** A weekly gathering providing a safe space for women to connect, share, reflect, and empower each other.
- **One-on-One Support:** Personalized support for women and men facing isolation, family struggles, or other challenges.

Community-Based Research & Advocacy

- Ongoing needs assessments and demographic research.
- Focus groups with newcomer youth, parents, and faith leaders on NEET experiences.
- Co-hosted a Gender-Based Violence Forum with OCTEVAW for 50+ community members.
- Sharing insights with service providers to strengthen belonging, access, and empowerment for all newcomers.



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COMMUNITY VOICES & NEEDS

- Employment & housing challenges
- Mental health pressures and isolation
- Gender-based violence and family dynamics
- Youth engagement and social skill rebuilding
- Barriers to accessing services due to language and cultural gaps





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SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

Consistency, governance, cultural authenticity, partnerships, charitable status.

Weaknesses

Gender imbalance, outreach limits, staffing constraints, capacity stretched.

Opportunities

Pioneer unmet needs, partnerships, education, social media, new board.

Threats

Politicization, funding challenges, overextension, outreach gaps.





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Strategic Priorities 2025-2028



**Community
Visibility
& Outreach**



**Responsive
Program
Growth**



**Mental Health
& Well-being**



**Equity &
Safety (GBV)**



SUCCESS INDICATORS

Outreach

A well-connected community where more people know about our work, engage with our events, and access information through our growing social media presence.

Board Expansion

A stronger, more diverse leadership team with active committees that reflect the community and guide the organization with vision and accountability.

Program Expansion

Seniors, youth, and families benefiting from new, culturally relevant initiatives, while research deepens understanding of community needs.

Mental Health

Community members having greater access to mental health support through workshops and strengthened partnerships with CHCs and hospitals.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

A safer community where awareness is raised, survivors are supported, and clear referral pathways connect people to help.





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First Steps (6 months)



Develop communications
plan for launch & outreach



Recruit additional
board members



Secure funding
for operations
and programs



Pilot one youth initiative
and one seniors' activity



Establish referral
partnerships for mental
health and GBV



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Governance: Committees & Roles

To advance these priorities, three board committees have been established:



Policy Committee
Sabrina & Alem



Board Expansion Committee
Yosief & Hanna



Fundraising Committee
Sara & Yodit



Acknowledgements

The Mehari Centre was founded to create a culturally safe space for Eritrean newcomers and Black communities in Ottawa, a place of dignity, belonging, and resilience. In a short time, it has become a trusted hub where voices are heard, needs are met, and solutions are co-created.

We thank our community members, faith partners, and advisors—both Eritrean newcomers and expert allies—for guiding this plan. Special thanks to Liben Gebremikael (TAIBU Community Health Centre) for his mentorship, to the Ottawa Community Foundation for their belief and support, and to Nepean Rideau Osgood Community Resource Centre for space and partnership. We also thank and Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) and local service providers for walking alongside us.

Finally, we recognize our dedicated staff, board, and volunteers whose commitment has made this work possible.

This plan is our collective promise: to build stronger foundations, foster healing, and ensure Eritrean and Black newcomers are fully recognized and supported



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LET'S WORK
TOGETHER

