





2026 IMPACT REPORT

The Black Experience Pavilion at the RC Show

THE RE-SEASONING COALITION

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

BY THE NUMBERS 4

INTRODUCTION 5

PROJECT IMPACT 6

STORIES OF CHANGE 12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the Black Experience Pavilion launched in 2024, the Restaurants Canada Show (RC Show) had existed for 79 years without meaningful Black representation on the trade show floor.

The Re-Seasoning Coalition, working in collaboration with Foodpreneur Lab, viewed this gap as a systemic and economic issue that affected Canada's ability to effectively compete with international brands in the foodservice industry. With Black Canadians expected to become the second-largest racialized group in the country by 2041, the importance of establishing and sustaining the Black Experience Pavilion was abundantly clear.

Over the last three years, the Pavilion's approach to increasing Black representation at the Show has been warmly welcomed by industry associations, foodservice executives, and independent operators alike.

Our achievements since 2024 include:

- **saving each entrepreneur an average of $15,000 in participation fees**
- **facilitating 375+ leads and business connections**
- **leading 47 interactive product demos**
- **highlighting 150+ retail and foodservice-ready SKUs**
- **distributing 450 free event passes to members of the Black community**
- **reaching 2M viewers on broadcast networks to promote the Pavilion**

Powered by leading organizations that understand the impact of true economic inclusion, the three-day showcase - held March 8-10, 2026 at the International Centre in Mississauga, ON - provided an undeniable example of the possibilities unlocked by combining grassroots approaches with public and private sector support.



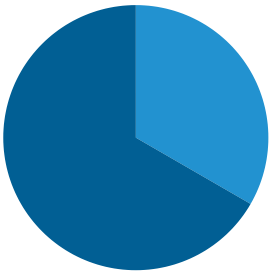


Click the PLAY button above to watch the recap!

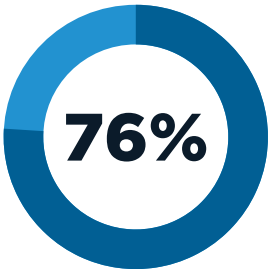


YEAR 3 BY THE NUMBERS

25,000
RC Show attendees



47 featured businesses
33% NEW TO THE PAVILION



women owned businesses



206 new leads and business connections
121% INCREASE YOY



SKUs per business
ON AVERAGE



public-private investment

business location

29% FROM TORONTO

20% FROM PEEL

9% FROM YORK REGION

INTRODUCTION

When the Black Experience Pavilion launched in 2024, the Restaurants Canada Show (RC Show) had existed for 79 years without meaningful Black representation on the Show floor.

The Re-Seasoning Coalition (TRSC), working in collaboration with non-profit business incubator Foodpreneur Lab, viewed the absence as a systemic and economic issue that adversely affects Canada's ability to compete with international brands to meet the needs of a rapidly-growing multicultural population. With Black Canadians expected to become the second-largest racialized group in the country by 2041, the importance of establishing the Black Experience Pavilion at that time was abundantly clear.

Three Shows later, the 2026 edition was held, for the first time, at the International Centre in Mississauga, ON from March 8-10. Once again, the success of the 30x40 sq. ft. exhibit was driven by an interactive space comprised of:

- A **Multipurpose Marketplace**: scannable, open shelving stocked with products
- The **Pavilion Demo Kitchen:** an interactive stage for 30-min product demos
- Two **Sampling Stations:** mini product counters designed to support quick pitches and product sampling from more established businesses

Over the last three years, the Pavilion has presented a compelling business case for intentionally inclusive spaces, providing 25,000+ RC Show attendees with touchpoints to sample, order, and stock Black-owned products that connect with a wide variety of consumers. Instead of shuttling Black entrepreneurs to the starting line of systemic inequities, we've built a racetrack that anticipates their needs (at no cost to them), reduced the number of sharp corners, and filled the stands with brand leaders, buyers, and consumers.

Building on the name recognition and success of its first two editions, the 2026 Pavilion was designed to support the following objectives:

- **optimize business development expertise**
- **expand market positioning for Black-owned products**
- **strengthen community capital**

Thanks to a mix of public and private sector investment, Year Three of the Black Experience Pavilion achieved significant milestones, moving the needle on true equity and inclusion in the foodservice & hospitality industry.

PROJECT IMPACT

OPTIMIZING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EXPERTISE

Since 2025, the Black Experience Pavilion has included a continuing education component designed to close participant knowledge gaps related to financial readiness, branding, investment, and closing the deal. From the outside looking in, these focus areas may appear elementary, but as researchers, we understand the importance of individual business savvy to the resilience of Canada's foodservice industry, overall.

Creating a diverse, competitive marketplace that benefits the buyer requires a wide variety of producers to participate in the supply chain. However, when certain demographics face deep knowledge gaps related to access and advancement decade after decade, their contributions to a sector become muted and/or disappear. As a result, gatekeepers who have never seen successful products from said groups may assume that group participation in the sector is unnecessary or unlikely to succeed, just by virtue of its invisibility. To disrupt this loop, TRSC has built a circular solution to Black participation in foodservice & hospitality that begins with building subject matter expertise and ends with sales conversations at the RC Show.

Pavilion collaborator Foodpreneur Lab propels food businesses from minimum viable product to market readiness. TRSC expands these efforts by upskilling Black food business owners on the mechanics of the selling, growing, and diversifying through a virtual curriculum comprised of six 90-min sessions led by food entrepreneur and investment advisor, Allison Gibson. This year's series, called The Next Big Thing: Investment Readiness Masterclass, was delivered to 24 entrepreneurs from across Ontario and Quebec. Thanks to increased sponsor investment, this year's Masterclass included a fireside chat with Sola Oluwole, a Business Consulting Director from 3G Action who shared insights on building relationships with banking partners and establishing strong financial practices.







The overwhelmingly positive feedback on the Masterclass series, which has averaged an NPS of 9.7/10 over two years, illustrates the power of even the simplest solutions – closing knowledge gaps – to moving the needle on systems change challenges for Black creators. As one participant shared in the post-series survey,

> ***"I am super grateful for the valuable insights shared. Allison was a great instructor and she explained things clearly and in a relatable manner. I feel like I have more tools available to help me in my business and I have an increased sense of confidence in my readiness for opportunities."***

Even better, by tailoring programming to participant needs, the number of new leads and business connections built in the 2026 Black Experience Pavilion increased by 121% YoY. Future editions of the Pavilion project will include Masterclass programming at multiple points during the year to compound expertise, spark new thinking, and ensure that Black food business owners can receive informed answers to the questions that will help their businesses grow.

The success realized by nurturing business development expertise for Black food entrepreneurs has highlighted the power of an end-to-end solution that addresses systemic inequities in a focused, culturally relevant environment.

EXPANDING MARKET POSITIONING FOR BLACK-OWNED PRODUCTS

Founded by Black Canadians with a history of food entrepreneurship, TRSC has always understood the value of professional photography in bolstering the legitimacy of Black-owned products, in any industry.

For many solopreneurs building a dream on a shoestring budget, regularly updating marketing materials while juggling personal commitments and addressing customer service, operational, and product development needs costs more time and money than expected. For Black entrepreneurs who often believe they need to be the best to stand out, these acrobatic efforts can be even more daunting.

In a continued effort to cook up opportunity for Black food entrepreneurs at the RC Show, this year's Black Experience Pavilion team featured a photographer whose scope of work included website-ready photography of the products featured in Demo Kitchen programming. Following the RC Show, Pavilion partici-

pants received file folders, averaging 7 photos per brand, with professionally shot and edited images of their products and themselves on stage or at the Sampling Stations. In addition to saving business owners time and money, this new service provided business owners with assets they can use to highlight their involvement in a major industry event, further positioning their brands as competitive, valuable, and accessible to both Canadian consumers and sector decision-makers.

The complimentary product photography had a net positive effect on overall Pavilion sentiment, with most of the entrepreneurs quickly sharing their RC Show photos with their personal and professional audiences on Instagram and LinkedIn. One Pavilion volunteer-turned-participant highlighted the power of the photos on her confidence as a business owner in an email, writing:

> ***"From being on the panel to... receiving these stunning professional photos, covering me on The Black Experience Pavilion has been nothing short of extraordinary. Photos I never paid for are now mine to share freely. I am still pinching myself! The entire team has given me so much more than photos or a platform. You've given me momentum, confidence, and a story I'll be telling for years to come."***

In addition to delivering marketing content, Year 3 of the Pavilion further supported the market positioning of the Black-owned brands through revamped Demo Kitchen programming, with 60% of the interactive sessions featuring two or more Black-owned brands on stage at the same time. This thematic organization elevated each brand's identity and category alignment while building camaraderie between entrepreneurs, strengthening their capacity for improvisation, and building a clearer picture of Black-owned products as versatile alternatives and additions to foodservice and retail menus.

To define the logistics required to prep, plate, and serve 50 samples from multiple brands within every 30min session, all Demo Kitchen participants attended pre-Show meetings with a dedicated back of house chef and their session host. The streamlined approach to managing the finer details of the event alleviated nerves







on all sides, reduced prep kitchen challenges, and delivered a refined audience engagement experience. This personnel investment represented yet another point of evolution while demonstrating the excellence in execution the three-day showcase has become known for.

As Janice Bartley, Executive Director of Foodpreneur Lab, puts it,

> ***"The Black Experience Pavilion represents exactly the kind of ecosystem alignment we've been working toward through our federally funded programs. While public investment builds capacity and readiness among emerging food entrepreneurs, the Pavilion provides the critical market access and commercial validation that government initiatives alone cannot achieve. Together, they create a more complete and effective pathway to long-term business growth."***

As a result of these combined changes and participant upskilling through the Masterclass series, activity during and following the Black Experience Pavilion achieved 206 new leads and business connections for 47 businesses and propelled 7 brands to develop new SKUs to support foodservice industry sales.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPITAL

There is a prevailing phrase that often colours the conversation between Black people who live in majority non-Black societies on the topic of professional success, "like crabs in a barrel". The unspoken hurt behind the phrase highlights the struggle that Black people - whether they are corporate employees, social media influencers, entrepreneurs, or artists - often experience when trying to progress in spaces and work environments where they are tokenized and unwittingly positioned in competition with each other.

Across generations, the prevalence of this concept - pulling down the one who manages to makes it up - ultimately pokes holes in social cohesion and can have an outsized impact on individual success in business as trust, cooperation, and knowledge sharing are essential to longevity and legacy in the personal and professional realm.

For TRSC, the evolution of the Pavilion in a new space presented an opportunity to write a new narrative about the importance of building intra-community capital for business success. This thinking propelled the addition of two panel events to Pavilion programming. Under the banner of collective wisdom, each 45 minute

conversation provided a forum for Black entrepreneurs to share challenges, offer strategies, and highlight their motivations for chasing success across the food-service & hospitality industry. In total, seven leaders shared expertise on two topics: running sustainable restaurants via the Restaurant 101 panel and scaling products for foodservice distribution via the Dream Bigger panel.

As panellists – including Sasilka Shallangwa of SK Cookks, Jerome Robinson of The Heartbreak Chef, Andy Fannis of Souperlicious, Michael Burgess of Nerpy's, Ogie Ifoga of Farm Credit Canada, Raquel Fox of Island Gurl, and Sarah Sekalala of SIIKA Foods - illustrated their origin stories and the creative solutions they've conceived on the way to success, it became clear that fostering community connections to bring a big idea to life in an industry that lacks Black representation, is indeed essential. Audience members were engaged throughout, arriving with questions and leaving answers that energized them to continue forging ahead. Ad-hoc pitches, jubilant reunions, and gratitude circled the Pavilion's footprint in the hours after each panel, bolstering the idea that it takes a village to build a Black-owned business. *Special thanks to Farm Credit Canada for sponsoring the Dream Bigger panel.*

SPOTLIGHT: **A PAVILION OF POSSIBILITY**

The influence of the Black Experience Pavilion has grown significantly. Since 2024, it has become a destination for food and content creators within and outside of the Black community to meet friends, chat with collaborators, find support staff, and discover diasporic trends. This year, the Pavilion also served as a national launching pad for three small businesses thanks to one remarkable member of TRSC's community.

Last year's expansion of the Black Experience Pavilion provided a more refined platform for chef, author, TV personality, and Island Gurl Foods creator Raquel Fox to participate in Demo Kitchen programming. This year, Chef Fox was invited back to the 2026 Pavilion to promote her products – now available through Sysco Canada as part of TRSC's association with the distributor – at a Sampling Station and share her 25+ years of expertise on the Dream Bigger panel. A fervent supporter of Black women in business and TRSC, Chef Fox fell in love with products from SIIKA Foods, A Rich Tradition, and Carobium, which she later pitched to TV producers to be included in a spring segment of *Global News Toronto*.

On April 16th, Chef Fox highlighted SIIKA Foods' Mild Simmer Sauce, A Rich Tradition's Jamaican Rum Cake Ice Cream, and Carobium's Tobago Latte Powder alongside host Ross Hull during the "Proud Canadian" segment of the show,

broadcast live and shared digitally on globalnews.ca.

Reaching 53,000 Canadians on broadcast and 780,000 Canadians digitally, Chef Fox's actions highlighted the capital within the Black food community and the Pavilion's influence in unlocking possibility. Since that broadcast, SIIKA Foods has tracked a 5% increase in social media growth, and both SIIKA and A Rich Tradition have debuted new packaging to support a revamped brand story. Watch a recording of the segment, via Instagram post, below.



LOOKING AHEAD

Year 3 of the Black Experience Pavilion offered more than a beacon of possibility; it demonstrated that grassroots ideas, planted with economic strategy and watered by public and private funding, can bloom, inspiring all who interact with the fruits of the labour.

As The Re-Seasoning Coalition transitions the Pavilion to a more immersive concept for 2027, we'd like to thank the sponsors who have supported our creativity and conviction since 2024: KraftHeinz Canada, the City of Toronto, Sysco, Farm Credit Canada, BDC, and Garland. Your belief in the importance of building industry resilience by platforming Black Canadians in the foodservice landscape was a steadying force that we are so grateful for. Thank you!







STORIES OF CHANGE

In the Black Experience Pavilion, the experiences of participating entrepreneurs are just as important as their sales metrics. Here's how Year 3 impacted the lack food community.

PAVILION IMPACT ON BUSINESS GROWTH

"Long-term partnerships and deeper impact"

The pavilion created a valuable platform for us to showcase our produce and story to a much broader audience within the foodservice industry. It helped increase awareness of Black Creek Community Farm as a reliable, community-driven supplier, and opened the door to new relationships with chefs, buyers, and distributors. As a result, we've seen growing interest in sourcing locally from us, which has supported both our revenue streams and our capacity to scale production thoughtfully. The pavilion has been instrumental in helping us bridge the gap between community farming and the broader hospitality sector, creating pathways for long-term partnerships and deeper impact.

"Inspired collaboration and resource sharing"

Being part of the pavilion has enhanced our understanding of the foodservice landscape, revealing gaps and trends we can capitalize on. Engaging with other entrepreneurs has helped us refine our marketing strategies and product development based on consumer preferences and the importance of representation. Overall, the pavilion has fostered a strong sense of community among Black food service entrepreneurs. It has inspired collaboration and resource sharing, benefiting us all and reinforcing our commitment to excellence and innovation in our culinary endeavours.

"An informal forum"

The RC Show is a unique opportunity meet many players in the industry in one place - grateful for that opportunity. Because the Pavillon brings together so many Black Foodpreneurs, it creates an informal forum to share experiences, opportunities and challenges and to further support each other. The required preparation for the show also propelled me to act on some planned changes.

"Gave my business legitimacy"

The Pavilion helped to give my business more legitimacy as buyers see that we are established and they can envision our products being on their shelves or menus just like it was displayed in the Pavilion.

"Direct, high-impact connections"

Spaces like the pavilion significantly reduce barriers by creating direct, high-impact connections in one place. Without it, the path to those same opportunities would be more fragmented and resource-intensive, especially for community-based organizations like ours.

PAVILION IMPACT ON KNOWLEDGE OR ACCESS GAPS

"Better understanding of pricing"

The RC Show opened our eyes to how different the foodservice landscape is compared to direct-to-consumer sales. We gained a better understanding of pricing structures, distribution models, and the importance of consistency and scalability. Conversations with chefs, purchasing managers, and distributors helped us see where our products fit—especially as a clean, small-batch option in a space that's actively looking for quality.

"What foodservice buyers really want"

This Pavilion has helped me to understand more of what food service buyers really want and it's helped me to craft my offering to supply those needs. Being able to have face to face conversations with dozens of interested individuals helped me to hear first hand what organizations are interested in, which I think is more valuable than only online research.

"The importance of scaling"

It made us aware of how big the food and beverage industry is as well as insights into the importance of scaling CARIBB POP and what is required to getting onto store shelves. A overall great impact for me was seeing so many black entrepreneurs and business owners in the food and beverage space. The RC Show was a fantastic event and opportunity.

"A credible, high-impact environment"

If the Black Experience Pavilion didn't exist, accessing the foodservice, hospitality, and retail industry at this level would be significantly more challenging. Opportunities like the Restaurants Canada Show 2026 typically require substantial financial investment, established networks, and industry access that many emerging brands are still building toward. Without the Pavilion, we would likely rely on a combination of direct outreach to buyers and chefs, smaller local markets, and independent brand activations to gain visibility. However, these approaches are often fragmented and less efficient in reaching a concentrated audience of decision-makers. The Pavilion created a unique, centralized platform that removed many of those barriers, allowing us to showcase AnGel Moss in a credible, high-impact environment alongside other innovative brands.

THANK YOU

FOR BEING PART OF THE BLACK EXPERIENCE PAVILION.

TORONTO

KraftHeinz

fcc

Sysco

foodpreneur lab

GARLAND CANADA
WELBILT DISTRIBUTION

THE RE-SEASONING COALITION