



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA

2025

BLACK YOUTH FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION (BYSI)

End of Year Report



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Introduction

The **Black Youth for Social Innovation (BYSI)** was established in 2024 at the University of Alberta to address persistent disparities in mentorship and internship access for Black students, particularly within the Social Sciences and Humanities. These systemic barriers have long contributed to the underrepresentation of Black youth in professional fields across Canada. In just two years, BYSI has become a vibrant and growing community of learning, innovation, and support. What began with 10 students in 2024 has expanded to 20 in 2025, now spanning disciplines such as Arts, Business, Education, Law, and the Natural Sciences. Our vision remains clear: to provide structured pathways for Black students through mentorship, professional development, and paid work-integrated learning opportunities that foster leadership and innovation. Our mission is to empower Black youth to lead a pluralistic society.



Our Growth in 2025

Student Participation:

Grew from 10 students in 2024 to 20 students in 2025.

Expanded Disciplines:

From Arts, Business, Education, and Law, BYSI now includes students from the College of Natural and Applied Sciences.

Highlights of 2025

1. Launch of the 2025 Cohort

In spring 2025, BYSI welcomed its second cohort of students into the mentorship journey. Students were introduced to the program's core principles of leadership, inclusion, and innovation, with remarks from Executive Director Dr. Jared Wesley. This gathering set the tone for a year of collaboration, vision-building, and growth.



2. Mind Clash – Debate & Critical Thinking Event (June 9, 2025)

Our first-ever Mind Clash brought students together in a debate-style activity designed to sharpen critical thinking, research, and teamwork. Developed by BYSI members, the event explored the question:

“Hip-hop culture (dance/music) has done more harm than good for Black youth.”

The debates were lively, well-researched, and rooted in lived experiences. The energy in the room reflected BYSI’s mission to empower Black youth to lead with creativity, critical engagement, and confidence.



3. BYSI Black Mental Health Initiative (August 6, 2025)

Led by students, this event at Emily Murphy Park combined creativity, conversation, and community:

- Painting mini canvases with fun prompts.
- Honest mental health dialogue guided by a culturally aware psychiatrist.
- Shared food, laughter, and connection.

This initiative showcased how mental health conversations can be youth-led, joyful, and deeply healing.



4. Brand Identity & Visibility

2025 also marked a significant milestone in BYSI's growth as we officially launched our logo and brand identity. With the support of Berlin Communications, we developed:

- An official logo, symbolizing ancestral strength, intergenerational knowledge, and the innovative spirit of youth.
- Branded t-shirts, business cards, and pamphlets to strengthen visibility and promote BYSI on and off campus.

Partnerships & Collaboration

Ongoing partnerships with **Berlin Communications** and **Ubuntu** strengthened our identity and messaging.

Students Testimonials

"I wanted to formally express my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the Black Youth For Social Innovation Summer 2025 Cohort. This summer, I had the opportunity to explore the field of Microplastics and Emerging Contaminants. While I had little knowledge of the field as an Immunology and Infection major in the Faculty of Science, I am glad I pushed myself to pursue the research opportunity. Spending this summer reading, problem-solving, performing experiments, and getting to know the other undergrads and graduate students in the lab fulfilled my summer in ways I couldn't imagine. Additionally, through the BYSI program, I was able to meet a group of driven and diverse students who have inspired me, and I've created meaningful friendships with. This fall, I will be continuing my work in the lab as a part-time research student! Again, thank you. Your efforts in the development of this program did not go unnoticed and will have an impact on my life forever." - BYSI student

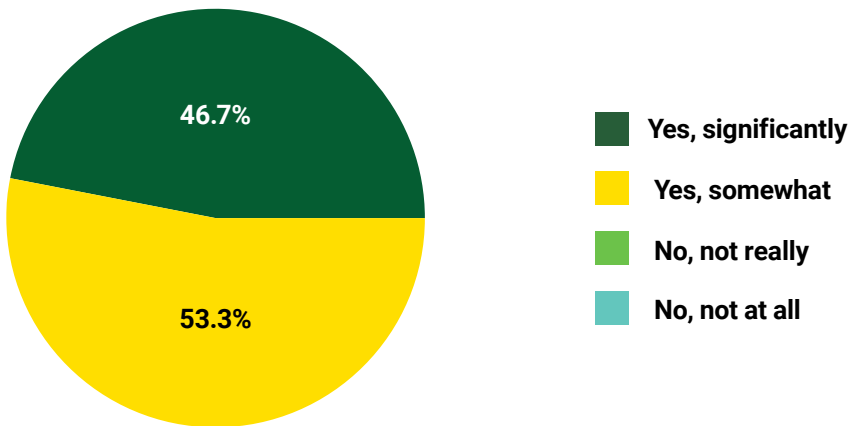
“The opportunity to be a part of this cohort group has been such an honour and an amazing experience. Socially, the group has equipped me with skills to help me break out of my bubble and in that, I was able to work and share with brilliant minds and create impactful relationships. Professionally, I have gained insightful tools from my fellow peers and mentors that I am sure to put to practice as I start to prepare for my career. In addition, the research position has been quite the journey with so much to learn and work on. It has been an eventful summer.”- BYSI student

“BYSI connected me with a research opportunity of a lifetime. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn so much from my supervisor and colleagues. I am also grateful to have made so many new friends during the BYSI program.”- BYSI student

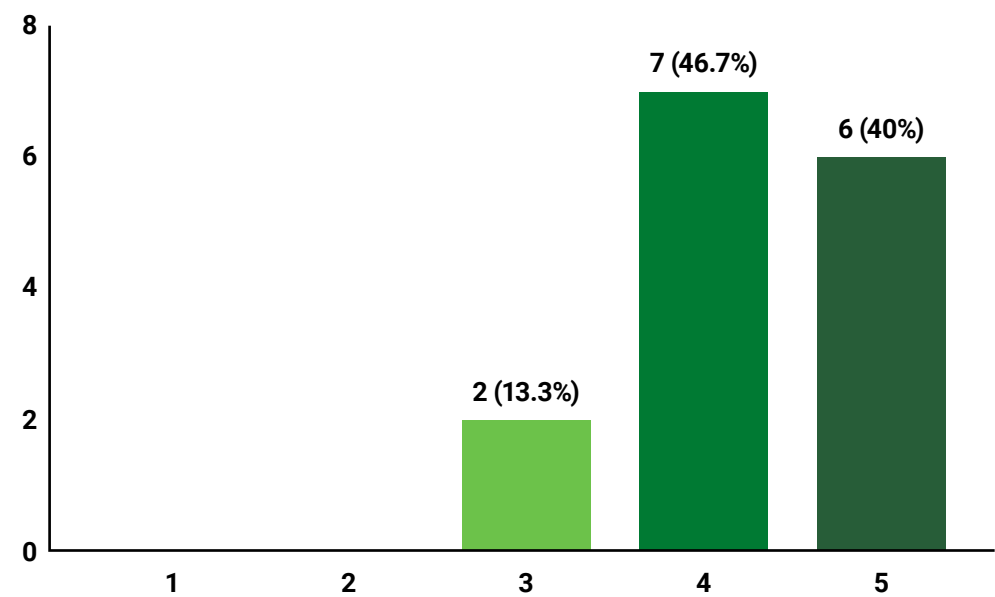
Post summer survey

(15 survey responses)

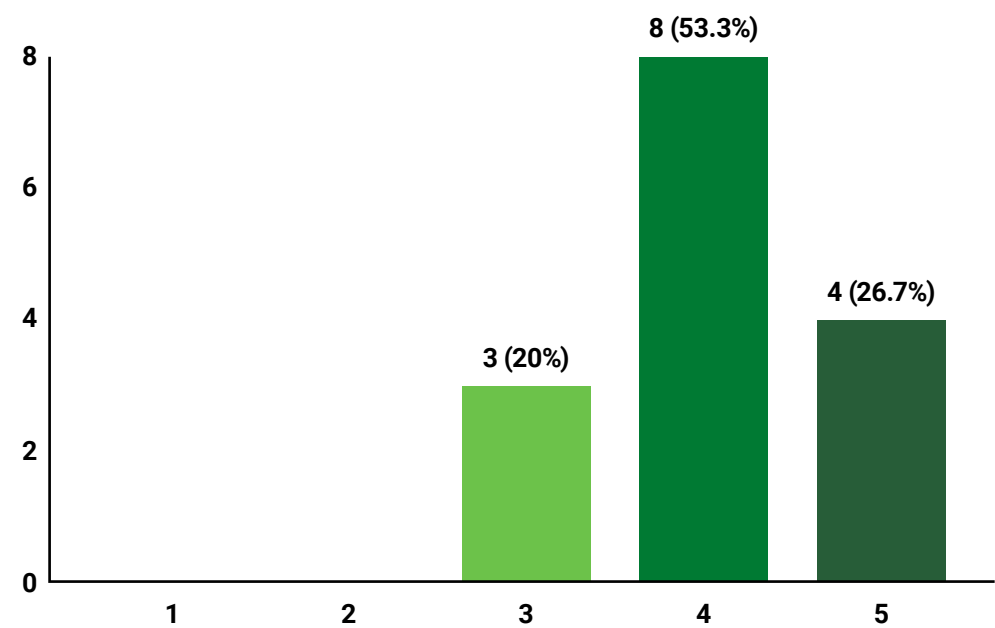
Do you feel better prepared for academic, professional, or personal challenges after completing this program?



Leadership skills



Workshops/Seminars



Looking Ahead to 2026

Our vision for 2026 is to support 30 Black students through:

- Expanded paid internships and mentorship opportunities.
- A greater focus on professional development in leadership, entrepreneurship, and innovation.
- Broader student-led initiatives, continuing the tradition of Mind Clash and mental health programs.
- Stronger external partnerships, including sustained support from both the University of Alberta and external organizations, will be critical in ensuring that BYSI evolves into a self-sustaining program with long-term growth and impact.

Conclusion

2025 has been a year of creativity, growth, and impact for BYSI.

From mentorship and leadership development to innovative student-led activities and the launch of our official brand identity, we have built strong foundations for lasting change. As we enter 2026, BYSI remains committed to dismantling systemic barriers, creating opportunities, and empowering Black youth to lead as innovators, leaders, and changemakers in Canada and beyond.



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Learn More About Black Youth for Social Innovation

Visit our website uab.ca/bysi

BYSI opportunity page is also live on the [EL Hub](#)

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