



*Ancestral Hands*  
 MIDWIVES

# Rooted & Rising

Strategic Plan

2025-2029

# A Message from our Founder & Executive Director



I founded Ancestral Hands Midwives with a simple but urgent truth: **Black birthing people deserve care that affirms their humanity.** We knew the stories of Black birthing people being ignored, misdiagnosed, or denied quality care. We had lived them ourselves. Too often, our community has been forced to navigate a healthcare system that was not built for us, where stories go unheard, needs are unmet, and lives are put at risk. **And I knew we had to, and could, create something different: a space where trust could flourish, where care was not rushed, and where Black families could feel safe, informed, and respected.**

**AHM is the first Black-led, community-rooted midwifery initiative of its kind in Ontario.** Our home in Scarborough serves as a sanctuary for Black birthing people across the Greater Toronto Area and beyond. Clients travel long distances to find what is scarce elsewhere: racially concordant, culturally safe, trauma-informed care.

And yet, I know that what we have built, while powerful, is not enough to meet the need.

“

*It's about showing what respectful, affirming care looks like - and proving that it's possible.*



This strategic plan, **Rooted & Rising**, is our roadmap for the next three years. It is rooted in the strength of our community and rising toward a vision where our model is not the exception, but the standard. **This plan builds on strength with clear goals: expanding our team, deepening our programs, securing sustainable funding, and laying the groundwork for a Black-owned health hub.** It is also about shifting systems through advocacy, storytelling, training, and coalition-building.

I want to thank the midwives who pour themselves into this work every day, and the clients who trust us during their most vulnerable moments. I also want to thank the community leaders, the small yet mighty network of Black midwives across the province, and the partners who offered guidance, encouragement, and support as we shaped this plan. You encouraged me when AHM was just an idea, and now we are boldly moving towards the future. Your trust fuels our vision, and your courage reminds us every day why this work matters. **Together, we are rooted in resilience and rising toward transformation.**

I invite you to read this plan not only as a roadmap, but as a promise: to protect and uplift Black life before, during, and after birth.

With gratitude and determination,

Althea Jones  
Founder & Executive Director

# About Us

AHM was founded to meet the urgent and long-neglected needs of Black birthing people, who have been systematically excluded, misdiagnosed, and mistreated by Ontario's healthcare system. It was designed by Black women, led by Black midwives who have witnessed these harms firsthand and chose to build a different, community-rooted model of care.

## Our model offers:

- Racially concordant care that reflects and validate clients' lived experience
- Extended appointment times that allow for trust-building and informed decision-making
- Advocacy tools that empower clients to navigate other healthcare settings, seek second opinions, and make confident choices



Research confirms that when Black clients are cared for by Black providers, they are more likely to:

- Be heard and validated
- Experience lower stress and trauma
- Report higher satisfaction and better mental health outcomes

Therefore AHM's team reflects the communities we serve. It is both intentional and essential, **not only who we are, but how we practice.**

# Our Roots

*(Our foundation,  
our purpose)*

Our goal is to transform Black perinatal care through culturally safe, community-rooted midwife led care and to challenge the systems that continue to fail Black birthing people. **We exist to affirm, protect, and advance Black life before, during, and after birth.**

# Our Rise

*(Our vision)*

We envision a future where Black birthing people experience care that is safe, dignified, and culturally grounded. **Care is delivered by people who look like them, believe them, and stand with them.**

**In this future, the healthcare system is transformed:** Black-led models, like AHM, are recognized as the standard. Culturally safe care is non-negotiable, and policy, practice, and power are centred on equity and accountability.



# Our Values



## EQUITY

Our commitment to equity means building systems that are accountable, just, and centred on Black life.

## EMPOWERMENT

We support our clients to advocate for themselves, make informed choices, and shape their own care journeys.

## EDUCATION

We believe education is a tool for transformation. We share knowledge that uplifts, informs, and strengthens Black communities in the healthcare system.

## ENGAGEMENT

We build trust-based relationships with families, midwives, and community partners, grounded in shared purpose and collective care.

# Why AHM?

AHM was founded to meet the urgent and long-neglected needs of Black birthing people, who have been systematically excluded, misdiagnosed, and mistreated by Ontario's healthcare system.

Many AHM clients arrive by word of mouth, looking for a midwife who "gets it." Some have had traumatic previous births. Some are young parents navigating social systems. Some are carrying deep fear. All are looking for care that centres them as whole people.



## AHM serves clients who:

- **Are Black individuals seeking racially concordant care**
- **Have been excluded from traditional midwifery due to high-risk classification**
- **Are uninsured, precariously housed, or facing immigration-related barriers**
- **Carry intergenerational trauma related to reproductive health and seek to break that cycle**
- **Want to receive perinatal care in an environment that affirms their identity, history, and cultural knowledge**

# What We Believe

- 1. Care is political.** The way care is delivered reflects systems of power. Culturally safe Black-led care challenges those systems at their roots.
- 2. Black midwifery is a pathway to health equity systemic change.** It centres trust, consent, and the lived experiences of birthing people. When midwifery is led by Black practitioners and rooted in community, it becomes a powerful tool for closing care gaps and building a just, responsive, and accountable health system.
- 3. You cannot transform what you refuse to resource.** Black-led models like AHM must be funded equitably and recognized as pillars of the healthcare system.



While AHM centres Black maternal health, our care is gender-affirming, trauma-informed, and inclusive. **We recognize and serve the full spectrum of Black birthing experiences,** including transgender men, non-binary, and gender-expansive people. We hold space for every body and every story. Our care continues to evolve in response.

# Our Theory of Change

At its core, AHM believes that Black birthing people deserve care that **affirms their humanity, honours their experiences, and protects their lives**. AHM offers one such system.

**Our theory of change** makes visible what is often ignored: how care, when delivered by and for Black communities, can not only serve individuals but shift systems. It asserts the logic behind AHM's model, connecting culturally safe, racially concordant care to measurable improvements in health, trust, and systemic equity.

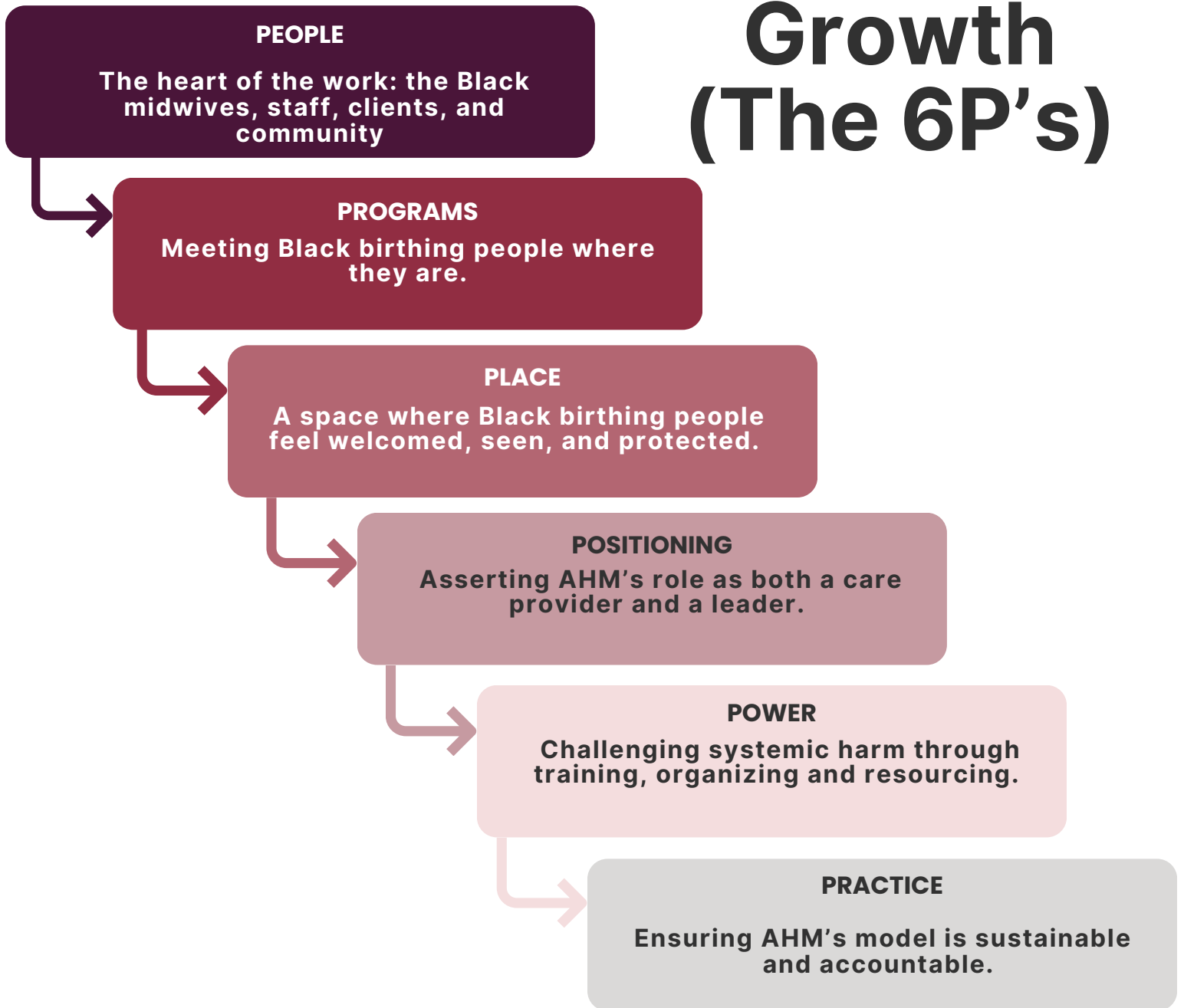
**If** Black-led, community-rooted models like Ancestral Hands Midwives are resourced to deliver culturally safe, racially concordant, and trauma-informed care across the reproductive and perinatal journey,

**then** Black birthing people will experience greater agency, safety, and continuity in navigating the healthcare system.

**Which will lead to** improved health outcomes, expanded leadership across care, advocacy, and policy spaces as well as greater accountability in how culturally relevant care is delivered,

**And will** contribute to the transformation of healthcare systems by shifting policy, power, and practice toward equity, dignity, and collective well-being.

# Pillars for Growth (The 6P's)



AHM is already reshaping what care can be. This strategy is a commitment to deepen that care, guided by **six pillars** that reflect who AHM is, what it stands for, and where it's headed:

These directions reflect AHM's intentions to 2029 with the goal to:

1. **Grow** without compromising care,
2. **Support Staff** while meeting overwhelming need, and
3. **Influence systems** without losing independence.

# PEOPLE

AHM's care model depends on a small, dedicated team of Black midwives who are trusted by their communities. **But trust alone cannot carry an overextended system.** To meet rising demand and protect the people holding this work, AHM must expand capacity and invest in sustainability.

**Hiring additional Black midwives is key.** Yet systemic barriers mean their numbers will remain limited for years to come. AHM is therefore committed to shaping a broader ecosystem which includes training culturally aligned providers while encouraging more Black students to pursue midwifery as a career.



## *Our priorities*

1. **Expand clinical team capacity** through hiring and formal hospital partnerships.
2. **Strengthen operational and leadership support systems**, ensuring staff wellness and shared decision-making.
3. **Build a workforce pipeline** through mentorship, training, and partnerships that diversify the field.



# PROGRAMS

AHM's programming is shaped by what clients ask for: from intake to discharge, they consistently report feeling safe, informed, and heard. But current offerings are limited by structural constraints. Our midwives are currently unable to provide full-scope continuity, especially during labour and delivery.

**There is strong demand from clients and partners to move toward full-scope care, where midwives provide care throughout the entire perinatal journey.** Currently, clients must navigate this most vulnerable point of care (often in hospitals) with little continuity or advocacy. **Moving toward full-scope, 24-hour access means closing the gap between clinic and hospital, ensuring Black birthing people receive continuous, culturally safe support without interruption.**

At the same time, the vision for programming extends beyond birthing itself, with wraparound, community-based supports such as housing navigation, lactation support, mental health services, and access to primary care providers.



## ***Our priorities***

1. **Strengthen continuity of care** through expanded intrapartum services, sustainable funding models, and partnerships with primary care providers.
2. **Integrate wraparound services** by formalizing culturally aligned partnerships and creating a care navigation toolkit for uninsured or undocumented clients.
3. **Expand education and empowerment** via the Birthing While Black program, parenting support groups, and advocacy coaching.

# PLACE

AHM is a place of care, safety, and belonging. The experience of entering our space is consistently described as calming, affirming, and different from what Black birthing people often encounter elsewhere in the healthcare system. From the way midwives speak, to the art on the walls, to the time taken in each appointment, the message is clear: **“You matter here.”**

This sense of place is one of AHM’s greatest strengths. It creates the conditions for culturally safe care where clients are not rushed or dismissed, and where midwives and staff can work in ways that align with their values.

AHM’s home is in Scarborough, and we will continue to invest in our presence here. At the same time, the vision of “place” includes more than our current clinic: it extends to hospital privileges, care partnerships, and, **in the long term, a Black-owned, multidisciplinary health hub where midwifery, education, mental health, and culturally safe wraparound services are co-located.**

## *Our priorities*

1. **Strengthen AHM’s presence** in Scarborough with space that supports care and wraparound services.
2. **Align space with staffing realities** by hiring additional midwives before expansion.
3. **Optimize current space** for flexible use by visiting clinicians.
4. **Lay the groundwork** for a Black health hub through feasibility planning and community consultation.



# POSITIONING



**AHM exists in a system not built for Black birthing people and, in many cases, one that continues to harm them.** Over the past several years, however, AHM has gained recognition: partners cite its model as best practice, clients travel across the GTA to access care, and policymakers and researchers increasingly turn to AHM for insight.

**Positioning is about clarity:** AHM is both a care provider and a system disruptor. As Ontario's first Black-led midwifery initiative focused on maternal health equity, AHM is uniquely placed to shift narratives, influence policy, and shape the future of care.

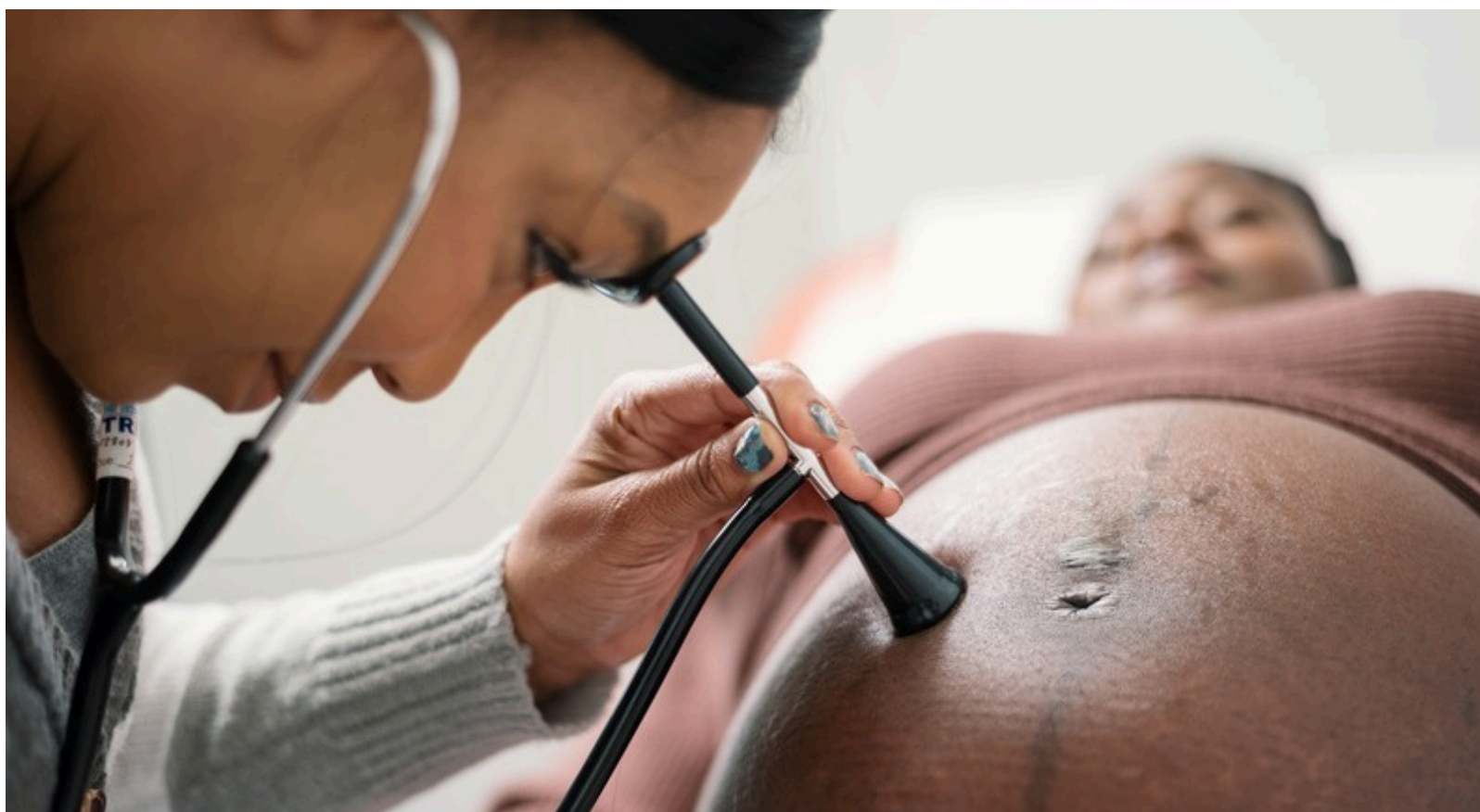
## ***Our priorities***

1. **Strengthen AHM's public narrative** through communications and storytelling.
2. **Elevate AHM as a policy actor and thought leader** on race-based data, funding, and equity standards.
3. **Build a hub** for learning and influence, codifying and sharing our model.
4. **Expand visibility** across media, research, donor, and policy spaces.

# POWER

For many clients who walk through AHM's doors, pregnancy is shaped by fear of being mistreated. **AHM was created as a response to that reality by shifting power back into the hands of those most vulnerable in the system.**

Power does not shift on its own; it requires strategy. For AHM, this means building **sustainable funding, diversifying governance, and ensuring leadership succession.** It also means influencing policy and philanthropy so that Black-led, culturally safe care is treated as a standard, not an exception.



## ***Our priorities***

1. **Secure long-term, flexible funding** through multi-year strategies and value-aligned partnerships.
2. **Diversify and enhance governance** with a skilled, representative board.
3. **Build philanthropic partnerships** that understand systems change and invest in core capacity.
4. **Embed leadership succession** by establishing an Executive Director role and supporting midwife leadership development.

# PRACTICE

For AHM, accountability means defining success on our own terms and proving the value of culturally safe Black-led midwifery care with clarity and consistency. **Practice is where vision meets implementation:** tracking not only who gets care, but how they are treated, what barriers they face, and whether they leave more empowered than when they entered.

AHM will invest in evaluation, learning, and infrastructure to strengthen its model and share it more broadly.

## *Our priorities*

1. **Develop a culturally grounded evaluation framework** with KPIs measuring cultural safety, empowerment, unmet need, and systemic impact.
2. **Integrate continuous learning** through midwife reflection, peer support, and client feedback.
3. **Strengthen operational infrastructure** with robust intake, documentation, and secure data systems.
4. **Ensure accountability** to the community through participatory evaluation and an annual State of Black Birthing Care report.




# Acknowledgements

This strategy begins from a position of strength: AHM is already a trusted model of culturally safe care, with a small but mighty team rooted in community, and a growing ecosystem of support. This plan protects what's already working, scales what's possible, and builds to ensure it lasts. Over the next three years, success will be measured not only by volume, but by depth, impact, and sustainability.

**We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals who supported us on our journey:**

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## *Let's connect!*

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**Amplify Birthing while Black**

