

Two Game Changing Entrepreneurs to Celebrate this Black History Month

Leside Naturals

Skin & Hair Care



Immigrating to Canada in 2006 from her birth country of Nigeria, Oludayo pursued both undergraduate and graduate studies in supply chain management, perhaps little realizing she was laying the foundation for a promising entrepreneurial venture into the cosmetics industry. Specializing in hair and skin care for fellow new Canadians who found dealing with the cold, harsh climate AND obtaining familiar, all natural ingredients for their skin and hair care to be a challenge, she launched Leside Naturals together with her husband in 2019 while on maternity leave with her third child. The company name is inspired by her three “October” girls, daughters ten year old Imole Oluwa, (LE) 6 year old Imisi Oluwa (SI) and 2 year old Imade Oluwa (DE). From sourcing natural ingredients directly from several countries in Africa including her birthplace, to experimenting with her grandmother’s recipes and trials on her own skin and hair

along with those of her children, Oludayo now offers a range of products from soap and body butter to hair oil and lip balm. With the support of the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre (BEC) and her family, you can now find Leside Naturals online, through Instagram, at Sobey’s Brampton North Park Dr. location and in several speciality stores! She shares her challenging journey as a full time mom, full time employee and full time entrepreneur with us.

Describing an ongoing battle with hair breakage, dryness and excessive texture loss, Oludayo (who is also committed to eradicating misconceptions within the black community about the ability to promote and maintain natural hair growth) she found Canada lacking the right resources to provide this much sought after hair moisture. As a result, Oludayo began importing raw, fresh ingredients from Africa, formulating products that were all natural with ingredients you could pronounce and that she knew from personal experience worked well. From their first moisturizing hair care product, to a full line of body butters, lip balms, soaps and hair oil, Leside Naturals proudly displays the list of ingredients on every product, knowing they work well and contain no harsh chemicals. Leside Naturals not only rigidly adheres to Health Canada guidelines but also happily supports full transparency around the labelling of their products and what they can achieve. In fact, founder Oludayo says proudly you can speak with her directly whether by phone, on Instagram or through email. Using her own experiences, and those of her daughter’s – one of whom has natural hair that’s grown to over 21” long – she is confident Leside offers an alternative people can trust over the more traditional “big beauty brands.”

Ms. Sola-Akinsola credits Daniel Bishun of BEC, along with several mentors, her supportive spouse and her mother, with each contributing to the overall success of Leside Naturals. She describes the experience of working with the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre team as crucial to her continued success. BEC provided the tools and resources she needed to work out a solid business plan; to access a free Shopify account helping her

business grow, where she could learn about website branding, increasing her Instagram visibility and finally, how to approach and work with both well-established retail businesses and brand ambassadors to maximize product exposure. She was able to connect with various funding opportunities although she stresses, in her advice to other emerging entrepreneurs, that you have to be prepared to hustle because the competition for grants and loans is fierce even though there are specific programs and supports dedicated to black entrepreneurs. She also attributes at least some of her success to the fact that she had a full time income to support her start-up venture in its early days.

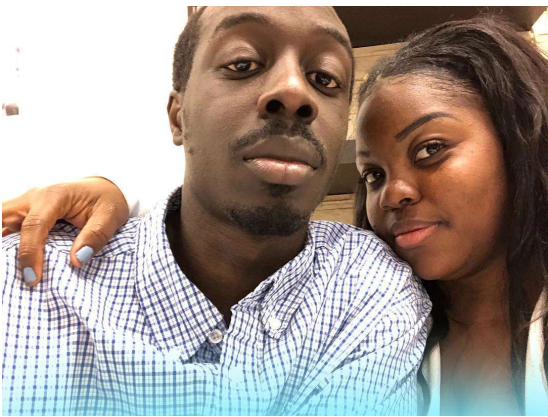
Other challenges she says entrepreneurs should be ready to face include sourcing materials, obtaining and maintaining visibility on store shelves and shipping costs. She mentions as an example, importing raw product from various regions in Africa, balancing cost effectiveness and also freshness as an important piece of her business that she's worked hard to get "just right." Remember that supply chain experience we mentioned earlier? It has come in handy as Oludayo works to ensure her product is "retail ready" and she's confident that Leaside is now ready to sit alongside other national brands and be competitive.

Look for Leaside Naturals at Brampton's North Park Sobey's location with more retail spots to follow soon. With both a hair and skin care product line, some of which are available in both scented and unscented to accommodate the allergic consumer, you're sure to find what you are looking for. They have also sourced a type of popular and familiar dry sponge used for exfoliating, importing it directly from Nigeria.

Finally, Oludayo says entrepreneurs also need to be ready to hear "No" multiple times but perseverance is what will eventually land you that coveted "Yes!" Try to find mentors she says and have a BIG vision. Be prepared for mistakes and to learn from them and look for tools and resources that can help you every step of the way, like those you'll find at the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre and their team of small business specialists.

To find out more about **Leside Naturals**, you can head to their [website](#), or follow them on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#)

For past client spotlight stories, please [click here](#)



Inspired by the premature birth of their child, two motivated, loving parents and entrepreneurial spirits at heart, combined forces out of a desire to give their baby the absolute best nutritional head start in life. From this lofty goal something else was born too – the desire to coax a thriving, all natural, juice, smoothie and plant-based business into existence! Starting in 2014, with their official business launch in 2015, Shameka and Kareem Dorsett have watched both their son and their business flourish by providing healthy, nutritious and delicious raw, cold-pressed juices, a selection of “mylks” and smoothies and, more recently, plant-based wraps, sandwiches and salads to discerning, health conscious consumers. Adding in a partnership with the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre (BEC) and its Starter Company Program was the additional boost Green Geek needed to expand the business, something the Dorsett’s did with confidence that BEC was a “champion in their corner,” supporting their business venture every step of the way.

Kareem has a background in culinary arts and undertook a lot of the initial research, trial and error when it came to blending and creating the Green Geek brand of juices. Some fruits pair naturally with others, while a banana for example, is more suited to a smoothie style of drink. The success of their trial and error process led to families asking to purchase their products and so, together with Shameka’s customer service and sales experience, they hit the road across the GTA to market Green Geek Juice, by literally taking it to markets! The couple describes their journey as “having been blessed to be able to work together towards our shared dream,” and as a result of their perseverance and hard work Green Geek is now a regular feature at the Brampton Farmers Market each summer. They can also be found in Milton (even during the winter months, at Terra Greenhouses when Covid permitted) and they have a solid online presence too. They source locally for as much of their fruits and vegetables as possible, working with a small farm in Inglewood and this year are also working on the further development of two partnership projects which will see their juices at two retail locations – “Wicked Shop Local” in Orangeville and also at the Eaton Centre in “Black Owned TO.” Perfecting their packaging and getting labelling just right to help grow their retail presence has been their latest ongoing initiative, also supported by the BEC.

The duo credits the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre (BEC) and its Starter Company Program as a big part of their success. Meeting the team, including Jennifer Vivian, and taking part in the pitch challenge (where aspiring entrepreneurs can “pitch” their products much like on Dragon’s Den) allowed them to develop confidence, perfect their presentation style and understand what was needed to help grow their business. With BEC they learned about creating a business plan, how to work on projections and they learned to move forward with both a specific focus and the additional clarity that the BEC team was able to provide. Kareem and Shemeka felt more empowered and describe the entire mentorship experience as helping them enormously. With access to the kind of information that only BEC alone could provide, such as where their ideal client lives, works and plays, they’ve been able to more accurately identify their target market and focus their energies on developing products for this very specific demographic.

Kareem and Shameka also talk openly about the important role social media can play in business development but caution fellow entrepreneurs not to get caught up in “appearances.” Success rarely happens overnight and they remind us it’s not always as glamorous as social media implies. You have to be willing to put in the hard work. They encourage other aspiring entrepreneurs with this advice suggesting they “don’t ask for something you are not willing to follow through on in terms of hard work.” That said however, the Dorsett’s also advise fellow small business owners to stretch their imaginations and to think outside of the box. Covid has definitely taken a bit of a toll on their business, requiring them to pivot along with many other small business owners and they’ve had to think creatively about ways to market their juices in these changing times. That aligns with their last piece of advice that is, appropriately, “most of all, to be willing to get creative!” Combining this advice with the support of the BEC team literally gave Green Geek the business boost they might not otherwise have been able to achieve on their own. If you’d like to check out Green Geek, take a look at their website where it’s easy to see all the fresh, natural ingredients listed and read the stories behind their creations!

To find out more about **Green Geek**, you can head to their [website](#), or follow them on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#)

For past client spotlight stories, please [click here](#)