



# SAWA NORTH AMERICA CONVENTION

Montréal, August 29-31

## PRESS KIT



# SAWA & MOHAWK

When two First Nations meet for a unique moment of tradition.



The large Sawa community of Canada and the Ngond'a Sawa Association of Canada are pleased to host the second edition of the Sawa Convention of North America. This biannual and traveling meeting will be held from August 29 to 31, 2025 in Montreal (Canada). This event is an opportunity to bring together the sons and daughters of the coastal region of Cameroon from Campo to Mamfé, living in Canada and the United States, around the values of solidarity, sharing and cultural transmission.

# Press release

## **Sawa Convention of North America: A historic meeting between two Indigenous peoples.**

Montreal, July 15, 2025 – The second edition of the biennial Sawa Convention of North America will be held in Montreal from August 29 to 31, 2025. Under the theme of unity, **"Jatèlè Ô Mulatako"** in the Duala language, this exceptional meeting promises a unique moment of sharing and celebration between two Indigenous peoples: the Indigenous Sawa people of Cameroon and the Mohawk Nation (Kanien'keháka), belonging to the Iroquoian linguistic family and one of the 11 Indigenous nations identified in Quebec.

This unique event will highlight a traditional ceremony shared by both cultures—an opportunity not to be missed!

The beautiful city of Montreal invites you to experience a warm and dynamic weekend, rich in cultural exchanges and discoveries.

Highlights of the program include the signing of the guestbook at the City of Montreal, as well as the invitation extended by Elder Kevin Deer, guardian of the beliefs of the Mohawk house of the Walking Clay Clan. He will offer an immersion into the richness of Indigenous art and culture, supported and showcased by Sacred Fires Productions. The Sawa chiefs, who have come specially from Cameroon for the occasion, will have the opportunity to discover and honor the Mohawk culture, in a spirit of brotherhood and mutual respect.

This meeting marks a first for these two geographically distant peoples, united by shared traditions and spiritual values.

The Sawa represent a large group of peoples originating from the Cameroonian coastal region, from Campo to Mamfé, proud to share their cultural heritage with the North American Indigenous community. The recent inscription of the traditional Sawa general assembly (the NGONDO) on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List attests to the contribution of Sawa culture to dialogue among the peoples of the world.

For interview requests or additional information, please contact us:

[sdibounje@gmail.com](mailto:sdibounje@gmail.com) / [info@sawaconna.org](mailto:info@sawaconna.org)

Marie-Sophie Madiba: 1 418-262-5659 / Émilie Saker: 514-497-1512

# Historical reminder

The idea for the Sawa Convention was born in 2014 in Houston, Texas, during the inauguration of the newly elected president of the Sawa Houston Association. This landmark event brought together several leaders of Sawa associations across the United States. Together, they outlined the ambitious vision of creating a unifying platform for all Sawa sons and daughters living in North America—from Cameroon's vast geo-cultural region stretching from Campo to Mamfe. The goal was clear: to foster the exchange of ideas, initiate community projects, and celebrate a shared cultural heritage.

In 2018, this vision took a decisive turn during a fundraising event organized in Georgia by Sawa Nya Georgia. It was during this event that discussions around the creation of the convention intensified, leading to the selection of Houston as the first host city. The foundations of this project were laid in the presence of key figures such as Moukouri Kouo Elizabeth, former president of the Washington, DC chapter; Charles Ngalle and Ben Ekwalla, former presidents of Sawa Nya Georgia in Atlanta, respectively; and Titti Dayas-Barry, former president of Sawa Houston.

Between 2019 and 2022, efforts continued with determination. Sawa leaders stepped up consultations to mobilize other local and regional associations, with the goal of uniting all Sawa communities in North America.

Thus, in 2023, the very first Sawa Convention in North America was born in Washington, DC. This inaugural edition marked a historic turning point by bringing together, for the first time, Sawa associations from the United States and Canada around their heritage, diversity, and shared future.





# SAWA CONVENTION 2025

## But who are the SAWA?

These are the Bantu peoples who mainly live along the coasts of Cameroon's major rivers, such as the Wouri, the Dibamba, and the Moungo, and their tributaries located further inland. They range from Campo in the south to Bakassi Island in the southwest, passing through the Mbo Plain, and occupy three administrative regions: the South, the Southwest, and the Littoral.

Composed primarily of the descendants of Mbed'a Mbongo, the Bassa, and the Bakoko, they form a large human community that has contributed to shaping the history of Cameroon and the African continent in general, thanks in particular to its valiant sons who resisted German colonization from the very beginning, such as Kuve Likenye of the Bakweri, Lock Priso (real name Kum'a Mbappe), Rudolf Douala Manga Bell, Ngoso Din, and Madola Dimale, the great chief of the Batanga.

The Sawa also boast a rich, centuries-old cultural heritage, which has given rise to one of the largest cultural festivals held on African soil: THE NGONDO FESTIVAL, ranked 5th in the world for carnivals and now listed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Site. Its cultural richness is multifaceted :

- On the gastronomic level: with its legendary ndolé, an internationally renowned dish that has reached the top of the list today; but there is also Penja pepper, perhaps less well-known among the Sawa and Cameroonians themselves, but internationally recognized for its unique qualities and virtues, which have earned it PGI (Preferred Geographical Indication) certification.

- Musically, the Sawa offer the world Makossa music and rhythm in all its variations. We can thus mention the names of immortal representatives such as Nelle Eyoum, Francis Bebe, Eboa Lottin, Kotto Bass, Guy Lobe, and Manu Dibango (may their souls rest in peace). Today, on the world stage, who can ignore Richard Bona, Henri Dikongue, Etienne Mbappe, Toto Guillaume, Salle John, Sergeo Polo, Dina Bell, Ben Decca, Ndedi Eyango, Douleur, Petit Pays, Grace Decca, etc.

- On the literary front, many Sawa sons and daughters distinguished themselves very early on; such is the case with Elolongue Epanya Yondo, Francis Bebe, Patrice Ndedi Penda, Senga Kouoh, Valere Epee, Mbondji Ejenguele, Angele Kingue, and Leonora Miano, recipient of the Prix Goncourt des lycées in 2006 and the Grand Prix Femina in 2013.

- And finally, here in Quebec, what could be more culturally representative than the former Minister of Culture and Communication of the Parti Québécois, the Honorable Maka Kotto député de Bourget, grand homme de culture, pur produit de la diaspora sawa.

We cannot talk about the Sawa without mentioning Douala, their reference city. A mythical city, formerly called Old Cameroon; the first capital of Kamerun under German influence (1901). Better still, at that time Kamerun was simply Douala.

# His Majesty Jean-Yves Eboumbou Douala Manga Bell,



## King of Canton Bell and heir to a prestigious lineage.

His Majesty Jean-Yves Eboumbou Douala Manga Bell, King of Canton Bell, is heir to a prestigious lineage. He succeeded his father HRH René Douala Manga Bell on December 16, 2012. At the end of his remarkable academic career in France, marked by studies in history and economics, he returned to Cameroon. During his reign, King Bell actively engaged in the preservation of cultural heritage, the recognition of the crimes of colonization, and the strengthening of Sawa traditions, particularly within the Ngondo, the traditional institution of the Sawa people. He was notably a guest of honor in Germany at the inauguration of Rudolf Douala Manga Bell Square in October 2022, in tribute to his ancestor executed by the German colonial administration on August 8, 1914. His Majesty is also a guardian of traditions, a visionary leader, and a defender of history. Since his coronation, he has worked towards the unity of the Sawa people from Campo to Mamfé. His confirmed presence at the Convention that the sons and daughters of the Sawa diaspora of North America are organizing in Montreal next August, supported by participation in the 2014 Martyrs Commemoration ceremonies that will take place there, will give a unique character to this celebration while arousing strong emotions.



# His Majesty Dr Robert Esuka Mbella Endeley

His Majesty Dr. Robert Esuka Mbella Endeley is the 7th Paramount Chief of the Bakweri of Buea, Cameroon. Heir to a prestigious lineage, he succeeds his uncle, Chief Samuel Moka Lifafa Endeley, who marked the history of the Bakweri. He was crowned on March 18, 2022, after a three-year vacancy in the supreme chieftaincy. A man of knowledge and vision, with a doctorate in geology and a master's degree in computer engineering, he today embodies culture, unity, and leadership.

## Preserver of cultural heritage,

He has focused all of his reign on preserving cultural heritage, strengthening the unity of the Bakweri people, and developing educational and historical projects.

Among his initiatives, he plans to create a museum and a bookstore, and revitalize the MBANDO cultural festival, an annual celebration of Bakweri identity. His Majesty Dr. Robert Esuka Mbella Endeley, Paramount Chief of Buea, is a visionary leader, a guardian of traditions, and, above all, a pillar of the unity of the Sawa people.

The announcement of his participation in the Sawa Convention North America next August has excited all the Sawa sons and daughters of the North American diaspora. They are eager to meet their young monarch.





## The youngest monarch among the senior chiefs of Ngondo

His Majesty Erick Jamil Madiba Songue is the current Chief of Bakoko-Wouri Canton in Douala, Cameroon. Aged 38, he was chosen on February 28, 2023, by the Ndokat family and traditional chiefs to succeed his father, King Salomon Madiba Songue, who died on October 17, 2022. He thus becomes the youngest monarch among the chiefs of Ngondo.

### His Majesty Erick Jamil Songuè

A graduate of the Universities of Westminster and East London in the United Kingdom, Erick Jamil Songue has had a distinguished career in the hospital sector.

As King, His Majesty Erick Jamil Songue continues the projects initiated by his father, such as the Douala Development Corporation (SAD), the retrocession of customary land, the Transporters' Village project, and the development of the Japoma stadium. He embodies unifying leadership and is actively involved in promoting and enhancing Sawa culture, particularly through Ngondo.

He is passionate about water sports, in harmony with the traditions of his people. At the intersection of modernity and tradition, King Erick Jamil Songue represents a new generation of traditional leaders committed to the development of their communities.



# Nadya Kwandibens, Redworks Ka'nahsohon Kevin Deer, Spiritual leader Mohawk, Clan Clay ambulant.



## Guardian of the beliefs of the Mohawk Trail longhouse

Ka'nahsohon Kevin is from the Mohawk Territory of Kahnawake. He has been the belief keeper of the Mohawk Trail Longhouse for almost 40 years. He is involved in the education system, and his goal is to maintain and enhance the Mohawk language and culture, beginning with the Six Nations of Ontario (Ohswe:ken) in September 1988. Kevin returned to Kahnawake the following year and has held successive roles as teacher, vice-principal, and principal at the Karonhianonhna Mohawk Immersion School over the past 30 years.

He has, however, returned to the classroom to deliver health programs in daycares, kindergarten, and grades one and two. Kevin received his Bachelor of Education from McGill University in June 1996. He is passionate about the Indigenous spiritual knowledge of Turtle Island (North America) and believes that it must be shared and understood by newcomers from the new world who are guests in the Indigenous home.

They must embrace knowledge and begin to live by what they have learned so that they have hope for future generations. Kevin Deer is also the Interim Vice President of the First Nations Technical Institute, where he uses his knowledge, experience, and expertise to make the institution a model that can influence the world. Elder, keeper of traditional teachings in carrying out the mission of the PFS.

# From his birth to his artistic beginnings

Born on May 3, 1949, in Bonamouti-Akwa, Douala, into a Sawa family of artists. At the age of one, he suffered a vaccination complication (polio), confining his legs, but was able to walk again at the age of four. At the age of four, he joined the studio of his great-uncle Philippe Madiba, a pioneer of Cameroonian painting and graduate of the ABC School of Drawing in Paris.

His work is distinguished by his mixed use of supports (canvas, wood, bark, hides) and mediums (oil, acrylic, inks, pigments, etc.).

He explores Cubism, Neo-Impressionism, and Surrealism, particularly highlighting women, whom he sees as the symbol of human history and knowledge.

## His academic and professional career

After brilliant studies (BAC A4, Master's degree in economics, and other training in management and accounting), he worked as a civil servant at the State Inspectorate General and then at the Ministry of Tourism.

In 1988, a seminar in Yaoundé cemented his artistic reputation: he earned a diploma of merit and perfected his craft alongside renowned painters and sculptors.

In 1995, he was appointed Departmental Delegate of Tourism in Kribi, a marine immersion that stimulated his creativity. Retired since 2005, he devotes himself exclusively to his art, alongside isolated research in the fields of history and ethno-sociology.

Jacques Eyoum Madiba is a Sawa genealogist, storyteller, and scholar of the Duala language who advocates for the promotion of Sawa cultural heritage. His name is often cited in cultural, community, and

## Jacques Eyoum Madiba

**Genealogist, socio-ethnologist and painter.**



## In a few words

Jacques Eyoum Madiba embodies the resilience and preservation of Sawa traditions: from a discreet young artist to a cultural icon, his career is marked by the reconquest of mobility, the reaffirmation of identity, and the innovative fusion of visual media. Today, he is at once a renowned painter, scholar, and transmitter of memory.

# Contacts

Marie Sophie Dibounje Madiba  
Communications and Marketing Manager  
+1 418 262 5659  
sdibounje@gmail.com /info@sawaconna.org  
<https://www.sawaconna.org>



Sawa Convention in North America

## OUR PARTNERS



**ÉBONGUÉ**  
AVOCATS LA WYERS



**DIPRICA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS**  
We work for businesses and individuals as well.



**RE/MAX**  
PERFORMANCE INC.  
AGENCE IMMOBILIÈRE

Marie Solange Gondang

Bur. : 450.466.4000  
Cell. : 514.220.1003  
[marie.gondang@remax-quebec.com](mailto:marie.gondang@remax-quebec.com)

*A historic moment in perspective!*