

# Semaji

Volume 8, issue 1

**Black Community Resource Centre**

**Supporting Youth, Building Communities, A Holistic Approach**

December 2010



*Black Theatre Workshop  
Celebrates their 40th Anniversary!*

[www.bcrcmontreal.com](http://www.bcrcmontreal.com)

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## CONTACT US

Black Community Resource Centre  
 6767 Côte-des-Neiges  
 Suite 497  
 Montréal, Québec, H3S 2T6  
 Tel: (514) 342-2247  
 Fax: (514) 342-2283  
 E-mail: [bcrc@qc.aira.com](mailto:bcrc@qc.aira.com)  
[www.bcrcmontreal.com](http://www.bcrcmontreal.com)

## CONTRIBUTORS

Shirlette Wint, Myrna-Pierre Canel, Dwight Best, Stéphanie Gélinas, Ashley Belmer, Clara Ganemtoré, Thea Cammie

## EDITORS

Dr. Dorothy W. Williams, Laurent Picard

## LAYOUT DESIGN

David Anderson, Thea Cammie, Laurent Picard

## COVER PHOTO

Ulysse Lemerisse Bouchard

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## President's Message



By Bradley Dottin

*Like the cover of this Semaji issue indicates, Black Theatre Workshop is now 40 years old. The Black Theatre Workshop is a member of the BCRC family; it has a seat on our board and a warm spot in our hearts. It is fitting then that this Semaji issue salutes this Montréal institution. Perhaps this tribute will encourage Semaji readers to go to BTW productions this year. In fact, make this year the beginning of a lifetime relationship between you and the Black Theatre Workshop. Make it your first choice to experience live, thought-provoking theater year-to-year.*

*Few Black institutions in our city are thriving after 40 years of bringing value by encouraging our youth and showcasing our best. Hats off to the Black Theatre Workshop! The Black Community Resource Centre wishes them every success in their 40th anniversary year and in the decades to come! Our Semaji issue wants to help you bring in holidays with some suggested readings, a video to watch and some exciting activities to look forward to in 2010 and in 2011.*

*You can read how you can make a difference by helping out at the annual Caribbean Christmas dinner and toy give-away for our less fortunate. For those wanting to escape, Playmas is once again putting on its Rum and Rhythm event in the dead of January. Brush off the snow and help raise money for a good cause on the West Island while sipping rum, and eating Caribbean delights. They have even found a way to make it a romantic get-away—consider staying overnight in a beautiful suite and then join us for the buffet breakfast!*

*You can read about our on-going programs we support and animate such as the Mini-Poste project, now in its final year, and the Nursing Review, a mentoring and training program to support the struggle to help foreign-trained professionals break into Quebec health institutions. We are proud to assist this cadre of Black women leading the change in nursing training.*

*There is so much more to read and absorb in this issue. Download it at your leisure, wrap yourself in a snuggie and read it from cover-to-cover while sipping your eggnog. Finally, we salute you too, for your support throughout this year and to all our volunteers, partners and interested folks: Happy Holidays and All the Best of the New Year. We are your resource center, a connection to the city, and a lens to the community, visit us some time.*

*“In fact, make this year the beginning of a lifetime relationship between you and the Black Theatre workshop”*



# “Facts for Thought”

*A Workshop that Illuminates Canadian Racism and its Effects*

by Stéphanie Gélinas

This past October, a group of spiritual animators from the English Montreal School Board gathered for an all-day workshop on the history and current state of Black people in Montreal. Dr. Dorothy Williams, a historian who has researched this topic and published numerous books on the subject, was invited to convey the history and inequities that Black people have faced in Montreal and Canada for centuries.

This is a difficult undertaking considering the fact that for many Canadians today, learning that Canada had slavery is difficult to absorb on its own. When you add the unearthing of a continuous history of systemic racism in Canada well, you have a room full of Canadians in disbelief. Telling someone who sees racism as an American phenomenon or as media fabrication that racism is in fact a reality often elicits denial. Canadians feel pride in

thinking that they have always had a sense of freedom and equality that distinguished them from Americans. This erroneous self-perception has made it difficult to reconcile Canadians with their history of slavery, their discriminatory practices and contemporary racism.

Throughout the workshop, Dr. Williams presented many facts on the history and state of Black people in



Montreal; facts that have never been made readily available to most Canadians. Our history curriculum customarily avoids the topic of slavery unless there is a recounting of the story of the Underground Railroad in which it hails Canadians as the champions of the slaves who had faced atrocities at the hands of the Americans.

The fact that Canadians had slaves during the early period when American

fugitives were being smuggled into Canada was however omitted from most stories about the early Underground Railroad.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that racism, the ensuing hardships and inequities faced by Black people in Canada was so appalling that 3 out of 5 fugitives returned to the United States as soon as slavery was abolished; this is a testament to the scope of racism in Canada.<sup>2</sup> The fact that in the 20th century, African-Canadians with college or university diplomas fought for positions as porters on the railways while their African-American counterparts were becoming lawyers and doctors is also left out of Canadian history curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that today, here in Canada, a Black person with a Bachelor's degree earns less than a White person who dropped out of highschool is widely unknown or seen as specific to the workplace rather than being acknowledged as symptomatic of the society-wide racism in Canada.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that up until the last census Black people were the most highly educated immigrants and that Black teenagers in Montreal are only dropping out a rate of 1% above the average, even with their added obstacles.

These facts help dispel the idea that Blacks are unemployed because of their lack of qualification.<sup>5</sup> Facts like these could also help reveal the concurrent history of a Black presence and racism in Canada which has been interestingly excluded from most publications on Canadian history. These facts are effectual in that they are a first step in helping Canadians to realize that they have a racist past and recognize that they, whether by ignorance or indifference, action or inaction, denial or condonation, have had a part in the systemic racist practices of their nation, many of which are still thriving.

Canadians can't have an open dialogue about an issue that they can't even acknowledge. There needs to be more of a discourse on the history of Blacks in order for people to make the first step towards change in Montreal. By presenting statistics and historical records it made it that much more difficult for the workshop attendees to deny the existence of racial discrimination in Canada.

By workshop's end, most felt enlightened, some felt guilt and real emotion, and although a few still remained in denial, most were able to see it as an issue to ponder. These EMSB spiritual animators are now at the very least somewhat acquainted with the

obstacles impeding the success of their Black students. Hopefully, some are thoughtful enough to help institute change in the lives of their students or even Canadian society.

1 Dorothy Williams, *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*, Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1997, p.24.

2 Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: a history*, 2nd ed. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997, p. 289; Williams, p. 27.

3 Williams, p.46

4 Williams, p.24

5 Subhas Ramcharan, *Racism: nonwhites in Canada*, Toronto: Butterworths, c1982; W. Head, 1978, p.29, J. Torczyner, *Demographic Challenges facing the Black Community of Montreal in the 21st Century*, Montreal: McGill University vol. 1, 2010.

## Chasing History in Little Burgundy

by Dwight Best, ACSioN Network CEC

It is often said that today's youth are truly ahistorical – not only do they know next to nothing of the exploits of their forebearers, unfortunately also they seem to be quite comfortable with, and complacent about, such a lack of knowledge. And so for the past two years, the ACSioN Network and the BCRC have been helping new members, particularly the executives of the different Black university student associations in Montreal to develop stronger, more profound connections to the city's diverse Black communities. By engaging these students in orientation workshops, where we discuss important issues facing these communities, we provide essential historical background information. This is the foundation for critical consciousness among our Black communities' future leaders and our professionals.

Although the BCRC/ ACSioN Fundamentals Orientation Conference has always included strong historical components, this year we decided to make the history of Blacks in Montreal come more alive by taking our student participants on an eye-opening historical scavenger hunt through Little Burgundy, the centre of Montreal's Black community for most of the 20th century.

With the guidance of Dr. Dorothy Williams, we were able to highlight some of the lesser-known landmarks which are subtle indicators of important periods in the history and development of Black Montreal. These include places such as Rufus-Rockhead Street, the cooperative housing nearly adjacent to the Ilot-Saint-Martin projects, and the Jessie-Maxwell-Smith and Charles-Drew parks. Once we had all the locations

listed, Dr. Williams also helped fine-tune the game so that all the participants would be able to complete their portion of the scavenger hunt.

Three student teams competed to find the most information about fifteen locations spread throughout Little Burgundy. Once they returned to Concordia University's Hall Building (itself an important part of Black Montreal history), we explained the history behind all the locations that they had just visited minutes before.

As we continued on to each landmark in turn, examining each photograph and discussing its historical significance, it was refreshing to see the interest that was sparked in each student.

The students' understanding of many of the locations was transformed through this activity, as some had in fact walked past these landmarks several times before the scavenger hunt, without an inkling of the meaning

behind these structures. All the participants asked to participate in this type of activity again – evidence that through this year's Fundamentals Orientation Conference, we have once again expanded our means to connect

with our most promising youth. As we prepare for further activities over the next year, we will continue to innovate with smart approaches that inform and engage tomorrow's Black community leaders and professionals!



It is named after Rufus Rockhead, who owned one of the most popular jazz nightclubs in the area during the 1940's.

Source: <http://citynoise.org>



Staff at Rockhead's Paradise  
Rockhead's was famous for friendly hospitality, top-quality Black entertainment, and featured a floorshows.

Photo by Émile of Montréal.  
Circa 1946.

Source : Concordia University Archives, P004-02-44

Arts & Culture

**Forty Years of Service...**

**Shirlette Wint, Psychotherapist, Cultural Consultant M.S.W.**

Throughout history, every known culture, civilization, and people have used some form of creative medium to evaluate and resolve complex social problems. We see the remnants of their efforts in architectural ruins, artefacts, and in other complex forms of language transmission. In today's contemporary world, groups that came out of

“great” civilizations (Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Chinese, Mayan, etc.) continue to build on what was left behind thousands of years ago. For other peoples, particularly those of oral civilizations, African and some Native American civilizations for example, the struggle to continue building on ancestral foundations has been more than challenging.



Historian and social commentator, John Henrik Clarke refers to history as a clock that people use to measure the political pulse of the day. They use this same continuum to locate themselves on the map of human geography.

It reassures them about where they have been, who and what they have been, and especially where they may go. The more tangible and concrete the ancestral foundations left behind, the greater the chances are that groups will trace their way to recognition and success. The result is a strong sense of self and easy access to cultural production that represents positive reflections of themselves in the society in which they live.

History has not treated all groups with the same kindness neither in the making or the rendition of culture. Blacks in particular have had a difficult time using history as a marker to identify where they are, who and what they are, and where they should and can go. Hence their legacy has been fragmented identities and cultural affiliations which are often times fragile and elusive and this creates gaps in their emotional health. WHO, the World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Due to historical and current social inequalities the majority of Blacks have not had the opportunity to experience the same sense of mental and social well-being. In his book, *Tom-Tom*, John W. Vandercook, eloquently described what it is to be an actualized human being with a healthy satisfaction with one’s lot

in life. He wrote: “a race is like a man, until it uses its own talents, takes pride in its own history, and loves its own memories, it can never fulfill itself completely.”

The level of satisfaction with which any group views itself is largely dependent on the image reflected back by others in the society. Mainstream groups generally experience positive reflections of themselves on a

*“a race is like a man, until it uses its own talents, takes pride in its own history, and loves its own memories, it can never fulfill itself completely”*

daily basis through positions of power and influence in major public and private institutions, including the media. We live in an era where image imposes, everywhere.

Generally speaking, group value and importance in this society is largely determined by a group’s capacity to commandeer positive representation of themselves, be it in newsprint, television series, cinema, theatre, etc. In fact, there are no aspects of modern life that is not image-based as seen in politics, economics, sports, social welfare and of course, in the world of entertainment. Presently, there are few historical or cultural reminders in

Montreal’s public space that represents Blacks’ lived experience. Hence, the strength of this community will be their capacity to create new cultural symbols that encourage the group to take pride in their own history, to love their memories and believe that their heritage is one that will lead to fulfillment. Already, the community is benefiting from the collective success of such efforts through literature, poetry, music, dance, humour, fashion and cuisine.

Montreal’s Black Theatre Workshop (BTW) is a result of this trend.

BTW celebrates 40 years of existence. Along with community centers, BTW is one of the rare institutions where blackness is accepted and celebrated fostering a sense of mental and social well-being among users. BTW validates and portrays the lived experience of Blacks worldwide. On its stage, plays like *Tight-Rope Time*, by playwright Walter Boden, *A Common Man’s Guide to Loving Women* by Andrew Moodie, and *Blacks Don’t Bowl* by Vadney Haynes tell stories with compassion and strive to reflect back to the audience positive images of Blacks which go beyond stereotypes and transcend group and culture. From the time it was founded, BTW’s tenure has been fragile and that has not changed. One can only applaud their mostly, solitary effort to survive, to take root, and to present good and great theatre. BTW’s plays resolve complex social problems and help make meaning for the people whose stories they endeavour to tell.



## Let's Blow out the Candles! Black Theatre Workshop Celebrates 40 Years

*Black Theatre Workshop Presents its 40th Anniversary Production of A Raisin in the Sun*

By Ashley Belmer

*“What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?”*  
- Langston Hughes

Lorraine Hansberry borrowed this line as not only the title but also the core of her story, *A Raisin in the Sun*. In her play Hansberry creates some of the most powerful images in theatrical literature, drawing on some of the more charged topics of her time; the Black experience and the American Dream. Premiering on Broadway over 50 years ago, *Raisin* has earned an honoured place in American literature as the first Black play produced on Broadway, written by an African-American woman and directed by an African-American man. It was also the first time a play was ever written about African-Americans as individuals dealing with day-to-day life and not the stereotypical “comedic” character sticks portrayed at that time.

*A Raisin in the Sun* reflects Black Theatre Workshop’s history – this was one of the first mainstage productions ever done at BTW in 1979 at Centaur Theatre, featuring cast members who are still actively apart of Black Theatre Workshop. It dealt with issues very relevant at that time and still relevant today – a story similar to the survival of Black Theatre Workshop. This first production marked a significant milestone in BTW’s history as it was the play that helped BTW step out of its West Indian roots into an expression of the broader work of the African Diaspora.

This classic piece of Americana tells the story of a man chasing the American dream and the toll it takes on his family for which he works so hard. First produced in 1959, *Raisin* was the spark that ignited the Black Theatre Movement of the 60’s. Hansberry’s Younger family brings to life the honest struggle of the “average” and yet undiscovered Black American Family. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2009, *A Raisin in the Sun* has stood the test of time by still

managing to bring the struggle of “everyman” to the forefront of our thoughts. This production promises to bring to life all of the love, tears and power that is the Younger family.

*Black Theatre Workshop’s production of A Raisin in the Sun feature a stellar cast including Adrienne Mei Irving (Le Code Noir, Comedy of Errors), Peter Bailey (Come Good Rain), (Recent NTS graduate, Romeo & Juliet) Leah Doz, Ranelee Lee (Swan Song of Maria, 2010 Juno winner), Tristan D. Lalla (How She Move), Mike Payette (Skin), Christian Paul (Death Race) and Don Anderson (De Profundis).*

*“Dahoma” - meaning long life in Swahili – sums up BTW’s 40th season perfectly. When BTW was first established in 1971, no one predicted the journey it would take, the lives it would change and the history it continues to create.*

*“It is particularly remarkable for a company such as Black Theatre Workshop, one that does not quite fit into the mainstream, to have survived for 40 years... so although we celebrate 40 years as Black Theatre Workshop we also pay homage to those that paved the way before us.” Tyrone Benskin Artistic Director Black Theatre Workshop*

*Black Theatre Workshop’s A Raisin in the Sun ran from Nov. 24th to Dec.5th at Centaur Theatre.*

Please go to our website  
[www.blacktheatreworkshop.ca](http://www.blacktheatreworkshop.ca)  
for more information.



## Holiday Book and Movie List

*When the weather outside is frightful ... keep warm wrapped in a blanket  
and enjoying solitide with a good book or with family and friends enjoying a holiday film!*

### African-American movies to watch over the holidays

#### Call me Clause (2001)



When Lucy Cullins, a successful but cranky producer at a home shopping network, hires an actor named Nick to play Santa Claus on the network she gets more than she bargained for. Nick really is Santa Claus, and he faces mandatory retirement after 200 years on the job. Nick must find his replacement by Christmas Eve or the world will face dire consequences and he has his sights set on Lucy.

*Whoopi Goldberg*

#### The Perfect holiday (2007) PG



A young girl turns to a department store Santa in the hopes that he will help find a new husband for her divorced mother.

*Gabrielle Union, Morris Chestnut and Queen Latifah*

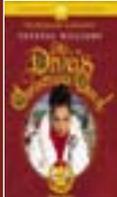


#### This Christmas (2007) PG-13

A Christmas time drama centered around the Whitefield family's first holiday together in four years.

*Regina King, Columbus Short and Delroy Lindo*

#### Diva's Christmas Carol (2000)



A remake of the Dickens classic, "A Christmas Carol" featuring a nasty pop singer who gets a reality check by three Christmas spirits.

*Vanessa Williams, Rozonda 'Chilli' Thomas and John Taylor*



#### Christmas at the Water's Edge (2004)

As she works with some underprivileged young people, an angel helps show a spoiled rich college girl the meaning of the season.

*Pooch Hall, and Keshia Knight Pulliam*

#### The Preacher's Wife (1996) PG



Good-natured Reverend Henry Biggs finds that his marriage to choir mistress Julia is flagging due to his constant absence caring for the deprived neighbourhood they live in. On top of all this, his church is coming under threat from property developer Joe Hamilton. In desperation, Rev. Biggs prays to God for help - and help arrives in the form of an angel named Dudley. However, Dudley's arrival seems to cause more trouble.

*Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston and Courtney B. Vance*

### In theatres over the holidays



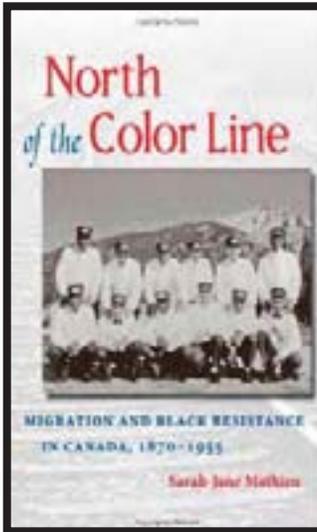
#### Frankie & Alice

A drama centered on a young woman with multiple personality disorder who struggles to remain her true self and not give in to her racist alter-personality  
Released **Febuary 4th**



#### Night Catches Us

In 1976, complex political and emotional forces are set in motion when a young man returns to the race-torn Philadelphia neighbourhood where he came of age during the Black Power Movement  
Released **December 3rd**

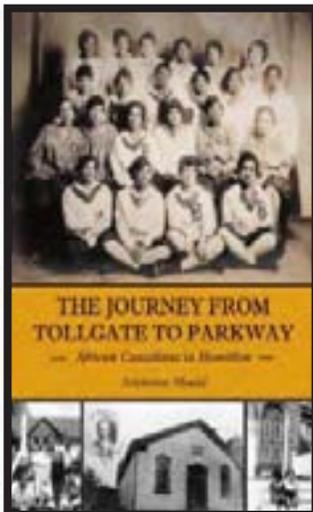


### **North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955 (The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture)**

*Sarah-Jane Mathieu*

*North of the Color Line* examines life in Canada for the estimated 5,000 blacks, both African Americans and West Indians, who immigrated to Canada after the end of Reconstruction in the United States. Through the experiences of Black railway workers and their union, the Order of Sleeping Car Porters, Sarah-Jane Mathieu connects social, political, labor, immigration, and Black diaspora history during the Jim Crow era. By World War I, sleeping car portering had become the exclusive province of Black men. White railwaymen protested the presence of the Black workers and insisted on a segregated workforce. Using the first-hand accounts of former sleeping car porters, Mathieu shows that porters often found themselves leading racial uplift organizations, galvanizing their communities, and becoming the bedrock of civil rights activism. Examining the spread of segregation laws and practices in Canada, whose citizens often imagined themselves devoid of racism, Mathieu historicizes Canada's racial history, and explores how Black migrants brought their own sensibilities about race to Canada, participating in and changing political discourse there.

**Released, November 25th 2010**

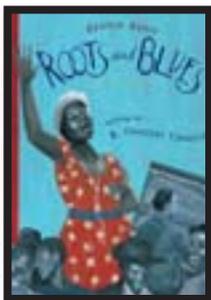


### **The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton**

*Adrienne Shadd*

When the Lincoln Alexander Parkway was named, it was a triumph not only for this distinguished Canadian but for all African-Canadians. *The Journey from Tollgate to Parkway* looks at the history of Blacks in the Ancaster-Burlington-Hamilton area, their long struggle for justice and equality in education and opportunity, and their achievements. It is presented in a fascinating and meticulously researched historical narrative. Although popular wisdom suggests that Blacks first came via the Underground Railroad, the possibility that slaves, owned by early settlers, were part of the initial community, then known as the "Head of the Lake," is explored. Adrienne Shadd's original research offers new insights into urban Black history, filling in gaps on the background of families and individuals who are very much part of the history of this region, while also exploding stereotypes, such as that of the uneducated, low-income early Black Hamiltonian.

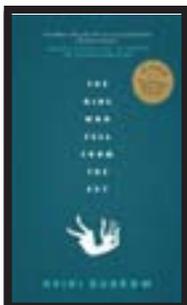
**Released, December 1st 2010**



### **Roots and Blues: A Celebration**

*Arnold Adoff*

Through poems and poetic prose pieces, acclaimed children's author, Arnold Adoff celebrates that uniquely American form of music called the blues. In his signature "shaped speech" style, he creates a narrative of moments and joyous music, from the drums of the ancestors, the red dirt of the plantations, the current of the mighty Mississippi, and the shackles, blood, and tears of slavery. Each chop of the ax is a beat, each lash of the whip fashions another line on the musical staff. But each sound also creates the chords and harmonies that preserve the ancestors and their stories, and sustain life, faith, and hope into our own times.



### **The Girl Who Fell From the Sky**

*Heidi W. Darrow*

Inspired by a true story of a mother's twisted love, "The Girl Who Fell from the Sky" paints the haunting portrait of a young orphan's quest for truth. A bizarre mystery surrounding a family tragedy forms the centerpiece of Rachel, an astonishingly beautiful mixed-race child, in a mostly Black community. As terrible secrets begin to emerge, Rachel learns to swallow her grief and construct her self-image in a world that wants to see her as either Black or White.



### **Caribbean Christmas Dinner**

*Saturday, December 25th, 2010*

Keith and Karyn, in conjunction with Caribbean Paradise Restaurant, present the 10th Annual Free Caribbean Christmas Dinner and Toy Giveaway for the less fortunate, the homeless, and elderly members of our community. Enjoy a hot, free Caribbean dinner, and live music featuring The Soul Stream Band and Skipper Dean. The event also includes a live radio broadcast featuring CKUT 90.3FM radio personalities. The toy give-away from Santa Claus is always a highlight. Join us in the comfortable surroundings of *Caribbean Paradise Restaurant* in LaSalle, 8080 Newman St. (514) 363-8080.

### **Taste of The Carribean - 3rd Annual Rum and Rhythm Caribbean Nite**

*Saturday, January 22, 2011*

Come taste the flavours of the Rums from the Caribbean and delicious cuisine by Master Chef "LESLIE THEO GUMBS" direct from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Music will be by Montreal Rhythm Makers and DJ 610. We will have a silent auction, surprises and dancing will be the order of the night. All proceeds donated to Triumph Through Adversity Culinary Scholarship Program, for disenfranchised youth in the community. This all-inclusive event, will take place at the Hampton Inn & Suites, 1900 Trans Canada Highway, Dorval, Quebec commencing at 7:30 p.m. Give the gift of Rum and Rhythm for Christmas and celebrate. Spend the night at the hotel. Special room rates available. Rum and Rhythm Tickets are \$60.00 all inclusive. Tickets available at most West Indian outlets or through the website at [www.atasteofthecaribbean.ca](http://www.atasteofthecaribbean.ca). Call (514) 620-6612 or (514) 342-2247 for further info.

### **Black Histories, Black Futures**

*Thursday and Friday, February 11-12, 2011*

The *Social Equity and Diversity Education* (SEDE) Office at McGill University is thrilled to present the Black Histories, Black Futures conference, which will run from February 11-12th, 2011. Through Black Histories, Black Futures, we hope to highlight the diversity and complex realities of Montreal's Black communities by convening community representatives, researchers, workers, and students from across the community and university sectors to share and build knowledge. In addition, we aim to strengthen growing relationships between McGill University and Montreal's Black communities by creating a forum for dialogue and strategy, furthering the work of the communities implicated in each of these initiatives. Black Histories, Black Futures will feature a number of guest speakers, workshops, panels, and other presentations, each discussing various aspects of the Black experience within and outside of Montreal. The conference will wrap up with a closing concert on Saturday evening... special guest performers will be announced soon! Please visit our website for all details as they become available: [www.mcgill.ca/equity\\_diversity](http://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity). We hope to see you there!

## Education

## Nursing Review

by: Myrna Pierre-Canel, RN.

When the clock strikes twelve on December 31st, people all over the world cheer and wish each other a very Happy New Year. On New Year's Day many people accept, often more implicitly than explicitly, that happiness comes from the achievement of values and goals. Everyone wishes to prosper, which means to be healthy, happy, more ambitious, more confident, and to live with financial abundance. However, few see their wishes granted. I learned from life's experience that you need to have faith in God, inner strength, positive thinking, courage, flexibility and determination to overcome obstacles in order to obtain success in your life. It is also important to remember that your success is possible because of wonderful people that God puts in your life path to help you to obtain your objectives; therefore they contribute to your prosperity. Now, because of my increase of health, wealth and happiness, I am able to help others live a delightful, interesting and satisfying life. Success is not about how much money you make, it is about leaving a legacy, making a contribution in your community and doing what makes you happy.

Being an active member of BCRC gives me the opportunity to give back to my community and to help others to achieve their goals. I believe in prosperity and I also believe that we need to share our knowledge and resources to help



Us all celebrating their success!

others in their success and to see their wishes granted. I am a registered nurse with a BSN from the University of Ottawa. I have provided mentoring and tutoring for three and half years to new Quebec graduate students in nursing

(college and University level) and to the foreign trained nurses. Due to the current nursing shortage in the healthcare system, community engagement is important. As a Canadian/Montreal citizen I believe it is appropriate and meaningful to contribute to reduce this nursing shortage. In order to enhance the success rate of our graduates and of foreign trade nurses within the multicultural nursing community, BCRC in

collaboration with professional nurses of Montreal East have prepared a nursing summer/winter courses to equip students and improve their passing grades for the OIIQ exam. We help them learn nursing skills to work more efficiently in their workplace. I have a vested interest in the prosperity and success of these nurses.

I really enjoy teaching and coaching these foreign trained nurses. Montreal is a multiethnic city where several cultures and religions coexist. This leads a rich mosaic. Over the years, I have learned greatly from several communities such as: African, First Nation, Philippine, Jewish, Indian, Lebanese and Arabic nations. Montreal is rich in cultural diversity and I often see it in my nursing profession. With an open mind and open heart, I also provide emotional and mental support to these nurses since it is not easy to adapt themselves to the Quebec nursing system and to its culture. Building trust and bringing confidence in themselves is crucial.

In general, mentoring for me in general is about empowering and building capacity specific to nursing competencies. As a mentor, I want to develop growth, advancement, improve their nursing knowledge and increase the performance/academic success of these nurses. Motivation and commitment are the driving energy in my mentoring. I am really grateful for my partnership so BCRC can bring positive change within the community.



The girls surprise me for my birthday!



**BCRC  
Prosperity for the  
coming year, 2011**

**Building a foundation for success.  
Training provided to foreign-trained nurses**



## *Using our hands, feet and minds in becoming responsible young adults*

By Clara Ganemtoré

### **Mini-Poste:**

After a long summer break, the Mini-Poste team welcomed eager new faces to the final phase of the four year project. Twenty-seven boys and girls from École Simonne-Monet, École du Petit-Chapiteau and École Des Nations of the Commission Scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) in Côte-des-Neiges were on board to learn about positive group dynamics and becoming familiar with the role and function of Montreal police officers. The Mini-Poste Project offers a multi-sector approach linking police, community, school, parents and experts in street gang prevention. Four times a week, animators from the Black Community Resource Center (BCRC) animators and a community relations officer from Station 26 of the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) hold workshops with students aged ten to twelve to foster self-awareness, confidence, respect and community values. The objectives of this ambitious and innovative approach are to provide positive reinforcement to the participants and encourage them in making positive life choices, while demystifying the police.

### **Vision for 2010-2011:**

When we first met, the new Mini-Poste team wondered if it would be up to the high expectations of the project. It definitely was a challenge, but the answer was there all along: pushing the boundaries of our imagination. With the contribution of interns from Université de Montréal (UDM), Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and Dawson College, BCRC coordinator and animators, Clara Ganemtoré, Stéphanie Gélinas and Laurent Picard, the Mini-Poste team was able to make use of role playing, marching games, drawing and sport activities to transmit the message of the program to its students. The link between themes such as self-identity or team building and making positive life choices can be quite abstract for students their age. We found that the best way to keep their attention and to make sure the message gets across is through games and play that challenges them, emotionally and intellectually.

### **Activities:**

The 2010-2011 Mini-Poste activities officially began on October 14, 2010. So far we have had 11 weeks of thematic workshops, police activities, recreational activities, including 1 special outing with our Friday Club and a parent orientation. The themes included team building to self-identity, peer pressure, community service and communication. While it is too early to tell whether these themes will have a lasting impact on the participants' life choices, it is clear that they understand the message we are trying to pass on. We have a highly motivated and curious group of students who never stop asking questions. The police activities consisted of the demonstration of police equipment and obstacle games done in pair in order to emphasize the importance of working in a team and being in excellent physical shape when you are a police officer. The participants also enjoyed the special visit to the Montreal Sport Center and the IMAX cinema. The end of the first trimester of activities will be celebrated during a Christmas Party planned for December 15, 2010.

### **Challenges and successes so far:**

We have had several obstacles in terms of communication all throughout the evolution of the program due to the differences in language and institutional culture of the multiple partners. 2010-2011 however is the year when these obstacles are finally being addressed. We are also still working on every trick in the book to attract parents to the workshops especially designed for them in mind. The team is also taking the time to construct engaging and challenging workshops for its students. We hope that this program truly contributes to building greater emotional intelligence and enables our students to make positive life choices.

Feel free to contact BCRC for any contribution you may wish to bring to the Mini-Poste program!



**The Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) is an organization that strengthens community capacity by providing professional support to organizations and individuals in need.**

**Our team is committed to assisting visible minority youth rekindle their dreams and achieve their full potential.**

**Our Funders:**

- **Human Resource and Skills Development Canada; Multiculturalism, Official Languages Branch; Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, National Crime Prevention Centre**
- **Emploi-Québec; Fonds Jeunesse du Québec; Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'immigration; Ministère de l'Emploi de la Solidarité Sociale et de la Famille**