

Semaji

Black Community Resource Centre

Supporting Youth, Building Communities, A Holistic Approach

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www.bcrcmontreal.com

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Back in 1977, there was the Black Community Central Administration of Quebec (BC-CAQ). This group was composed of the Negro Community Center, Quebec Board of Black Educators, LaSalle Black Community Association, Cote-des-Neiges Black Community Association, Black Studies Center, Black Community Communications Media and the Walker Credit Union.

The organization's mission: "to put into operation the concept of operational unity by providing centralized services for the local Black Community."

In many ways, the BCCAQ was one of BCRC's forefathers. And "Focus Umoja," the BCCAQ's monthly publication, is similarly one of Semaji's predecessors

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Connectusmontreal.com

BCRC is currently working on a project that we feel will be a great benefit to many: An On-line Community Directory.

Similar listings already exist, but in essence, this community directory will be a much larger listing of people (from all backgrounds), community organizations, businesses, and other institutions that promote the vitality of the Black communities in the Montreal metropolitan area. This directory will allow Montreal's Black communities to access its many resources. Think of it as our Resource Guide, but bigger, better and easier to access. We hope to help people contribute to improving the community. Further, we want to encourage our youth to emulate success around them and inspire them to achieve, as others have done.

Data collection has already begun and this directory is to be a larger compilation of our communities' resources than has ever been seen. It

will span many fields and industries; it will be aesthetically pleasing, kept up-to-date, and it will be an easy-to-search listing. Information will not be used for commercial purposes (i.e. selling contact info to telemarketers).

If you are reading this, you are likely someone that supports, or can support, the vitality of the Black community, and we would like to list you in this directory. We hope that you will contribute, on your terms, to this initiative by identifying your talents and expertise. If willing, please send us the information requested below.

The strength and success of this initiative depend on your participation

1. Contact information that you would like listed:

Name (individual and/or institution):

Address street number & name:

Apartment/Suite: C ity:

Postal Code:

Phone: Extension:

Fax:

Email: Website:

d. Which skills would you like to teach or share with others as volunteer skills?

e. Which skills would you like to teach or share with others as for-hire skills?

3. What does your organization do?

2.a. What are your skills, or what is your expertise? Please be as specific as possible

b. When you think about your skills, what three things do you do best?

c. Which of your skills are good enough that other people would hire you to do them?

4. Please refer any individuals, businesses, groups, organizations, and/or community resources that you feel we should contact so that they may be included in the directory.

If you have any questions whatsoever, please don't hesitate to contact Dwight Best at 514-716-2606 or email database@brcrmontreal.com.

THANK YOU!

No matter who you are or what your background is, Please contact us and let us know about ANY skill, services offered, knowledge, or area of expertise you may have that you feel may benefit the Black community.

Here are example categories of Skills, Services and Areas of Expertise that you may have:

Associations & Organizations

Automotive

Apparel & Accessories

Administrative Services

Marketing

Entertainment & Media

Employment & Career Resources

Engineering

Education

Computers & Electronics

Family & Community

Finance

Food & Beverages

Health & Medicine

Home, Construction & Repair

Legal Services

Real-Estate

Social Services

Sports & Recreation

Transportation

YOUTH



New BCRC project: Say it Loud Say it Proud An inter-generational youth media-education initiative

By J.G.

We are excited to report that the BCRC, in collaboration with Concordia University Television, is launching a new media-education project in two Montreal high schools. Dubbed Say it Loud, Say it Proud! the project teaches youth the art and skill of video production while helping them connect to local communities. Youth from James Lyng and Riverdale high schools are working with community elders to share stories from various ethnic groups in the city.



Funded by Heritage Canada's Department of Official Languages, the project is broken into two phases. The first functions as a drop-in media lab through the Community Learning Centres at both schools. Students can come after-school and take part in creating a number of short documentaries inspired by interviews with elders from various Montreal communities. These documentaries will present a digital oral history of Montreal, as seen

through the eyes of its English-speaking minority.

The second phase of the project will be much more intensive, focusing on dramatic filmmaking. Students will select stories from the first phase and work to transform them into screenplays which will then be shot and edited into a dramatic film. Instruction will be given in all aspects of the production cycle, from pre-production, scripting and storyboarding, right through to the final cut in the editing room.

Once the projects are complete, students will be invited to share them with their peers. Exhibitions at both partner schools, as well as online distribution, will help get their work out into the community. A teacher's resource guide will also be created that will enable other educators to run a similar program themselves or make use of the videos created through this program.

The project is being coordinated

by former CUTV Station Manager Jason Gondziola. Lauren Lupton, a recent graduate of Concordia's Communications Studies program, is the storyteller/facilitator, working with youth to help them share these stories. Additional media education support is being provided by Liz Bono and Eli Levinson, both of whom are studying Communications at Concordia. Andy Williams, a local media educator and music historian, is providing educational support. Concordia University's



School of Extended Learning has graciously allowed the project to make use of its computer labs for the second phase.

The website will be up and running soon. For more information you can visit www.sayitloudsayitproud.com.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



For more information visit www.afro-entrepreneurs.com

or call

The Cote-des-Neiges Black Community Association
(514) 737-8321

Are you looking for financing to start up or grow your company?
Are you a member of a Black community in Quebec?

Le Fonds afro-entrepreneurs provides funding with flexible options to start-ups and small businesses less than five years old in the form of a loan or loan guarantee in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

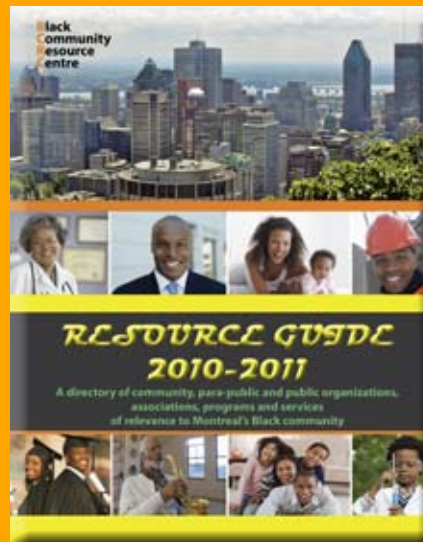
They're back!



Our Scholarship and Employment Services Guide gives you detailed information on educational funding and organizations offering job search support.

You can come by our offices 9-5 weekdays and pick up copies or download them from our website www.bcrcmontreal.com

Our Resource Guide highlights a variety of non-profit, public and para-public organizations serving the Black community.



YOUTH

Expressin' Life



By Shirlette Wint

For 2009, BCRC's Expressin' Life project activities ended on a very positive note. Expressin' Life has been enthusiastically received in eight EMSB high schools: Lester B. Pearson, John Paul I, John F. Kennedy, Lauren Hill Academy, Rosemount, James Lyng, Marymount, and Westmount. With an average number of eight participants in each group, the four facilitators, Alison Mackay, Alessandra Naccarato, Natak Collins and Zeeta Maharaj have used their competence, creativity and individual ingenuity to successfully engage over one hundred 13 to 14 year-old girls in the 90 minute weekly after-school activity. School principals, guidance counsellors, social workers, school nurses and other support staff liaise regularly with the facilitators to encourage and support this very important work.

The defining moment that truly confirmed that the Expressin' Life project makes a difference in the lives of the participants was the large turnout at our parent outreach activities. The facilitators organized these meetings to connect with and encourage parent involvement in the project. Three months into the program and some parents had already noticed important behavioural changes in their daughters. Other responses included offers to write letters of support for the project and requests to join the project's Advisory Board. Of course, the most valid evidence that project objectives and goals

are being met is the way in which the girls have taken ownership of the project's activities. From their comments and their willingness to voluntarily return week after week it is clear that they have formed healthy emotional bonds with the facilitators and perceive them as alternative role models and sources of support during a period which is for many girls a time of emotional upheaval.

As we enter the second half of the project, several activities have been planned to sensitize the girls to the dangers



of gangs, hyper-sexualization and other risky behaviours. The objectives of these activities are to promote critical thinking, build self-awareness and reinforce personal advocacy skills. In all three regions of the EMSB Expressin' Life facilitators have organized workshops with the police of the SPVM. Socio-community representatives will be animating in-school workshops that focus on the prevention of risky behaviour. In addition, outings have been planned to the National Film Board, Concordia Fibre Studio, and Mother Hubbard Kitchen as a pleasant discovery has been that many of the girls love to cook and get very little opportunities to do so at home. Other outings will include visits to St. Emily Skill Share, a Ceramic Café, local T.V. and Radio Stations, as well as a visit with the National Women's Volleyball Team. A few recreational outings will

be swimming and skating.

Guest speakers have also been invited to animate workshops with the girls on various topics such as body image, gangs & hero worship, self-esteem, conflict resolution, etc. Regional career days have also been planned. The inclusion of outings, as well as guest speakers is a proven approach that reinforces positive behaviour changes. Both activities present opportunities for modeling, and this exposure will encourage healthy curiosity, dispel common myths, as well as strengthen community ties to local institutions and other resources.

For many of the participants the highlight of the Expressin' Life extra-curricular activities will be the two-day vernissage and art exhibit being planned for April 29 & 30. This which will bring together all the girls from the different high schools. For the majority of the girls, it may be the first time that they will be meeting as a group outside of

their regions. During the two-day event, the girls will be recognized for their successful participation in the project. All 120 will also have the opportunity to showcase their artistic expressions in a public setting which will bring together, parents, school administrators, students, project partners, local officials, and supporters.

An essential component of the Expressin' Life project is ensuring that teachers in the schools, where the program activity is being offered, are sensitized to the content and objectives of the project. Often it is only the teachers who are privy to the subtle or more overt and disturbing events that changes the adolescent student's experience. From their positions of observers, teachers can more easily determine who, among their female

EXPRESSIN' LIFE

students, would benefit from participating in our group activities. It is important, to help them to know how to respond to these negative changes they may see in the girls. To this end, Expressin' Life has held informal workshops in five participating schools. A total of eight workshops will be delivered over the next two months. The highlight of the workshops is the 26 page BCRC manual that outlines the Expressin' Life concept and program. It contains an extensive resource list of audio visual and print material that can be used in the classroom to reinforce concepts and life-skills learned during Expressin' Life activities.

Through the workshops, over 170 teachers have already been reached. Dozens of school administrators willingly join teachers during these workshops. Their reception has been enthusiastic. Even though they have already overflowing plates, teachers listen attentively and all agree on the project's merits and the need for such a group activity for girls. Their only lament is: why isn't there a similar project for boys?

For those of you who have been following the development of the Expressin' Life project, we look forward to seeing you at our two day exhibit. As we approach the event we will be sending you an invitation to join us in celebrating the successful completion of this first year of the Expressin' Life project. One, we hope will be repeated in coming years. We want to continue to reach out to adolescent girls, providing them with opportunities to learn alternative tools that strengthen their social adjustment skills through in-depth discussion and personal expression.



YOUTH

Perspectives on Mini-Poste



teens going to school with weapons but ... I was in for a shock.

What I encountered were energetic pre-teens ready to participate and discover new qualities within themselves. They are quick-witted and humorous; often times I find myself telling my own friends jokes I heard from them. Overall, I must say they definitely proved me wrong and changed the stereotypical way I regarded them.

For the time that I have been working with this project, I have seen many of the youth come together for workshops revolving around such themes as: communication, conflict management, peer pressure, racism, self-esteem, self-identity, and of course, team building. They have shown great improvement and express how they apply what they have learned in day-to-day situations. To me this is very important because as they grow to be young adults they

will have a great sense of direction, self-respect and respect for others.

The fact that these pre-teens can work alongside a police officer, who they can look up to as a role model, is exactly what they need. Since this is an anti-gang project, I think this project is a positive reinforcement to keep them going on the right path.

The Mini-Poste Project is a great way to encourage pre-teens to reach their full potential. It is a wonderful way to give them a sense of belonging and build trust with the police. They learn how to deal with life situations and create higher levels of self-esteem. So far, my experience with the Mini-Poste Project has been worthwhile. Every day with them is a new adventure, and I must admit, a learning experience for myself as well. It is a pleasure to watch them grow and succeed.

Pleasant surprise

By Tamara Pennycooke

When I was first informed that I would be working with the Mini-Poste Project, I was a little apprehensive because I was always told that the youth of Côte-des-Neiges were "bad." I have to say I may have let my imagination run wild with that idea. I pictured obnoxious pre-

Un ancien participant donne ses pensées



O v i d i u Soare est un diplômé du programme Mini-Poste. Il faisait partie de l'équipe de Simone Monet en 2008-2009.

Aujourd'hui il est rendu au secondaire, mais il revient une fois par semaine pour faire du bénévolat avec le programme. On lui a posé quelques questions.

BCRC: Qu'est-ce que Mini-Poste signi-

fie pour toi?

OS: C'est une occasion de faire des activités que je ne pourrais jamais faire, comme aller visiter une académie de police (à-moins que je deviens policier).

BCRC: Qu'est-ce que tu as appris au Mini-Poste?

OS: J'ai appris comment fonctionne une patrouille de police, et comment travailler en équipe.

BCRC: C'est quoi que tu as le plus aimé du programme?

OS: Je ne peux pas dire ce que j'ai aimé le

Pour rester informé à-propos des activités Mini-Poste, consultez notre site web

www.brcmontreal.com/miniposte/

ou appelez nous au 514-377-1685

plus, car j'ai tout aimé.

BCRC: Comment trouves-tu la vie au secondaire?

OS: Je la trouve dure la vie au secondaire. Je dois étudier plus qu'au primaire ça c'est sur et certain et j'ai plus de devoirs. J'ai plus d'amis et plus de liberté mais c'est un peu nul car les profs sont plus exigeants, ce que je n'aime pas. Les examens sont plus durs qu'au primaire ça c'est sur et certain aussi.

MINI-POSTS



COMMUNITY

Union United Church



By Courtney Sewell

In keeping with the spirit and mandate of Union United Church, The Outreach Program is committed to responding to the needs of the community. Among our existing programs, 2009 saw the addition of the Strengthening Black Families (SBF) pro-

gram.

This innovative and award winning best-practice program was imported from the United States and adapted for the Montreal Caribbean context by Concordia University. Thanks to the leadership of the African Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDP) and the support of the Montreal Presbytery, Union United joined four other community organizations in delivering the program across the Island of Montreal. Our first session concluded in spring of 2009 and was considered a tremendous success.

Strengthening Black Families is a prevention program that involves elementary school children and their families in skill development sessions. SBF uses family systems and behavioural approaches to increase resilience and reduce risk factors for academic, behavioural, emotional and social problems. Parents wishing to take part must

commit to completing the 14 week program. The program is delivered once a week in the evenings.

The success and continuity of many of our community programs would not be possible if not for the dedicated volunteers who give their time. Union United is in need of volunteers for our Meals-on-Wheels program. This program delivers cooked meals to seniors who are sick and shut-in and to individuals who are in need of such a service. If you are available on Tuesday mornings between 9am – 12pm and would like to give back to your community, or for additional information on any of our programs, services or events, please contact (514) 932-8731 or visit our website at www.unionunitedchurchmtl.ca

RESEARCH

We continue examining Black success...

Black Men: Educational and Economical Challenges

By Denise Tittle

For the past few decades North America has been walloped by a distinguished phenomenon that is nothing but demoralizing for Blacks, especially for Black men. In a passage taken from her book: *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, bell hooks expressively describes this phenomenon: "Nowadays in the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarch culture, most boys from poor and underprivileged classes are socialized via mass media and class-biased education to believe that all that is required for their survival is the ability to do physical labor. Black boys, disproportionately numbered among the poor, have been socialized to believe that physical strength and stamina are all that really matter. That socialization is as much in place in today's world as it was during slavery. Groomed to remain permanent members of an underclass, groomed to be without choice and therefore ready to kill for the state in wars whenever needed, black males without class privilege have always been targeted for mis-education."

What hooks is describing in this passage is the reality of many Black men in the world today, particularly in the Americas. According to a report by The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, out of the 4.5 million Black men between the ages of 15 and 29 living in the United States in 2004; less than 8% of them have graduated from college compared to 17% of whites, which represent 61% (roughly 9.1 million) of the total male population in the US

in 2004. The report also states that people with more education tend to have higher incomes, but in 2002 at every educational level, African Americans with the same education made less than whites. Study after study show that this unfortunate phenomenon is mirrored north of the border.

"It seems that Black children, especially Black boys, are losing out as early as elementary school in the process to maintain parity with Whites" (Walker). Many Blacks feel that the very system that is supposed to be training their children in the best way possible



is destroying them. The educational system in North America labels Black children, above all Black boys and men, as disruptive. They place them in 'special classes' when they get too expressive. According to hooks, a recurring problem with the American school in the twenties, and still evident today, is that Black boys are not encouraged to be thinkers. She says: "time and time again when telling their life stories Black males describe being punished in schools for daring to think and question [...] Even before Black boys encounter a genocidal street culture, they have been assaulted by the cultural genocide taking place in early childhood educational institutions where there are simply not taught."

Many Afro-Canadians feel the same way about the educational system in their country. That is why many Afro-Canadians support the idea of an all-Black school that would have Black teachers who understand the needs and abilities of Black children.

In September 2009, the first Africentric school opened its doors in Toronto's north-end. Africentric schools are regarded, according to trustees from the Toronto District School Board, as an attempt to combat the disproportionately high dropout rate among Black students in the Toronto school system. The school's focus is not to separate Black children from others, but to teach Black children in a historically African manner. And as indicated by the nine out of eleven trustees who approved the opening of the Africentric Alternative School, supporting such a school is seen as the only way to reach an increasingly alienated group with a 40 per cent drop-out rate.

This kind of school seems to be such a promising alternative for Black students that the English Montreal School Board had recently explored the idea of opening an Africentric school in the Montreal area. According to prominent Black figures in the community (Steering Committee for an Afrocentric School in Montreal) "a Black-ethnocultural focus school will not only aid in correcting the achievement gap and drop-out rates for Black Canadian children, but it will also aid in the promotion of citizenship, tolerance and acceptance in the greater Montreal society."

Now, this new interest in Black-ethnocultural schools raises the question: Do Black children learn differently compared to their white counterparts? Or is there a curriculum that can be better adapted to respond to the needs of Black children? According to

Dan Philip of the Black Coalition, Black children, especially boys, need a place where they feel comfort and a sense of belonging. They need a place where everyone shares the same background, and where the people they come across have made a way for themselves and as a result these people will have a great deal of credibility in their eyes. A large part of the curriculum at an Afrocentric school is History. It is important to teach children about their past so that they can identify and create a better future. Philip says, "History opens up the realm of possibility. Direct contact with the living history opens up possibilities that are palpable, reachable, and conceivable. Living history is not just books, it's people!"

And, as so many Black men are lacking adequate education, it is no surprise that the unemployment rate for Blacks is much higher than that of any other race. According to the 2001 Census, the unemployment rate for Blacks in Quebec, 17.1%, is twice that of the entire Quebec population. Now there is no wonder why Black men don't aspire to higher education. Why spend so much money and time on a system that is just going to fail you? This may be why a larger proportion of Black men take on trade jobs, or become "hustlers." Rational people will choose the most certain

path to success and professional jobs and a path which produces the greatest potential income.

A good family structure has relentlessly proven to generate great benefits for students, both Black and White. Knowing that a large percentage of Afro-Canadian children live in single-parent, female-headed



households with no real male influence, one can only imagine how hard it is for Black boys to succeed. According to George Taylor, author of, *Practical Application of Social Learning Theories in Educating Young African-America Males*, "the absence of a father has been identified as contributing to the adverse conditions and, subsequently, the plight of the

African-American male today." In fatherless households children are at a greater educational risk and less likely, in the case of boys, to learn what it means to make and keep a commitment, a commitment to school that is. (Taylor). As an African-Canadian who lived in a fatherless household, I had an upfront view on the effects of a missing or absent father. Now this does not mean that within all single-parent, female-headed homes the children are doomed educationally and socially. However, the lack of parental involvement can limit a child's chance of success and attainment.

So why are Black men lacking adequate educational training, unemployed and crowding prison cells? As formerly mentioned, Black men face above-average challenges when attempting to achieve educational success. Those challenges negatively influence Black male self-identity. It leads them to lose faith in the system and in the people that are supposed to guide them toward success. And regrettably, this negative challenge leads them to explore other avenues to achieve 'success.'

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COMMUNITY

Taste of the Caribbean



By Gemma Raeburn-Baynes

A Taste of the Caribbean will take great pleasure in awarding their first INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY "TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN WOMAN OF MERIT AWARDS" 2010 at "A Taste of Tea," a Caribbean Afternoon Tea Party, a truly

delightful experience to pay tribute to outstanding women in Montreal for their generous and ongoing efforts to support our organization and its goals.

Some of the women being presented with TOTC Merit Awards are Ms. Brenda Rowe, Ms. Brenda Paris, Honorable Marlene Jennings, Ms. Thelma Johnson, Ms. Josa Maule, Dr. Dorothy Williams, Ms. Eramelinda Boquer and Ms. Lorraine Klaasen. We honor these women for all their hard work, conviction and countless hours contributing to the betterment and advancement of Montreal's Caribbean community and the Greater Montreal community.

Please join us for tea, great conversation, wonderful entertainment, fantastic Caribbean indulgences, a decadent sweet table, a fabulous teacup competition and many door prizes, as we celebrate together our friends and role models.

The event is being sponsored by DavidsTea, a company with teas that taste as good as they smell. What happens when you blend DavidsTea black tea with ginger bits, lush pieces of peach and apricot or their new obsession, Exotica, made from a spicy blend of lemongrass, red pepper, cloves, cinnamon, pineapple, orange peel and coconut? The tantalizing taste experience is so exotic, so inviting, so warming, you get an instant feeling

of well-being! Come and discover some of the 135 types of DavidsTea that will taste even better... when shared with friends and family!

Call now (514) 620-6612 or (514) 342-2247 for tickets. Tickets are only \$20.

On Sunday, May 30 - This is the big one that thousands of Montrealers wait for each year! It's our annual extravaganza of Caribbean cuisine, music, arts and culture all in one place at Place Bonaventure. Many visiting Caribbean Celebrity Chefs will tempt your palate with a huge selection of unique epicurean offerings, and you can tickle your tongue with sampling of fine Caribbean Rums. There will be so much going on that you won't know where to start!

There will be food stands with gastronomical delights from over 20 island nations, as well as boutiques showcasing fine crafts, and an on-going stage presentation all day with the best in local music, dance troupes and a few special extras! Plus, aside from all the adventure and excitement, funds raised from these events will go to our "Triumph through Adversity" scholarship program, giving at-risk youth a chance for a better future.

This year's theme is Mardi Gras! – Wear a mask; dress up in a carnival costume or just dress Caribbean style! This is one party you don't want to miss!

So come spend the day in the Caribbean for only \$45.00 (General Admission) - VIP: \$100.00 – Children \$15.00. We bring the Caribbean to you so no airplane tickets to buy for our "trip down south and better yet... no long lines at customs! This is the largest Caribbean Festival of its kind in Canada. Info: (514) 620-6612 or (514) 342-2247 or log on to www.atasteofthecaribbean.ca.



SPOTLIGHT

Hector preserves history

By Rochelle Lazarus



Imagine creating your own resource, a kind of “Wikipedia” filled with information on a vast array of topics that you feel are important not only to yourself

but to all people. Imagine doing this without the use of the internet. Imagine having to comb through newspapers and magazines for years to find the stories that you feel should be included in your collection. And imagine storing all this information without the RAM of your computer or the gigabytes of your USB key. This is exactly what Arnim Hector has done. For over 25 years he has read and clipped hundreds and hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles –to the point where his collection now fills a large room.

I heard about Hector through BCRC and was intrigued by his hobby, so I visited him to learn more. Before visiting the loft where Hector keeps all his clippings, I could not have begun to imagine what I was going to see. When I walked into the loft I was astonished at the number of articles; not only were the walls covered but there were also poster boards, binders, barrels, and piles of article clippings filling every surface and corner of the room. There was even a door which was plastered with articles on both sides.

Hector was born in 1942 in Trinidad and Tobago. He learned the trade of welding and worked in construction before migrating to Canada in March 1968. Hector has worked in oil refineries across Canada and in the United States. He has always been interested in magazines, newspapers and educational reading.

Hector traces his interest in

reading and learning back to his childhood. He describes his family as a “scholastic family.” He began reading at the age of five and during his childhood was involved in many programs both at his church and at school.

He is passionate about history, world events and politics and strongly values education, whether formal or self-initiated. This passion motivated him to begin saving clippings from the many articles he read, so that he could create a kind of living, growing archive “to keep the people informed and up-to-date concerning current events - politically, socially, spiritually, mentally aware - keeping the people in tune concerning what concerns us all, enlightening them as earth spins on its axis to spin out all this knowledge and wisdom.”

Hector has strong values. He believes that indigenous people, Black people and people of colour have a strong and meaningful history and many of his clippings concern events related to their stories. Although he acknowledges that non-Whites have had to endure and continue to endure oppression, he feels that no one should blame their current situation on oppression. There are opportunities and resources available to us all, which Hector believes we should be taking advantage of in order to better ourselves. It is through education and the awareness gained by reading about the types of world events he has chronicled, that we can break the cycle of oppression and take control of our lives.

After 25 years of collecting clippings on important events taking place all over the world, Hector speaks with pride about his collection and his accomplishment. He has not lost interest, nor does he believe the value of what he has done is any less important today than it was 25 years ago when he first started. He does not think of quitting the task, although he does think about turning over his archive to an individual or organization that can carry on his work, so that other people can enjoy and learn from his collection and his example.



COMMUNITY

C.L.U.E. Math and Science rocks Tyndale

By G.S.

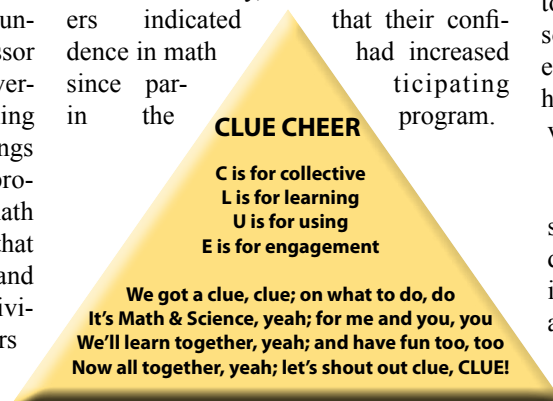
The gymnasium at Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre is filled with song and cheers, clapping and foot stomping every Monday and Wednesday evening. The sounds are the beginning of the weekly session of Collective Learning Using Engagement or CLUE. This two and a-half-hour mathematics and science program serves approximately thirty 5th through 7th graders from Little Burgundy and utilizes a problem-solving, hands-on approach to explore math and science topics.

The program is the vision of Kelly Thompson, a former employee of Tyndale and a resident of Little Burgundy, and Gale Seiler. Gale is a professor of science education at McGill University with experience teaching and running after-school programs in urban settings in the United States. The goal of the program is to motivate students to learn math and science, two academic subjects that often cause students to lose interest and become frustrated in school. The activities complement topics that the learners will encounter in their school science classes, but at CLUE they explore them in more depth and in open-ended investigations. It is the hope of the program team that each learner will begin to see himself/herself as someone who CAN DO math and science.

In math sessions in the fall, learners measured, mapped, and redesigned Tyndale's basketball court using geometry and ratios. They also planned a community talent show including the calculation of all costs and revenues for the event. At the last session in December, learners completed a series of problems addressing the skills they practiced during the program, but they were organized into a treasure hunt throughout the building. Each problem solution gave them information on where to find the next "clue." They completed the end-of-program test without even realizing it! In the upcoming science sessions, learners will explore

the properties of matter by studying snow and other materials as well as adaptations of living things from their environment. The winter session will culminate with a trip to the Science Education Laboratory in the Faculty of Education at McGill University. During this Saturday visit, learners will do chemistry experiments that will build on concepts and topics they have learned in CLUE as part of the end-of-program assessment.

The program structure, which uses guided work on authentic problems of interest to the students, seems to be very successful in countering math phobia and science dread. On the first program evaluation survey, 90% of the learners indicated that their confidence in math had increased since participating in the program.



The backbone of CLUE is its volunteers, most of whom are students at McGill and Concordia. Many of them are also members of the local chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and serve as role models for the learners in the program. Weekly interactions between learners and volunteers enhance the program's ability to enable participants to identify with science and math and careers in those areas. All volunteers attend a three-hour orientation and training program twice a year, and nightly debriefings are done each evening. Volunteers rotate responsibilities for being the lead educator for particular lessons, and they provide support to learners in pairs as they engage in the activities. The program is coordinated by Pamela Ogang, a McGill graduate, who brings great energy to her job.

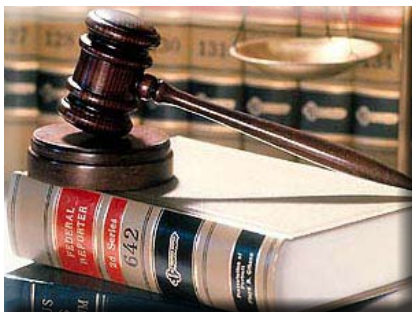
A vital part of CLUE is the opening event called Harambee, based on a Kiswahili word meaning "let's pull together." It is an upbeat, energetic, expressive interaction using music, call and response, and movement that provides an opportunity for participants to display their individuality and share positive energy in a setting where they are valued. At CLUE, Harambee includes a theme song, cheers and chants, and a moment of silence to meditate on what participants want to accomplish that day. This year participants sing and move to the inspirational song, Something inside so strong by Labi Siffre. Although the style of this song is not hip-hop, the musical genre most familiar to youth today, the inclusion of hand and body motions invites all to get involved in it. Following the theme song, Harambee intensifies as participants engage in cheers and chants. These are high energy and engaging, involving both verbal and physical participation.

The moment of silence is designed to bring the energy level back down, while preserving the positive feelings already generated. Participants are asked to reflect on how they feel at that moment and to envision how they want the rest of the evening to unfold. During Harambee, personal feelings and emotional energy are generated and these positive feelings are carried away as the group breaks up into their math or science sessions.

The fall session was a huge success with great attendance levels. There was much positive feedback both from learners and volunteers on the evaluation survey completed in December. The winter session, which also runs for eight weeks, started on Monday, January 25, 2010. In 2009-2010 the program was possible through the support of Westmount Park Elementary School, private donors, while Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre provided the space. The program team is currently looking for funding for next year.

JUSTICE

The Right to Know: Legal Information for Community Groups



By Frances Ravensberger

In community organizations, we are often faced with different demands on our time and the impossible task of getting everything done. Building strong communities is a driving force for what we do. The work is often more than what a regular job would ask of us, and balancing the loads on our plates is not an easy task. Building healthy community groups means also thinking about the ways we work together inside our organizations – not just the ends of decreasing poverty or offering new recreation programs, but the means of getting there. How we work together can be as important as what we are trying to accomplish.

things we do is provide information about the legal side of running a non-profit organization. Like most of the people we work with, none of us at COCo are lawyers. We can't give legal advice, but we are happy to link groups up to the legal information resources they need, or to lawyers with non-profit experience.

Here are two popular legal information topics that we get asked about at COCo, and some useful resources:

In community organizations we are often put in the new role of being an employer, and suddenly have the responsibilities that come with it. Knowing what our rights and responsibilities are as employers and employees in community organizations can help us to communicate well, make transparent decisions, and prevent conflicts. These healthy practices can make our community groups grow stronger and help to effect the social change we are passionate about! There are great resources that exist in English about employer and employee rights and responsibilities – check out Au Bas de l'Echelle's An Act Respecting Labour Standards in

general meeting. Although this may seem like just a legal requirement, it is also a good opportunity to get people together, to involve the membership in the running of the organization, and to help the organization grow in healthy ways in an open and inviting environment. Many of the legal requirements of being a non-profit are met by developing healthy practices within your organization – having regular board meetings, taking minutes of those meetings so that other people can keep in the loop about what is happening at the organization, and making sure the finances are in order. To take stock of some of your organizations healthy practices, check out COCo's healthy practice assessment tool (http://coco-net.org/docs/HPP_Tool.pdf).

Free legal information is only a piece part of what we offer at COCo. We also provide one-on-one information sessions that answer all sorts of other questions about community groups and how they run, like finding funding, the board's role, conflict mediation, and more. COCo facilitators can work with your organization to design a made-to-measure training, or you may be interested in our free public



The Centre for Community Organizations

For many people, interacting with the law is often a bad experience. Racial profiling by police continues to be a problem for people of colour throughout Montreal. Despite justified frustration and anger about how the law is used to repress communities, as community organizations there are legal rules that influence how our organizations run. COCo (Centre for Community Organizations: www.coco-net.org) believes that legal information should be accessible and that knowing about the law can facilitate community organizations' work for social change. With the goal of making the law accessible to community groups, at COCo one of the

a Nutshell (<http://www.aubasdelechelle.ca/images/publication-respecting-labour.pdf>) and the Labour Board's Labour Standards in Quebec (http://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/pdf/publications/c_0149a.pdf) for more information. For a general overview take a look at COCo's info-sheet on Employer and Employee Rights and Responsibilities (http://coco-net.org/docs/emp_rights_infosheet.pdf).

Non-profit organizations incorporated in Quebec have to do a few things each year to ensure that we can keep being legally recognized. For example, non-profit organizations need to hold an annual

legal information workshops that we hold several times a year. Our workshop to discuss annual general meetings was in February. Check out our e-bulletin, which you can sign up for. Stay tuned to what is happening at COCo and community groups' events and jobs by going to: <http://coco-net.org/ebulletin.html>.

If you have questions about helping the organization you are involved with to run more smoothly, you can call COCo anytime to chat.

514-849-5599 or info@coco-net.org.

ARTS & CULTURE

Newstarz

By Jason Selman

“Newstarz.net” is a new entertainment networking site which allow artists to post resumes, headshots and other material they deem relevant as a new way for them to promote themselves in the industry. Semaji spoke to its creator David LaPommeray about the website and his experiences as a professional actor in Montreal.

What do you enjoy about being an actor?

When I was young I had a voracious appetite for reading and I would just immerse myself in different worlds. Acting for me is like that but on a way more intense level. You become a different character. I really enjoy that. It’s a great way to learn about yourself, to do introspection.

What were the biggest surprises for you when you went from being a student to someone pursuing a career in the field?

When we were in theatre school we were very “encadré,” everything was taken care of for us. We knew when our classes were; we were given homework, assignments, etc. But when we got out of that environment, we were left to fend for ourselves. It’s a question of becoming more resourceful and that’s something that they don’t teach you in school, the business side of it, how to market yourself. I’m not going to say it was a rude awakening because I was anticipating it. I took it upon myself to be more proactive and not wait till I got out of school to start looking for an agent, or for ways to market myself.

Where did the inspiration for the website come from?

The first thing we want to do when we get out of school is to find an agent, get representation, and increase our exposure so that

So what I decided to do was offer people their own personal website. They get to post their resumes, demo reels, audio clips, head shots, etc. We have a search engine that allows you to pinpoint people of a certain category. For instance if you are a director looking for a blonde actress, between 5’8 and 6’2 you could just put those specifications in my search and everyone who fits that description will pop up automatically.

What are the challenges of being a Montreal-based actor?

Within the context of being a Montreal-based actor you have to determine whether you’re in the French market or the English market, whether you are Black or you are White. Even though French is my mother tongue, I’m primarily an English actor, so starting out I knew that I had two strikes against me. One was that I was doing work in English and two was that I was Black. So my mindset was to make those two strikes work in my favour. But across the board there’s less work right now, attributable to the current economic situation. Often times as a Black actor people want to pigeonhole you. People thought I was crazy back in the day for turning down auditions for stereotypical roles. That’s the added challenge as a Black actor; do you want to place putting food on the table ahead of your dignity? I can’t judge, but personally on many occasions, I’ve put my principles ahead of paydays and I’m okay with that.

I look to (whether you like their work or not) Keenan Ivory Wayans or Tyler Perry, Black artists who took it upon themselves. They didn’t complain about the challenges. They decided to do something about them. Ideally that’s what I would like to strive for. It’s revolutionary in a sense. It starts with one person I suppose, but you have to get other like-minded people to get on board. [People who] share a frame of mind and commitment to do things for us by us that won’t always pigeonhole us and cast us in this pejorative light.



we can work as soon as possible. We want to garner the attention of casting directors, casting agents producers, directors, etc. That’s easier said than done.

If you want to get an agent, agents will look at you if you’ve already worked. If you have something to show. But how do you have something to show if you don’t have an agent to get you the work? In that frame of mind, I wanted to create a tool to help make that transition easier for aspiring artists.

What a lot of people do to get exposure is create their own personal web sites and ones I’ve seen range in price from \$600-\$3000. And when you’re starting out, that’s not feasible. That’s a month of rent, groceries, bills, etc. People are left with this conundrum, do I starve to pursue my dreams or do I put my dreams on the backburner to be able to pay the bills and put food on the table?

What would be your dream role?

As an actor you always want to play something that’s as far from yourself as possible, you want to challenge yourself. I got to be in a theatre production of “I Am First A Human Being” and it was two one-man shows that interspersed. One of them was the story of Nelson Mandela and the other was the story of Krystyna Wituska, who was a prisoner of war in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. She wasn’t Jewish though, she was Polish. Basically she was like Anne Frank. We told her story and Nelson Mandela’s story concurrently and during that play it really helped me to really understand Nelson Mandela and the beautiful thing about acting is that you get this character and you channel his individual, you become him. It was such a rewarding experience and it was the experience that I, as an actor, cherished the most thus far.

Until next time



The Black Community Resource Centre regretfully announces that Luigi Marshall will be leaving the team.

Luigi, was an important part of BCRC and a good friend. His hard work, dedication, and zeal will truly be missed.

We wish Luigi all the best in his endeavours as he begins writing a new chapter in his life.

D.T.

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**