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Montreal's 2016 Black Community Forum

On June 16, 2016, the BCRC went down in history as the hosts of the, second only, Black Community Forum in Montreal. Held at 6767 Cote-des-Neiges, where the BCRC offices are located, the Forum brought together individuals and organizations that hold, as their mandate, the goal of meeting the needs of the Montreal Black Community. It was here that the Forum addressed what had been done in the past, what was being done in the present, and

what should be done in the future.

The goal of the Forum was to inspire unity within the organizations so that we can better serve the Community. Issues that are prevalent within the Community

were presented and, as a group, strategies were discussed on the ways in which we can address them. However, before we get into the issues that were presented at

the Forum, it is important that we look to the first Black Community Forum, which was held at Val Morin, Quebec, in 1992.

Val Morin Community Forum

The 1992 Val Morin Black Community Forum, the predecessor of the recent Community Forum in Montreal, certainly set the stage for the 2016 Forum. Preparation for the 1992 Forum actually began in

1990/1991. This began when the activists and organizations from the Montreal English-Speaking Black Community met with the Quebec government and the city of Montreal to demand that the presence of Blacks in Quebec be recognized. In response to this demand the Quebec Government created the "Table de Concertation for the English Speaking Black Community" in 1991/1992. It was due



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A Word From The President



Black Community Forum June 16 2016: A Summary Report from the BCRC Forum Secretariat

By Dr. Clarence Bayne

24 years after the First Black Community Forum at Val Morin (July 3-5 1992), key Black Community organizations were called together by the Black Community Resource Center (BCRC), at 6767 Cote-des-Neiges. The general purpose of this Community Forum was to review the Val Morin recommendations and priorities, to inform and to invite participation in the development of a community agenda. The BCRC, which acted as the Secretariat of the Community Forum, worked in collaboration with key organizations in the French and English speaking Black communities and ad hoc community committees to develop the agenda and set priorities for the future.

Different organizations took turns at hosting the meetings of ad hoc community meetings, giving many organizations and individuals the chance to participate in and contribute to the process. The introductory and opening speakers, Patricia Dillon-Moore and Dr. Clarence S. Bayne, pointed to the fact that the BCRC has historically played a significant role in keeping the Forum mechanism in place and operational since 2000.

A Message to the Federal and Provincial Governments from the Forum

For years the Black community organizations have made the case at the Federal and Provincial levels of government, that it is incumbent upon the government to facilitate partnerships between its various Ministries and departments and the appropriate Black community organizations. However, Dr. Bayne, in his welcoming address to the Forum, expressed the view that both the Federal and Provincial governments have abandoned the Black communities in Quebec. This is especially true of the English speaking Black communities, making the members of these communities effectively "constitutionalized field niggers" of the Trudeau "notwithstanding clause" and the collateral consequences of Bill 101. In Session 1 that followed, the Executive Director of QCGN (Sylvia Martin-Laforge) astutely pointed out that, under the Canadian Constitution, linguistic communities have inalienable rights that are provided for by certain funding agreements. She argued that Blacks in Quebec should cash in on their linguistic rights enjoyed here, as elsewhere in Canada, and from the benefits of Multiculturalism as a state policy.

Demands for long-term core Funding

A recurring theme in the committee meetings was the administrative instability and discontinuities in the services of organizations, resulting from lack of core funding due to shifts in government policies and biased private and institutional corporate funding. This Forum, like the Val Morin Forum, recommended that the Government of Canada, and the Provincial Government of Quebec, provide sustaining funds for Black organizations with a long-term mandate serving the community and Canadians. It also recommended that, in particular, Heritage Canada, Immigration and Cultural Communities, Library and Archives Canada and other ministries and departments provide long-term recurring funding to mandated Black community based organizations. In addition, it was also suggested that they assist in strengthening Black community based organizations, and facilitate in the creation and transfer of knowledge. This can be accomplished by providing core funding to ensure the implementation and maintenance of professional communications network centers and digitized archival system.

For full article visit:
<http://bcrcmontreal.com/black-community-forum--june-16-2016/>

Semaji

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to this Table de Concertation that the first Black Community Forum was held at Val Morin.

During this Val Morin Forum, the Community identified issues within the Black Community and came up with six priorities in order to address these issues: support for the Black Family, anti-racism strategies, economic development, reinforcement of community structures, education, and art/culture.



The main purpose of the 1992 Forum, as with the 2016 Forum, was to unite the Community Organizations in order to better serve the community. Due to this, the Forum had no charter and received its authority and power from the organizations within it. This was because the main purpose of the Forum was to foster unity. Other purposes of the Forum included: to develop an internal agenda in the community; strengthen and reinforce community structures; get more resources into the community; and help organizations use resources

effectively. The Forum was also an important aspect of the BCRC, since it was the catalyst that shaped BCRC into the organization that it is today and made it into the secretariat of the community leadership Forum.

English-Speaking Minorities

We began the Forum with the topic of the "Status and Future of the English-Speaking Minorities in Montreal and Quebec." As the Forum focuses on the English-speaking Black community, it seemed appropriate to begin with this topic.



The session began with a presentation from Sylvia Martin-Laforge, from QCGN. QCGN is an organization that works to understand the issues that face the English-speaking community in Quebec. Ms. Martin-Laforge spoke about policies that affect the English-speaking community in Quebec and how we can use other acts and policies to protect our rights as a minority. Since unity is such an important sentiment in this Forum, Ms. Martin-Laforge also mentioned ways in which we can use Official Languages core funding to end the fragmentation that the federal government has subjected us to. Without the need to compete for project funding, which, at the moment, is needed for our

very survival, we would be able to become a more unified front. As Ms. Martin-Laforge told us, we have to be willing and open to change policy, because it will not change on its own.

We then heard from Lorraine O'Donnell, from QUESCEN, which deals in research capacity and community development for the English speaking community of Quebec. Ms. O'Donnell also called for unity, as well as collective research and sharing of knowledge. It is through this knowledge and partnerships that we will be able to support, sustain and strengthen minority cultures and communities.

Settlement and Development Model

During the second part of the Forum presentation, "Exploring the English-Speaking Black Communities Settlement and Development Model: Education, Development and Employability," I noticed that throughout all of the presentations, no matter how different these organizations were from each other, the same problems and issues were being addressed. These



presentations mostly focused on programs that are being offered to the community, especially in regards to youth programs. We heard from Corey Seaton and Alex Adrien from QBBE,

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Tamara Hart from DESTA, Sean Seales from BCRC, and Quincy Armorer from the Black Theatre Workshop.

QBBE, which is an organization that deals with education, the family and community development,



presented one of their newest family programs, as well as a successful summer program. DESTA, which is an organization that works with at-risk, marginalized youth, between the ages of 18 and 25, in the areas of education, health, personal development, and employment, presented some of their programs as well. These programs include: tutoring, prison outreach, and mental health support. BCRC, which is a resource based organization with a holistic approach, presented their newest program for at-risk youth, "House of Kings and Queens." Finally, we heard about school tours from BTW, which is an organization that gives recognition to Black culture and community through the theatre.

While these organizations spoke about their projects, there were also some common grievances that were mentioned. We see concerns for education, youth, family, self-worth, representation, and in some cases a concern about the lack of core funding

which is a dividing factor between the organizations that work toward the same goals.

Do Black Lives Matter

In this third section a topic was introduced that captured the attention of every audience member: "Do Black Lives Matter?" The session was introduced by Yvonne Sam, who has worked tirelessly to bring this matter to the attention of



the Quebec and Canadian governments. We then heard from Rolf Francois and Fo Niemi (CRARR), as well as discussants Tiffany Callander, Pharoah Freeman, and Tamara Hart. This was also a topic that many people in the audience contributed to.

Many major issues were brought up, such as government policy, civil rights, and representation in positions of authority. However, the biggest issue, and the one that has consistently been mentioned throughout the Forum, has been unity. As Ms. Sam had said during her presentation, "we are only as strong as we are united; as weak as we are divided."

It was on this issue of unity that many hands were raised in the audience. As we all know, it is hard to be a unified front when there are govern-



ment policies that are working to divide us. There are policies on funding, and lack of core funding, that set the organizations against each other; lobbying for grants and financing in order to survive. There are also language laws that divide us from the French-speaking Black communities. As well, a deterrent to unity can sometimes be the term unity itself. Will becoming unified mean losing all individuality? As one of our audience members pointed out, we are not all made up of one

identity. We are made up of identity based on gender, skin



colour, and family ties, among others. However, as our panelists cautioned the audience, "unity does not equal uniformity."

Black History Month Round Table Plenary

In this section we heard from Michael Farkas, the president of the Black History Month Round Table. He not only spoke about the future, but the past as well when he explained the link between the Val Morin Forum and the

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The Ninth Floor



On May 16th, the BCRC screened the critically acclaimed film "Ninth Floor," a film about the riot which took place at Sir George Williams University, in 1969, due to racism within the grading system of a Montreal University.

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Round Table.

Although Mr. Farkas spoke about practical issues, such as events and plans for a virtual event page, he also spoke about the meaning and purpose behind the Round Table. The Round Table works to preserve the Montreal Black Community's history and culture. It gives us a voice, in that we are able to write our own history. It also gives the community visibility and credibility. As was the trend in the Forum sessions, Mr. Farkas also spoke about unity. He ended his presentation by suggesting a virtual portal for cultural events that would be accessible by all the community's organizations.



Closing Discussions

To close out the event we looked at topics such as health and historical preservation. We began with a presentation from the ad hoc community committee for health care in the Black Community. We were informed about sickle cell anemia, diabetes, hypertension, and prostate cancer; medical conditions that statistically have a higher percentage in the Black community. We were also informed on mental health and the effects that this can have on a minority community, who faces additional challenges and has less resources to address these issues.



We then heard from Greg Pink, in collaboration with Dr. Bayne, on the new archive being constructed on the BSC website in order to preserve our long and rich history.

Conclusion

I think that it is important to give our thanks to the people who helped to make this Forum a reality. We have the BCRC who hosted and financed the Forum in itself, as well as the BCRC staff who organized things behind the scenes; Dr. Bayne who called the Forum after all of these

years and put together the material; all of the panelists and discussants who shared their knowledge and ideas with us; and Patricia Dillon Moore, our moderator, who kept everyone in good spirits, and of course for made sure everyone kept to the time table as closely as possible. A big thank you also goes to the individuals and organizations that came to listen and give their opinions.

As we have seen throughout this Forum, there are many issues that remain unresolved in our community. The BCRC and our partner organizations are working tirelessly to address these issues; however, these issues also effect the community at large. So, please let us know your opinions! You can leave comments under the Semaji on the BCRC website



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(<http://bcrcmontreal.com/semaji-june-2016/>), on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BCRC-765045140262703/>), or e-mail me at editor@bcrcmontreal.com. Also, we will be featuring a new page in all future Semaji issues, titled "The Community Voice." So if you would like your opinions or questions to be featured in the Semaji let me know in your e-mails. And remember, as Ms. Martin-Laforge has said, change will not happen spontaneously, we must make our voices heard to affect change.



Dr. Charles Drew Blood Drive 2016

On behalf of the BCRC, I would like to thank everyone who spared a bit of their time to come down to 6767 Cote-des-Neiges to donate blood to the Dr. Charles Drew Blood Drive. Thanks to you we reached our goal of 50 people. Thanks also to Maxi for donating food, and part of their parking lot, to the BBQ that donors were able to partake in.

Good news! After many recommendations to HEMA Quebec, Black women with low levels of iron can now donate. Statistically, Black women tend to have lower levels of iron than other ethnicities, so they are very often refused for blood donations. However, "people who regularly receive blood transfusions (e.g., people with sickle-cell anemia) have a lower risk of developing antibodies against the donated blood if it comes from a donor with similar genetic characteristics (Source: HEMA Quebec)." Therefore, since sickle-cell anemia is a condition that, statistically, has a higher percentage in the Black community, enlarging the Black population of blood donors would make the process easier for people with these medical conditions.

la collecte
blood donor clinic

DR. CHARLES DREW BLOOD DRIVE

en collaboration avec d'autres organismes communautaires
in collaboration with other community organizations

Vendredi 27 mai
14 h à 20 h

Friday, May 27
2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

BCRC
6767, chemin de la Côte-des-Neiges
Montréal

Canada

GIVE BLOOD. GIVE LIFE.
DONNEZ DU SANG. DONNEZ LA VIE.



Test Your Knowledge With This Historical Crossword Puzzle!!

Black-Canadian History

Across

1. Forum that was held in 1992 to deal with issues in the Black community in Quebec. (Three Words)

3. An abolitionist and conductor of the Underground Railroad. Died in 1913. (Two Words)

4. This Act was passed in 1944 to prohibit any sign, symbol or expression of racism. (Three Words)

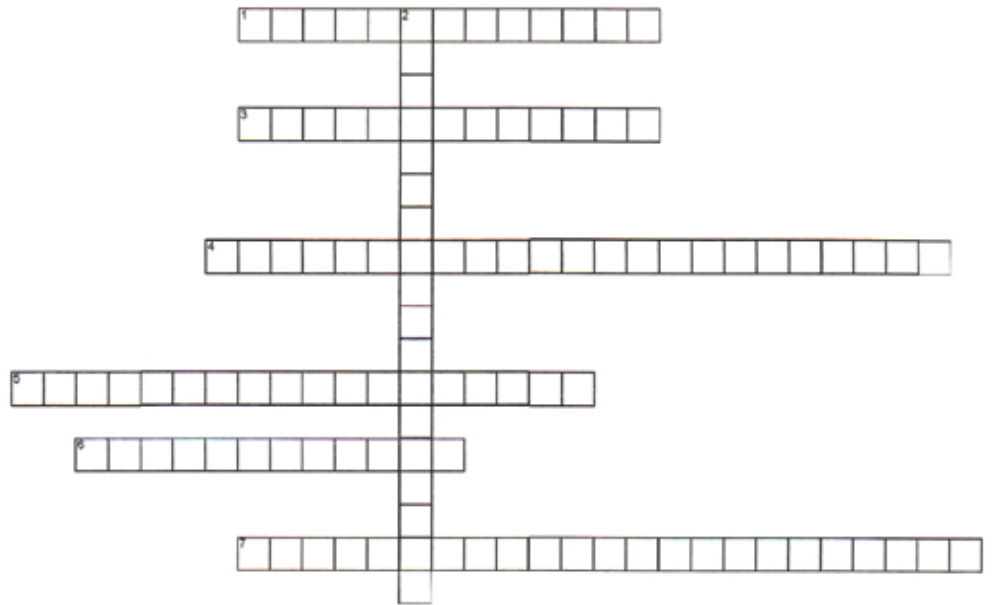
5. First Black man elected to Canadian Parliament in September, 1963. (Two Words)

6. In 1946, this Nova Scotia woman was arrested for sitting in the white-only section of the theatre. (Two Words)

7. Also known as the Computer Riot, this demonstration took place in 1969, due to racism within the grading system of a Montreal university. (Four Words)

Down

2. This figure, who hailed from Edmonton, offered to raise an all-black battalion. This became the No. 2 Construction Battalion. (Two Words)



Summer Sizzlers!!!

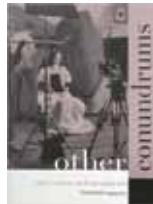
Stay Tuned!!!



Central Intelligence (2016).
Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Danielle Nicolet.

After he reconnects with an awkward pal from high school through Facebook, a mild-mannered accountant is lured into the world of international espionage.

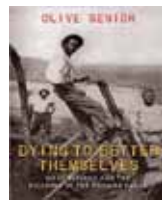
--Excerpt from IMDb



Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art,
By Monika Gagnon.

Other Conundrums, co-published with Vancouver's Artspeak Gallery and the Kamloops Art Gallery, is an extraordinary collection of essays on Canadian artists of colour by Monika Kin Gagnon, one of Canada's most respected art writers and curators. The essays explore the history of cultural production in this country with an emphasis on race, cultural difference, and cultural hybridity.

--Excerpt from amazon.ca

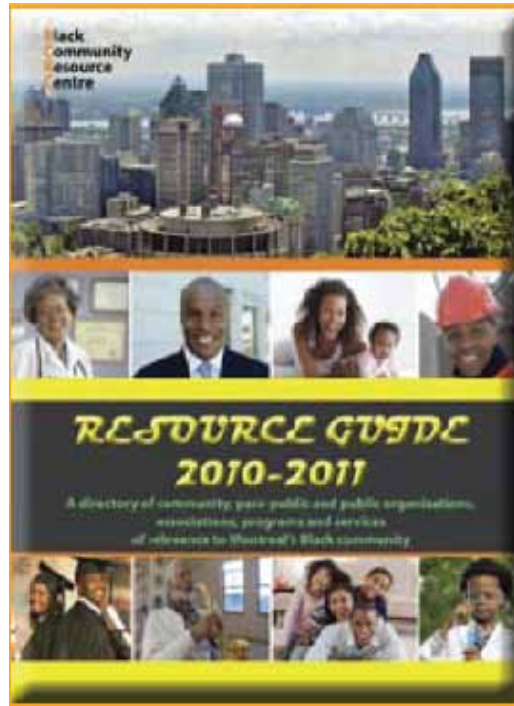


Dying to Better Themselves: West Indians and the Building of the Panama Canal, By Olive Senior.

The popular West Indian migration narrative often starts with the "Windrush Generation" in 1950's England, but in Dying to Better Themselves Olive Senior examines an earlier narrative: that of the neglected post-emancipation generation of the 1850's who were lured to Panama by the promise of lucrative work and who initiated a pattern of circular migration that would transform the islands economically, socially and politically well into the twentieth century.

--Excerpt from amazon.ca

These books can be found at the Atwater Library's Black Collection.



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

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:

- ◆ Patrimoine canadien /Canadian Heritage, Official Languages
- ◆ Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal

Québec 

Canada 