



## **Inside This Issue**

- 2 **A Word From The President**
- 3 **COMMUNITY**  
-Word from the President Continued
- 4 **JUSTICE**  
-Quebec and Racism—Time to lift her head out of the sand. Continued.
- 5 **JUSTICE**  
-Naming of Tamara Thermitus to human rights post is welcome
- 6 **HERITAGE**  
-Canada's Black Walk Of Fame  
-Crossword answers from last issue
- 7 **LEISURE CLUB**  
-Historical Crossword  
-Spring Into A Good Book!!  
-Stay Tuned!!!



Please come out, on **April 19th**, to donate some blood and show your support for the English-speaking Black Community of Montreal. Please go to our website ([brcmontreal.com](http://brcmontreal.com)) or visit our facebook page for more information. Thank you!

### **Quebec and Racism—Time to lift her head out of the sand**

*By Yvonne Sam: Chairman (Rights and Freedoms Committee) Black Community Resource Centre*

Ontario has set the pace and Quebec must now join in the race. But before doing so, we must try to come to a common understanding of racism, and the roots of racism in Canada. It is difficult to change what you refuse to acknowledge, and equally difficult to acknowledge what you cannot see. There is pervasive evidence in Quebec that some French leadership, even the most radical, do not believe that the French Settler classes are to be blamed for racism against Blacks, Asiatics, the indigenous peoples, or for the acts of genocide carried out against them. The radicals blame this on the dominance of British colonial capitalism in Canada. They bestowed sainthood on the working classes that they declare

to be the true source of revolutionary change and absolve themselves.

In Quebec, they covered up their complicity by declaring themselves the White Niggers of America. But, also in Quebec, there are the elite French Settler classes who define Quebec as a French nation struggling against "English Canada money and the Immigrant vote" to retain its culture, language and rights over all the territories that it considers to belong to the settler nation of Quebec and essential to its pursuit of national independence and Frenchness. In this Quebec, both of these classes of leaders believe that the right to be French trumps the rights of "others"

to their liberty and human rights. Hence, the "notwithstanding clause". Hence, their annoyance when one points out that the quasi constitutional agreements between Quebec and Canada institutionalizes the practices of systemic racism and discrimination in Quebec and Canada.

The evidence is in. Ontario seems to recognize it. What hinders the Quebec government is the Protectorate of the citizens' from forming an Anti-Racism Directorate. The demand is out. This time, with some degree of moribund urgency, there is a demand for the Quebec government to tackle the gnawing problem of

*Continued on Page 4...*

## A Word From The President



### Report from the Secretariat of the Black Community Forum

*"The Secretariat of the Black Community urges the City to return to the earlier, and more holistic and integrative, approach that characterized its relationship with Black Communities over three City Administrations: The Dore, Borque, and Tremblay Administrations."*

*Dr. Clarence S. Bayne, President of BCRC and Chair of the Secretariat of the Black Community Forum.*

The Black Community Forum is a network of 12 Organizations that have agreed to meet as a Conference of organizations to set and approve priorities that create the framework for their operations and guidelines for activities which serve to maximize the objective and subjective wellbeing of the Black Community. Consistent with Recommendation 6.5.1.1 of the Forum Report, the conference has created an administrative structure, the Secretariat, to conduct its administration and implement its recommendations and promote the purposes of the Forum. The secretariat is located at office space in the BCRC, 6767 Cote des Neiges. The Secretariat speaks for the FORUM under the authority given to it by recommendations 6.5.1.1 to 6.5.1.13 of the Forum Report (Manual). It is directly accountable to the Conference of Member Organizations.

#### Members of the Conference of organization: The Black Community Forum

1. The Black Community Resource Center(BCRC)
2. Quebec Board of Black Educators (QBBE)
3. The Black Theatre Workshop of Montreal (BTW)
4. The Union United Church
5. Universal Negro Improvement Association of Montreal (UNIA)
6. The Black History Month Round Table (BHMRT)
7. La Ligue des Noir (Black Coalition)
8. The Institute for Community Entrepreneurship (ICED, Concordia)
9. The Black Writers Guilds (Kola)
10. Black Awards Scholarship Fund (BASF)
11. The Rights and Freedom Ad Hoc Community Committee
12. The BSC Black Community Archives

These 12 agencies, by their collaboration and partnership within the group and with a wide range of organizations and memberships outside the group, create a network of services that extend beyond the Black communities. This covers the arts, culture, education, health, employment and employability; youth education and development; library and archive services; immigrant settlement, diversity and anti-racism and discriminatory practices; social and economic development; and governance, human rights and freedoms.

The Black Community Forum is not a Chartered Federation. But its members work together

cooperatively and in a manner consistent with Recommendations 7.2.1 to 7.2.10 of the Forum Report. In particular Recommendation 7.2.1 states:

*"We recommend that the forum created by this meeting become an ongoing mechanism, which will facilitate the process of harmonizing the various agendas into a unifying programme of activities for the community."*

The Forum, consistent with Recommendation 7.2.5, functions through the legal status of the member organizations and is bound together in a spirit of "collaborative unity and existential responsibility." Collaborative unity means that the organizations concerned agree to work together through their various specializations to represent, and achieve, the greatest good for the Black community and society, and that they intend to do this through a system of inter-organization communication and cooperation. Existential responsibility means that each organization is responsible to the community through their respective charters, mission and mandates to provide services to the community in the most effective and efficient way possible. For this reason, membership in the Forum requires that an organization provides services to the Black Community; and that they are registered or chartered in Quebec as not-for-profit social enterprises, cultural and community based agencies in good standing; and that they engage in community and social economy activities that address the priorities of the community. This legal framework of Canadian laws governing not-for-profit organizations assures the community at large that they are accountable. These organization must report annually to the Canadian government, which monitors their activities, in the interest of the citizens of all the communities that they are given a charter to serve. It is the responsibility of the Secretariat to monitor the published public reports of their members to ensure that they are in good standing.

In addition, each member organization agrees to accept and respect the following purposes and to respect and support the recommendations of the Forum in a manner consistent with their respective charters, and the principle of "Existential responsibility".

*Continued on Page 3...*

# Semaji

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*If you have any comments or requests please contact Ashlie Bienvenu at editor@bcrctmontreal.com*





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#### Purposes of Forum

1. To develop a process which will identify a long-term development plan for the Black Community.
2. To ensure that this planning process is cooperative and collaborative.
3. To identify and promote a structure to support the planning process.
4. To encourage and promote the development of strategic partnerships and networks that benefit the Black community, and the larger society.
5. To provide a network of communication, the transfer of knowledge and information, and to facilitate the general expansion of social capital.

In order to fulfill the purpose of the Forum, the Secretariat sent a communique to the Borough of NDG/CDN; the City of Montreal; the office of the Premier of Quebec and the Prime Minister of Canada; the Minister of Justice; the Minister of Heritage; and the Quebec Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion. This was to seek assurance that the Black community's presence in Montreal and Quebec would be more fully recognized and we requested a meeting to discuss the concerns expressed at the Forum of June 16, 2017. To date, we have received acknowledgements of receipt of our communique from all of the parties. But, we must openly recognize the respect and seriousness given to the communique by the Ministry of Justice, the Mayor of NDG-CDN (Russell Copeman) and the City of Montreal (Mayor Denis Coderre). We still await a response to our request to meet from the other agencies.

#### Meetings with the City and the Mayor of NDG-CDN

In response to our Communique, the Mayor of CDN-NDG (Mr. Russell Copeman) invited the Secretariat to organize the Cote des Neiges Black Community organizations, in order to meet to discuss the issue of the failure of the City to officially invite the Black Community to participate in the Montreal 375th; and to discuss relationships with the City. The organizations that attended were BCRC, QBBE, La Ligue des Noirs, and, to speak on the 375th problem, the Black History Month Round Table.

This meeting introduced the Secretariat to the Mayor of NDG-CDN and enabled the Secretariat to engage the Mayor's attention and support on larger issues affecting the relationship between the City and the Black community across all arrondissements. The meeting opened the channels to the City of Montreal for formal communications with the City, represented by Mr Dimitrios (Jim) Beis, Maire de l'arrondissement de Pierrefonds-Roxboro, Membre du comité exécutif Responsable de l'approvisionnement, des sports et loisirs ainsi que des communautés d'origines diverses. The Forum, represented by the Chair of the Secretariat, presented to the City a number of issues and suggested ways that the City can better serve the Black community of Montreal. The Secretariat sought a more comprehensive and long-term approach, as opposed to the current fragmented short-term approach. The secretariat presented to the City the option of returning to, and revitalizing, the systematic planning processes and agreements that existed under the Doré, Borque, and Tremblay administrations, as opposed to the presented defused system of relationships. In particular, the Forum has asked that the City return to, and review, the formal agreements reached under the Tremblay Administration, in 2004, between the City and the Black community. According to that agreement, the City, in a letter from the Mayor's Office November 2014, agreed to undertake a plan of action that would address the following priorities: strengthening of families; addressing the problem of violence among youth; supporting programs in the community relating to the employment and employability of Black youth; improved access to better housing; promoting the socio-professional and economic integration of youth; facilitating access to the City infrastructures; fuller integration of the Black communities into the City and representation at the advisory and decision making bodies of the City; and full representation of the contributions of Black people to the history and development of Montreal. To this we added new concerns expressed at the June 16, 2017, Conference of Black Organizations (Forum), in Montreal: improved anti-racism strategies; improvements in the justice system; the strengthening of Black organizations; and sustaining the vitality of the English speaking Black community, whose growth seems to be stagnating. In particular, we have asked the city to return to the advocacy role it played during that period, on behalf of the Black community within the Boroughs and other levels of Government.

#### City's Response

The response of the City has been very positive. There is a firm commitment from the

City to discuss problems with the Secretariat that need to be addressed urgently, and marshalling the resources of the City and the community to help resolve these problems. The City has indicated that it has already made adjustments to its evaluation criteria for supporting community projects. While the City emphasis on the support of organization activities remain focused on sport and recreation, it recognises the need to support events and organizational activities that are social or economic in orientation. The City has agreed that it will monitor more closely the funding procedures to ensure that when, under the existing system criteria, projects do not fully meet the criteria for sport and recreational activities, that the agencies advise the organization on ways to modify the projects that they become valid for funding. It is our understanding that the City has advised civil servants in the City and Boroughs that they should actively support organizations in the planning, development, and formatting of their grant applications in order to improve their success ratios. The Secretariat is, in fact, currently engaged with the City to ensure that these new approaches are taking place; and that Black community organizations are being made aware of opportunities for support and funding at the City and in the Boroughs.

The City is, at present, responding to a number of requests made by the Secretariat to assist and support projects in the Black Community: the Pan-black Identity defining events project assigned to the Black History Month Round Table for implementation by an alliance of Black Community Organizations; the development of a Black Community creative and cultural tourism sector involving several Black heritage sites and Black English Speaking Events; and the development of a systematic Black Toponymy strategy in collaboration with the Black Forum (Secretariat); assistance with and support for a social and economic summit to deal with the sustaining of the vitality of the English speaking Black communities; and support for the new initiatives launched by the BCRC, in collaboration with the QBBE and the BSC, to stop the brain drain of Quebec educated English speaking and bilingual Black youth from the community. This project represents the second stage of a partnership between the BCRC and the Montreal CEDEC. The first stage was a survey conducted by the CEDEC to determine the demand for the project. The BCRC has undertaken the second stage which is the implementation of a program to promote and improve the employment, here in Quebec, of Black youth graduating from Quebec colleges, technical institutions, and Universities.



...Continued from Cover

systemic racism and how it adversely affects more than a million people in the province.

The government of Ontario, clearly on the ball, recently announced the establishment of an Anti-Racism Directorate, primarily geared to address racism in all its forms: individual, systemic and cultural. Such a directorate is a direct acknowledgement of the existence of systemic racism, including anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia and racism experienced by other communities, including the Jewish community, all of which can act as barriers to progress and opportunity.

A recent Washington Post Opinion piece, that ran three days after six men were killed at a Quebec City mosque, claimed that the province of Quebec was more racist than the rest of Canada. Members of the legislature sprang into action immediately voting unanimously to denounce the article, once again seemingly more concerned about bruised egos than dealing with the festering issue.

([www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/02/01/why-does-progressive-quebec-have-so-many-massacres/?utm\\_term=.e812d542cd4c](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/02/01/why-does-progressive-quebec-have-so-many-massacres/?utm_term=.e812d542cd4c)). Following the shooting, members of the Coalition for Equality and against Racism said that the shooting was an extreme manifestation of racism and xenophobia.

From time immemorial the province has been struggling with acceptance of the presence of racism, preferring to call it any other name except that which it merited. Over a decade ago, the Consultation Commission on

Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences, later referred to as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, investigated the issue of reasonable accommodation of minorities in the province, hearing from experts, individuals and organizations on identity, integration and religion, all at a cost to taxpayers of \$3.7 million. Now, in recent times, a petition from associations and a collective of individuals has been delivered to the National Assembly, once again demanding a public commission on systemic racism. Premier Couillard has given in to the demands for a provincial inquiry into the treatment of First Nation Women, and, in a further apparent face saving gesture, mandated retired Superior Court Judge Viens to investigate into systemic violence, racism or discrimination against Indigenous men and women throughout the health, social services and justice network. The province is also establishing a working committee with Indigenous groups to find rapid solutions to continuing problems, independent of the work of the Commission. Although, one notes that the Commission would not be disclosing its findings until sometime after the 2018 election. We note that Mr. Martineau, of the Journal Montréal (<http://www.journaldemontreal.com/2017/03/29/le-paradis-des-racistes>), does not like Mr. Couillard's decision, and basically accuses him of letting down the "nation" class. He writes: "Philippe Couillard could have said: "Let's see, systemic racism, you do not think about it! It's insulting to Quebec society." But no. It will leave it to the anti-racist organizations to tell us whether we are racist or not. If, in addition, it can discredit its political opponents and portray them as xenophobes, so



much the better. This is called instrumentalizing a cause for its own benefit. Shame on you, Prime Minister."

Ontario is, in no way, anymore racist than Quebec, the striking difference being, however, that the issues were important enough to merit corrective mechanisms being put in place. On the other hand, in a neighboring province called Quebec, which has a pervasive and long standing problem with racism, it has become blatantly apparent to anyone with rudimentary observational skills that Quebec needs to accept the concept of racism before setting up a bureaucracy to battle racism; and, as in Ontario, not only does similar corrective steps need to be taken, but they need to be taken expeditiously.

Racism in Quebec has been an ongoing problem, albeit shrouded in taboo-like garments. No longer can Premier Couillard continue to bury his head in the sand, for ignoring the reality of racism will only make the situation worse. The inaction must stop and action must be taken.

Yvonne Sam





## Opinion: Naming of Tamara Thermitus to human rights post is welcome

By Yvonne Sam

Previously Published in Montreal Gazette (February 13, 2017)

*It's been a long time coming, but a change has finally come. The seemingly impossible became possible, right smack bang during Black History Month, almost like a long-awaited gift to Quebec Blacks. Tamara Thermitus, an anti-discrimination lawyer of Haitian origin, was named head of the Quebec Human Rights Commission last week, with the unanimous support of the National Assembly.*

Her appointment was not a slam dunk, however, as it was originally challenged by opposition politicians who claimed that she was too "multiculturalist", and much too close for comfort to Dominique Anglade, a Liberal cabinet minister who also shares the same roots.

The Human Rights Commission is specifically mandated to ensure that Quebec's laws, bylaws, standards and institutional practices, both public and private, comply with the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, which prohibits discrimination based on "race," colour, ethnicity or national origin and religion.

Hitherto, the commission lacked both anglophone and minority representation, and, since its creation in 1976, Thermitus will be the second woman, and the first Black, to oversee the organization—a situation that testifies to the underrepresentation of Black Quebecers in decision-making bodies.

Despite the fact that the appointment of Thermitus as head of Quebec Human Rights Commission is truly symbolic for the Blacks and the Haitian community in Quebec, Blacks

should not be lulled into a false sense of complacency. We have made strides and advances, giving the impression that everything is resolved, but this is not the case. We must press on for diversity with the appointment of the other four remaining human rights commissioners. There is an urgent and ongoing need for public education to ensure that there is better awareness regarding the value of diversity to society as a whole.

According to Premier Philippe Couillard, the appointment of Thermitus sends a very strong signal about the place that people from diverse backgrounds must occupy in our society. Strong words well-spoken would be better if adhered to. Parti Québécois' then-leadership candidate Jean-François Lisée, in September 2016, pointed out the presence of systemic racism in Quebec, and called on the government to spring into action, rather than hold public consultations. In response, Couillard's government said it would soon announce a plan to look into the issue. Since the creation of the Quebec Human Rights Tribunal in 1990, the Human Rights Commission has never brought a case of systemic racism before the tribunal. The first court decision on systemic racism, in Quebec, was issued only in 2013, by the Superior Court. That case involved Olthene Tanisma, a Haitian-born urban planner who successfully sued the City of Montreal, after his case was stalled at the Human Rights Commission.

In order to cultivate an arena of legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, Couillard was repeatedly called upon when filling existing vacancies to give

thoughtful and deliberate consideration to racial and linguistic diversity. At that time, there was an unprecedented absence of Black or anglophone commissioners in the current composition, which only served to further impair the decision-making process.

It stands to basic logic that, in a world where perception can be as important as reality, it is critically important that visible minorities believe that the deck is evenly stacked, and that they have as much of a chance of being judged by someone who looks like them, as someone else.

The current appointment of Tamara Thermitus as head of the Quebec Human Rights Commission will go a long way toward allaying any fear and improving chances of a satisfactory resolution. But with her appointment, have Black Quebecers seen the last of the past, and does this herald a new cast? Or will this, as welcome as it is, be seen as a mere sop, an isolated gesture?

Yvonne Sam



# Canada's Black Walk Of Fame

By Ashlie Bienvenu

As there has been a lot of recognition of this historical figure in the past few years, with her inclusion in the Canadian Heritage Minutes and the decision to place her on the new ten dollar bill, I thought it would be appropriate to start our new series, Canadian Black Walk of Fame, with Viola Desmond. This series not only looks at the life and contributions of these important figures in Canada's Black history, but also looks at the way that they have shaped Canadian society with their contributions and actions. With Ms. Desmond, we will look at her background of fighting for an equal opportunity, for herself and her community, her courageous actions when her basic human rights were violated, her impassioned battle with the courts to fight for her rights, and the rights of her community, and her lasting impact on Canada as a Civil Rights pioneer.



Viola Desmond's dream, of owning a Black beauty salon, was not easily attained in the 1940's. Not only was it difficult for Black people to open a business, but very few beauty schools would admit Black students. In fact, Desmond had to travel all the way to Montreal get accepted into beauty school (Annett). She then went on to open her own salon that provided services for Black women; however, she didn't stop there. Desmond expanded her business over the years, and also created a beauty school that Black women could study in, so they would not have the difficulty of finding a school like she did (CBC News). Desmond's sister said that this was due to her passion for people; "she inspired them and she inspires us (CBC News)."

Even though Desmond did a lot to help her community before 1946, it wasn't until November 1946, that Desmond managed to "raise awareness about the reality of Canadian segregation (Black History Canada)." The incident that sparked this awareness began when Desmond had traveled to New Glasgow, looking to expand her business, when she encountered car trouble. Looking to for something to do while waiting for her car to be fixed, Desmond decided on watching a movie, not knowing that this theatre segregated its clients. When Ms. Desmond asked the ticket booth for a seat in the first few rows, due to her nearsightedness, the ticket-seller refused

to sell her a ticket for the main floor; she could only get the balcony, even though she was capable of buying the more expensive floor tickets. Angry that she would be denied access to a seat, simply because of the colour of her skin, Desmond walked into the main floor and sat in a chair. This then resulted in the manager telling her to leave because she did not pay for a floor seat, to which Desmond responded she would be willing to pay for the extra cost. The manager refused to sell her a floor seat ticket, due to the fact that she was Black, and called the police, who brutally dragged her out of the theatre, injuring her hip and knee (Heritage Minutes). Desmond was then put into a police cell for the entire night, where she "maintained her composure, sitting bolt upright in her cell all night long, awaiting her trial the following morning (Heritage Minutes)."

Desmond was then charged with tax evasion and given a fine of twenty-six dollars, due to the fact that main floor seats were one penny more than balcony seats. Ironically, even though her "real 'offence' was to violate the Roseland Theatre's implicit segregated seating rule (Heritage Minutes)," race was never mentioned. After paying the fine, Desmond tried twice, unsuccessfully to get the decision appealed at the Nova Scotia Supreme Court (Heritage Minutes). In fact, Desmond went to her grave, in 1965, "without any acknowledgment of racial discrimination in her case (Annett)." This "miscarriage of justice (Heritage Minutes)" was only acknowledged in 2010, in a posthumous pardon presented by Nova Scotia's Lieutenant-Governor Mayann Francis (Heritage Minutes).

This, then, brings us to Desmond's memory in current times and her impact on Canadian society. Ms. Desmond is often called the Rosa Parks of Canada, even though Desmond's standoff occurred nine years before Parks. This is conveniently glossed over in Canadian history, due to the Country's pattern of "whitewashing history (CBC News)." Be that as it may, Desmond was key in setting a precedent of fighting for civil rights in Canada. Even though the appeals of the trial were not won, "her story and her vigilant activism through the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People were important factors in the eventual abolition of the province's segregation laws in 1954 (CBC News)." Desmond's legacy of civil rights



advocacy has not gone unnoticed recently. In 2018, she will be the first Canadian female, as well as Black figure, to be featured on the Canadian ten dollar bill. She is also the first Black female to get a Canadian Heritage Minute (Annett).

Therefore, Desmond was one of the first key figures to fight for the Black community's civil rights. She may not have been successful with her appeals of the trial; however, she managed to bring to light the implicit pattern of racism in Canada. According to Finance Minister Bill Morneau, "Viola Desmond's own story reminds all of us that big change can start with moment of dignity and bravery (Annett)."

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Picture: <https://heritageday.novascotia.ca/content/2015-honouree>

## Crossword Answers from Last Issue

### Across

2. Rufus Rockhead
3. Mandela
4. Railways
5. Montreal Royals

### Down

1. Notre Dame



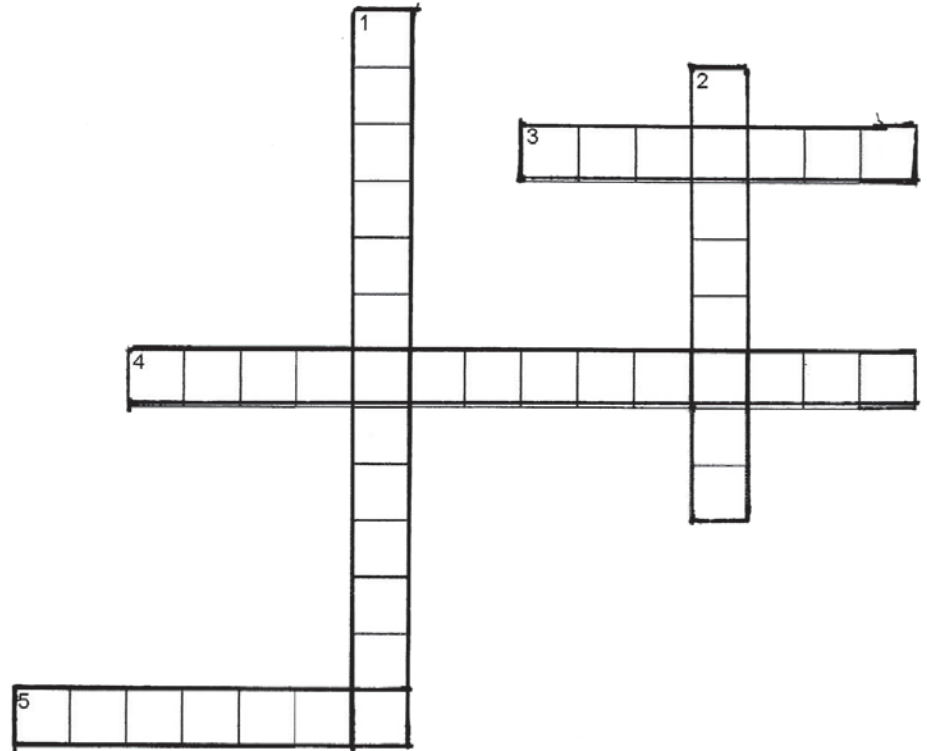
# Test Your Knowledge With This Historical Crossword Puzzle!!

**Across**

- 3. In July 1796, hundreds of Jamaican freedom-fighters, and escaped slaves, landed in Halifax. What was the name of this group?
- 4. In 1605, this man was hired as a translator for Samuel de Champlain's excursion. He is considered to be the first Black man to set foot in Canada. What is his full name?
- 5. During the American Revolution, the British promised a better life to Blacks in exchange for their services. These Black Loyalists, who relocated to Nova Scotia from Boston, belonged to "the Company of \_\_\_\_".

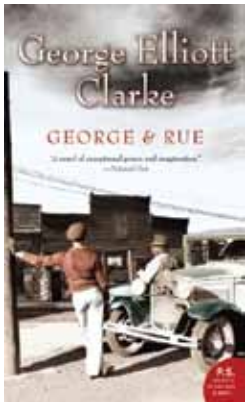
**Down**

- 1. In May 1776, General Henry Clinton created this corps of free Blacks to participate in the American Revolutionary War. What was the name of this corps? (Two Words)
- 2. In March 1685, Louis XIV created a code that permitted slavery in New France for economic purposes only. What was the name of this code? (Two Words)



\*Information taken from blackhistorycanada.ca

## Spring Into A Good Book!!!



**Execution Poems: The Black Acadian Tragedy of "George and Rue", By George Elliott Clarke.**

Gaspereau Press' best-selling title, Execution Poems, is George Elliott Clarke's complex lament for his late cousins, George and Rue... In 1949, George and Rufus Hamilton were hanged for the murder of a taxi driver in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Fifty years later, Clarke has written, in his abundant style, a series of poems that embody both damnation and redemption, offering convoluted triumphs alongside tragedy and blurring the line between perpetrator and victim. What Clarke presents in Execution Poems is uncomfortable. He

reminds us of racism and poverty; of their brutal, tragic results. He reminds us of society's vengefulness. He blurs the line between the perpetrator and the victim — a line we'd prefer remain simple and clear. At the heart of it, Clarke is frustrating the notion that society deals any better with these issues today than it did in the 1940s.

—Excerpt from [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com)

This book can be found at the Atwater Library's Black Collection.

## Stay Tuned!!!

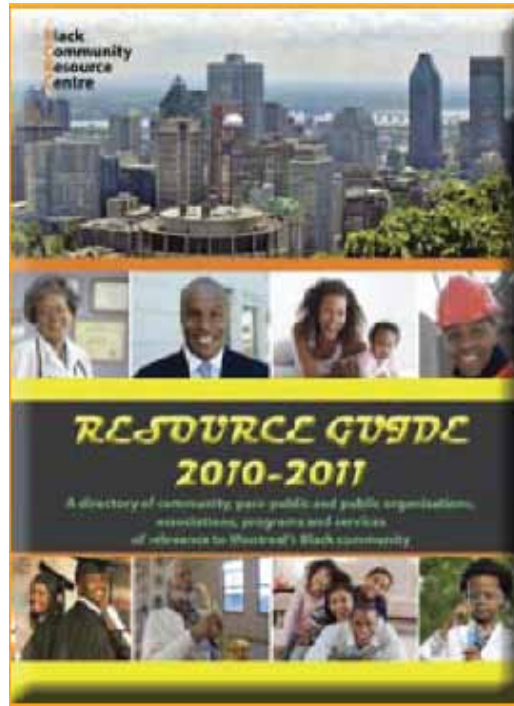


**Across the Line (2015).**

Cast: Sarah Jeffery, Stephan James, Shamier Anderson.

A young, black NHL hopeful living in a racially divided Nova Scotian community finds his career prospects in jeopardy when tensions in his community come to a head.

--Excerpt from IMDb



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

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