

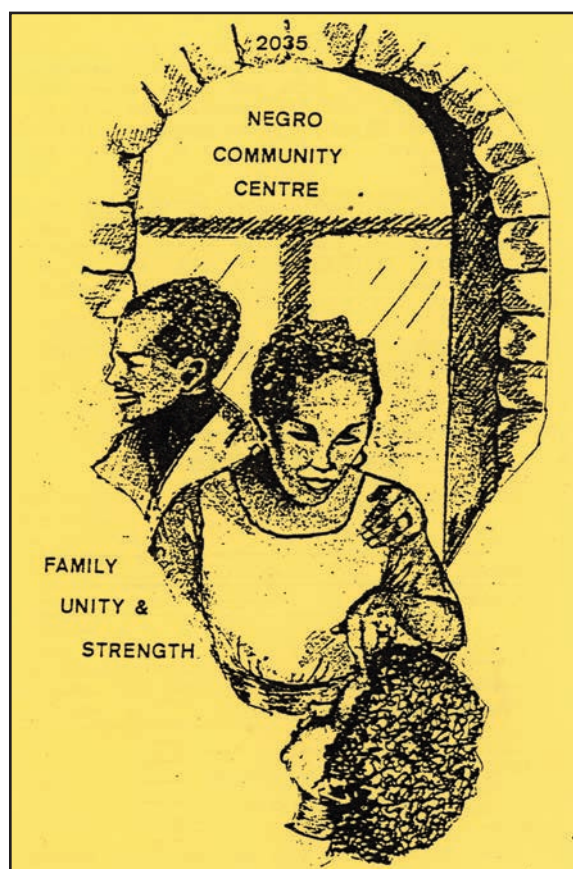
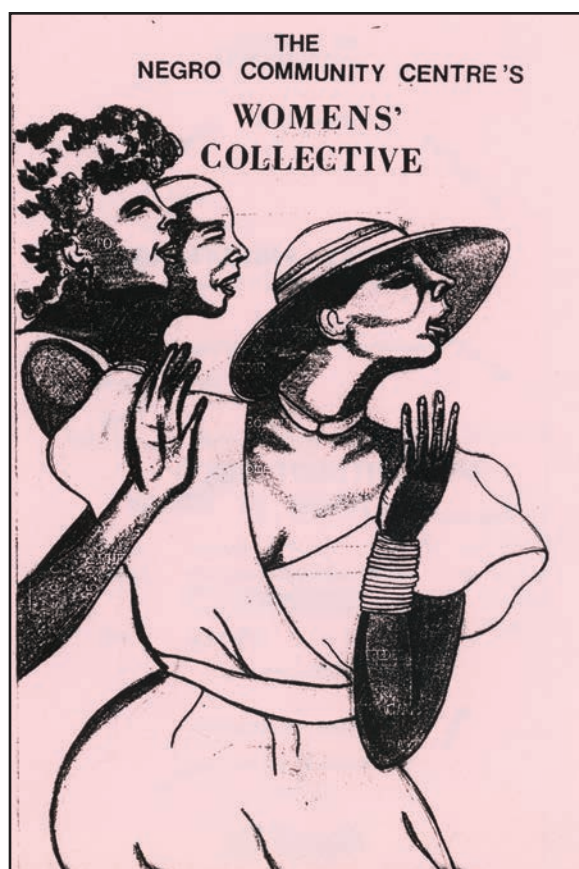
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News



Concordia's Negro Community Centre / Charles H. Este Cultural Centre Fonds
Uncovered Gems from a Vanished Montreal Institution

Transforming Quebec Society in the 19th Century
The Infamous Bishop Bourget

Just in Time for Christmas
The Montreal Gazette's 1865 Take on the Season

Quebec Heritage News

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QAHN News

by Matthew Farfan

Fall Heritage Fair

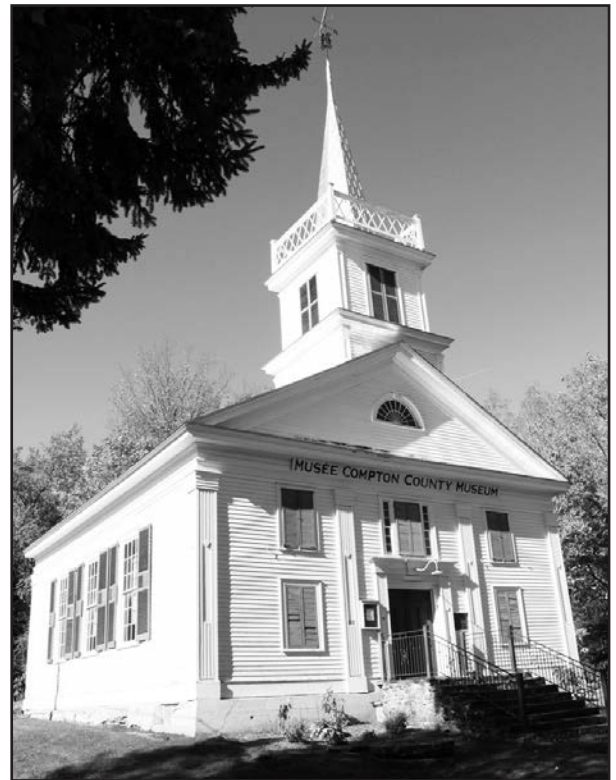
QAHN's first annual Heritage Fair, held in partnership with the Townshippers' Association, took place in October under beautiful fall skies at the Eaton Corner Museum in Eaton Corner. The event was funded in part through QAHN's ongoing DREAM project.

The morning segment included a panel discussion by representatives of the Brome County, Richmond County and Missisquoi museums, moderated by Dwane Wilkin. Heather Darch gave a keynote address on the "Anatomy of a Fundraiser."



The afternoon included displays inside the Eaton Corner Museum's newly restored Foss House. Over a dozen heritage and cultural organizations from all across the region were represented. The former Congregational Church, home to the museum's permanent exhibition, was also opened to the public for the day.

Townshippers' Association was on hand for the event with a wide selection of books on the history of the region. Local writer Nick Fonda signed copies of his new book, *Richmond Now and Then*. Susan Campbell and Glenn Wanamaker of CBC Radio conducted interviews. And fiddler Terry Howell provided the entertainment.



Awards

Richard "Dick" Evans, founding president of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network and the organization's current treasurer, has received a Canada 150 Volunteer Award in honour of his contributions to preserving heritage in Quebec. This award is the latest in a string of accolades that Evans has earned over the course of three decades of leadership in the heritage sector, including involvement with Heritage Huntingville and the Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society.

After a long career with Dupont Canada, Dick Evans returned to his native Eastern Townships in 1987, taking up residence on the Evans family farm near Huntingville. He has devoted much of his retirement to heritage preservation, not only

in the Townships, but across Quebec.

In the 1990s, Evans helped found Heritage Huntingville, and successfully raised funds to restore the Huntingville Universalist Church, the oldest building of its kind in Canada. He was also instrumental in creating Uplands Cultural and Heritage Centre in Lennoxville. In 2000, while president of the Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society, and having distinguished himself as an advocate for heritage preservation, he obtained support from the Department of Canadian Heritage to organize a provincial conference of historical societies at Bishop's University. The outcome was the formation of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network.

Marie-Claude Bibeau, Member of Parliament for Compton-Stanstead and Canada's Minister for International Development, presented Evans with a Canada 150 award at a ceremony at his home this past summer.



JoAnn Oberg-Müller, a long-time director of QAHN, has just been named an "Outstanding Townshipper" by the Townshippers' Association. An American by birth, Oberg-Müller came to Canada many years ago to pursue a career as a recruitment officer at Concordia, McGill and Bishop's universities. She now lives in Knowlton, but her volunteer activities have taken her all over the Townships and Montérégie.

At a ceremony in North Hatley in September, Oberg-Müller was described as "a committed volunteer who is not afraid to work. Whether it's serving as a director on one of many local boards, or manning a table and meeting people at a community event, or judging student projects, she is always ready to help.



Top left: Dick Evans received his award from Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau. Photo: Duxane Wilkin.
Top right: Sandra Stock. Photo: Carol Meindl.

JoAnn is a careful thinker, and an excellent ambassador for the many community organizations she has become involved with."

Besides her service on the QAHN board, Oberg-Müller has devoted her time to a number of other heritage and community organizations. These include the Brome County Historical Society, Townshippers' Foundation, and the Canadian Club of the Yamaska Valley.

Another veteran QAHN director, **Sandra Stock**, has just received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Morin Heights Historical Association, presented at its 2nd annual Heritage Awards Gala in November.

The award recognizes Stock's long-standing commitment to preserving and promoting the heritage and history of the Laurentians, in particular the area around Morin Heights, and for her leadership in the foundation of the MHHA back in 1997.

Stock, who now lives in Montreal but who returns regularly to the Laurentians where she lived for many years, has written extensively on the history of the Lower Laurentians, Montreal, and other parts of Quebec. Her articles and book reviews have appeared in *Quebec Heritage News* and elsewhere.



Official languages

Also in October, organizations representing Quebec's Anglophone population met in Knowlton with the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (LANG).

Seven Members of Parliament, including Committee Chair Denis Paradis, were on hand to hear concerns expressed by the various community groups in attendance. QAHN was represented by Executive Director Matthew Farfan.



Mark your calendars!

5th Annual Montreal Wine & Cheese

QAHN's 5th annual Montreal Wine & Cheese is set to take place on April 26, 2018 (5-7 p.m.) at the historic Château Dufresne in Montreal. Open to all who love history and heritage, this much-anticipated event serves as an informal

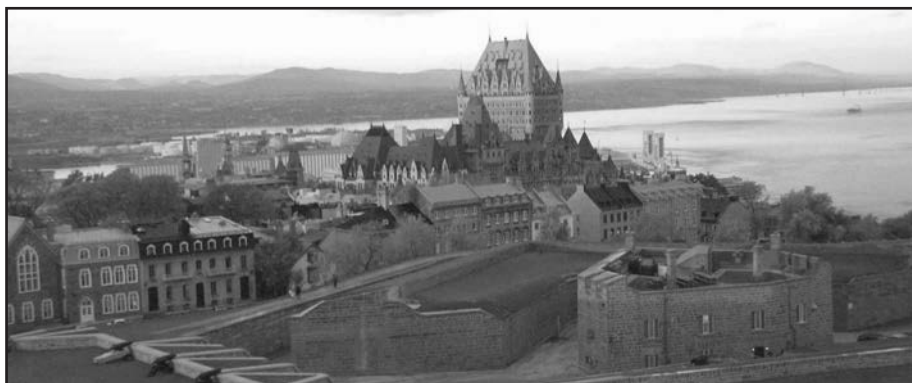
Bottom left: JoAnn Oberg-Müller (centre), flanked by some of her QAHN colleagues.
Bottom right: Château Dufresne. Photo: Thomas1313.

chance to network for members of Montreal's Anglophone and Francophone heritage communities.

This event should definitely not be missed! Built between 1915 and 1918, the Château Dufresne (2929 Jeanne-d'Arc Avenue, in Montreal's east end), is a superb Beaux-Arts style mansion originally owned by the Dufresne brothers, leading members of Montreal's Francophone bourgeoisie. Today, the Château houses the Dufresne-Nincheri Museum, which is dedicated to the history of Montreal's east end.

2018 QAHN Convention

QAHN's 2018 Convention and AGM will take place over two days at the beautiful Domaine Cataraqui and other venues in Quebec City, June 9-10, 2018. The event should be an interesting one. Stay tuned for more details about program and registration!



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VOLUNTEERING MATTERS MEASURING SUCCESS

Examining the Effectiveness of Your Volunteer Program

by Heather Darch

This is the fifth in a series of articles by Heather Darch exploring the issue of volunteers and volunteering. It was inspired by her work on the recent QAHN project, FOREVER.

Carpenters have an expression: “measure twice - cut once.”

It’s a rule of thumb we could use in our volunteer management programs too. Taking a look, and even a second look, at how our volunteer programs are operating, and the impact that individual volunteers have on our organization, can be helpful in identifying any weaknesses or problems and shoring-up those areas.

Evaluating your program as a whole may sound like a lot of work, and evaluating your individual volunteers might not sound too appealing either. In fact, the thought of evaluating a person helping out in your organization is so intimidating that most small non-profit organizations do not practice it routinely, if at all. As volunteer management expert Jill Friedman-Fixler says, “Most people carry significant baggage about performance reviews. The majority of volunteers today are employed, and are therefore familiar with the review process. They want their volunteer experience to be different from their employment, to be fun and challenging, and to have an impact. They don’t want a lot of administrative bureaucracy; nor do they want their volunteering to be reminiscent of their workplace.”

That said, experts in the field of volunteer management say that evaluations must be done to determine how efficiently and effectively the program meets its goals and to provide structure and guidance for volunteers.

Ongoing evaluation of a volunteer program is a healthy process of reflection, revitalization and renewal. Looking at your program through a broad lens allows you to see if your mission is

moving forward and ask questions like: Are we attracting volunteers with the right skills for the projects we have? Do we have the right resources available for volunteers to complete tasks? Are volunteers staying with us? Are we making the best use of volunteer time and skills? Have we set forth realistic goals and opportunities for the volunteer program? Are volunteers satisfied with their roles and responsibilities? Are we meeting their expectations?



Seeing generations volunteer is a good measure of the health of your volunteer program. Event volunteers Lori and Madison (mother and daughter).

In her presentation at a 2016 QAHN Volunteering Matters conference in Montreal, Louise Brazeau, the education director of the Château Ramezay, supported the practice of evaluating the volunteers in her own program. Formal evaluation can bring very specific results in improved procedures, expand recruiting efforts and create concrete and realistic goals for an organization. “It is a critical part of strategic thinking and planning for the museum’s program.”

Formal evaluation of a volunteer likewise motivates volunteers to do their best. Volunteers really need to know how they measure up to the expectations

of the organization. Developing skills, taking on more responsibilities, and adjusting tasks to accommodate a volunteer’s strengths are just some of the outcomes when you sit with a volunteer and review his or her performance. Evaluation also develops the team effort approach and can make volunteers feel appreciated.

Friedman-Fixler suggests a “valuation process” for volunteers rather than evaluation. A valuation eliminates the stigma of performance evaluation for all concerned and reinforces behaviours that your organization wants to cultivate. Volunteers will appreciate the effort and the positive individualized feedback. It sounds volunteer-friendly, too, which should ease the fear of actually sitting down with a volunteer for a review.

Formal reviews can occur at intervals that coincide with the creation of a new strategic plan, but informal evaluation really should be ongoing. This involves active listening, casual conversation with your volunteers, and observation of their work to determine if revisions are needed and to reinforce the value of volunteer contributions.

Most organizations will keep track of the number of volunteers as well as their volunteer hours. That’s good, especially when they can use that data for grant applications. But it’s the value you need to assess that will yield information to enhance your programs. How you manage your programs should be driven by what you want to happen as a result of your efforts.

Evaluation of programs and people will only have a practical impact if you are committed to making the changes and addressing the needs based on the results. It’s a good idea to build formal and informal evaluation into the planning of your volunteer program so it becomes a part of your routine and your organizational learning.

REMEMBERING THE NEGRO COMMUNITY CENTRE

An Introduction
by Steven High

We as a black community, we don't have a building that we can say is our own, a place. And black people have contributed, contrary to what a lot of people believe, to Montreal.

–Shirley Gyles, NCC President, interviewed in 2005.*

**Interviews conducted in 2005 as part of the student project "Voices from Little Burgundy" can be accessed at Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.*

This past year marked the 90th anniversary of Montreal's Negro Community Centre (NCC). Formed in 1927, the NCC served as the cultural and recreational hub of the community until 1992 when it shut its doors for the last time. The old stone building at 2035 Coursol Street in Little Burgundy was falling apart and the organization did not have the funds to repair it. Efforts to reopen the building eventually petered out, and Concordia was invited to salvage 100 boxes of textual and photographic records from the rapidly deteriorating building. These records remained in deep storage until a couple of years ago when Shirley Gyles officially donated them to Concordia Library's Special Collections. As for the NCC building itself, despite protests, it was demolished in 2014.

Students enrolled earlier this year in my undergraduate history class, "Telling Stories," had the good fortune of working with the NCC records directly – thanks to our partnership with Alexandra Mills, archivist at the Concordia Library. The course was based on a very simple question: what was in these boxes and how could we 'return' this history to the community?

Thirty students were each assigned a box and told that they had to become an 'expert' on its contents. We then built our knowledge from the ground up, sharing leads and so on. They were helped along by Alexandra Mills, who taught them archival theory and method, as well as by Desirée Rochat, a PhD student in education, who is a specialist in community archives, with links to the neighbourhood. Students also read deeply into the history of Black Montreal and Little Burgundy, including the published writings of David Austin and Dorothy Williams. They then developed their own projects, which included a research paper and a public outcome. These ranged from online digital stories, to

websites (see for example: <http://cohds.com/ncc/>), books of poetry, a graphic novel, posters, leaflets, and audio and art installations. A number also opted to contribute to *Quebec Heritage News* magazine. The student projects were then showcased at the public launch of the NCC Archive at the Liberty Hall of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Little Burgundy on April 11. There was huge community interest, with an overflow crowd of 200 people.

Historically, Montreal's Black community had taken root in what is now Montreal's "Sud-Ouest" Borough, specifically in the area that is known today as Little Burgundy. The reason was straightforward: until the 1950s, most Black men in Montreal worked for the railways as red caps, porters and cooks. They could therefore walk to work at Windsor (CPR) and Bonaventure (GTR/CNR) Stations. At the time, there were few other employment options. In an oral history interview, Carl Simmonds, a former porter, recalled that "in 90% of the black families, the head of the family worked for the railways, because you couldn't get no other kind of jobs. What else could you get? There was too much racism." Mrs. Packwood, interviewed by Dorothy Williams in the early 1980s, recalled that few factories hired Black workers until World War II, and even then "if you got a job here you had to be White in the daytime, and you could be Black at night." Some Black

women could "pass" as White, allowing them to work clandestinely in Eaton's or Holts and Renfrew on St. Catherine Street. Otherwise, most worked as domestics in the homes of the wealthy located uphill from Little Burgundy. The area was once known as the "city below the hill" for a reason.

Montreal's Black community forged strong community institutions. When excluded from membership in the White railway unions, Black workers formed the Order of Sleeping Car Porters in 1917 (a century ago this year) – the first major Black trade union in North America. Railway porters and their wives were also centrally involved in the founding of the Colored Women's Club in 1902, Union United Church in 1907, the United Negro Improvement Association's (UNIA) Liberty Hall in 1919, and, of course, the NCC in 1927. Louise Langdon, the mother of Malcolm X, was active in the local UNIA. Black-owned businesses once lined neighbourhood streets. Probably the most famous was Rockhead's Paradise, a place that was virtually synonymous with



Montreal's jazz era. James Franklin got a job there in 1939 and worked there for the next thirty-one years. "It was the best spot in town," he told Dorothy Williams. He recalled meeting all kinds of celebrities, including Nat King Cole, Redd Foxx, and Nipsey Russell.

Little Burgundy was a lively place. In oral history interviews, Black residents spoke of their childhoods in glowing terms. But historically, there wasn't much green space. As children, Abel Lewis recalled that they used to play hockey in the "big empty railroad yard" that once ran right through the neighbourhood, splitting it in half. But to do so, they would have to play a game of cat and mouse with the railway police who "felt it was very dangerous for us to be playing there and we totally disagreed with that."

Starting in the 1960s, Montreal's Black community was dispersed by a series of events that forever changed Little Burgundy. First, the decline of railway passenger travel meant the layoff of several hundred porters and red caps. Then, most of the factories that once lined the Lachine Canal closed, displacing thousands of people. With the area in crisis, Quebec decided to build the Ville Marie Expressway through the neighbourhood. The stately stone buildings that once stood on the north side of St. Antoine Street were all demolished, including St. Anthony's Church. Then a huge swath of the neighbourhood was demolished to make way for a new public housing project – which provided better housing conditions but forced people to move out of the neighbourhood for several years during construction. Many did not move back. Montreal's Black community was never again as geographically concentrated. As a result, the population of Little Burgundy plummeted from 21,381 in 1951 to just 7,000 in 1973.

The NCC struggled to survive in this changed environment. It offered an impressive range of programs – "from cradle to grave," many said. Children and youth benefitted from the NCC's music and dance classes, sports, and the summer cultural camps that were named after Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr, and others. People remember their childhood experiences at the NCC fondly. Valerie Hernandez told one of my students back in 2005 that

In those days, your parents didn't drive you because they didn't have a car. Or, if they did have a car, they were working very long hours. So, parents would send you to the Negro Community Centre. You can walk, because we all lived in the same area. ... I think I did everything [there]. There is nothing you didn't do. I started tap dancing... Then I started taking piano lessons and then I was a Girl Guide and I went to Saint John's ambulance. So, then you join different community groups, to youth groups.... We were all part of that. So, they put on dances and things like that. Every week end you had some place to go. And that was the focal point: the Negro Community Centre.

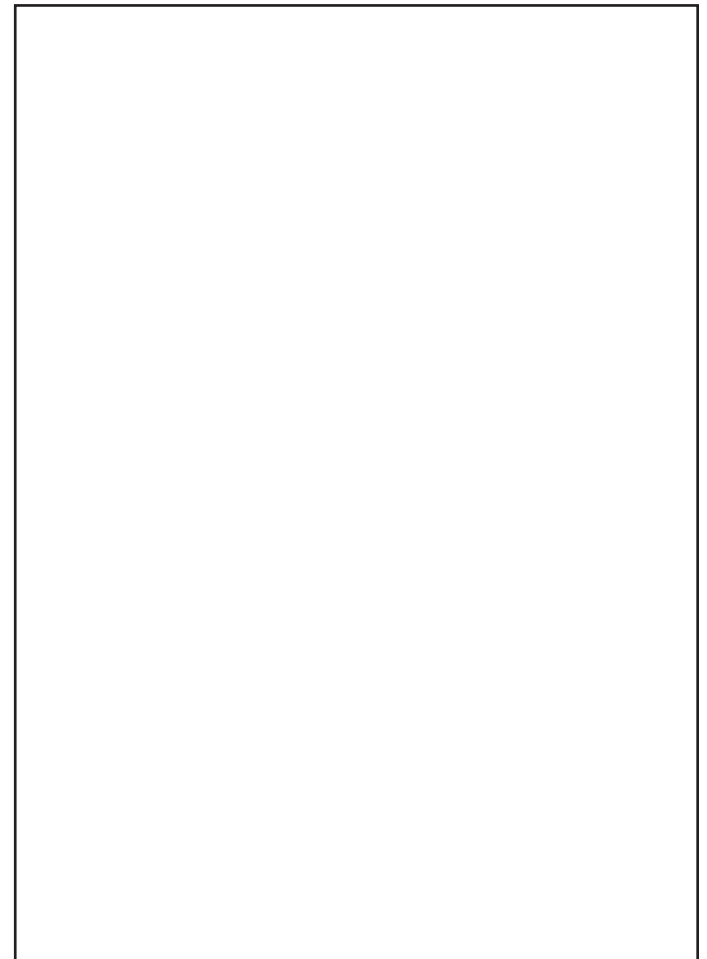
The NCC placed considerable emphasis on education, offering scholarships and promoting Black history and culture. In 1970, the NCC inaugurated the Stanley Clyke Library of Black History and Culture. Named after the NCC long-time director, who had recently died, the library's vertical files are still part of the archive at Concordia. Clyke, a social worker, originally from Nova Scotia, looms large in the organization's history. His wife, Emily Davis,

an accomplished professional and community leader too, was the sister of Viola Desmond – who is sometimes referred to as Canada's Rosa Parks for her defiance of de facto segregation. Desmond has just been put on Canada's new \$10 bill.

The articles that follow do not offer a comprehensive history of the Negro Community Centre, but rather pathways into this centre of community life and history. They begin with an article on the importance of community archives, written by Desirée Rochat and Alexandra Mills, followed by others on the arts, music, schooling, women, the Afro-Can community newspaper, the Young Mothers program, and the influence of leftist politics, concluding with a wider reflection on the importance of Black history in Quebec. The NCC closely followed the liberation struggles in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s as well as South Africa's anti-Apartheid movement in the 1980s. There were also important connections to Black radicalism at McGill and Sir George Williams (now Concordia) universities during these years.

As we mark Canada's 150th and Montreal's 375th anniversaries, it is important to acknowledge the work of community groups like the NCC that quietly contribute so much to our lives, and to restate the importance of archival collections like this one in preserving the history of English-speaking Quebec in all its regional and cultural diversity.

Steven High teaches in the Department of History and is co-director of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University.



ACTIVATING COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

The Negro Community Centre / Charles H. Este Cultural Centre Fonds by Désirée Rochat and Alexandra Mills

The Negro Community Centre, like most private welfare organizations, was founded by a small group of citizens. In this particular instance, it is notable that the citizens were members of the Negro minority who felt a need for organizing ways and means of helping to “alleviate distress” among Negroes in Montreal.

—Negro Community Centre (no date)

The organizations that communities establish tell a lot about what communities strive for, what they understand as their collective needs and aspirations, and how they envision fulfilling them. They tell us about the spaces and means people put in place to bring about change. The Negro Community Centre (NCC) was part of a network of institutions founded by members of the Montreal Black community. During its peak years, thousands of people came through its doors. In 1967 alone, general attendance reached 44,558. In addition to addressing the social, economic and living conditions of its members, the NCC objectives were (according to the 1967 report):

- To provide leadership facilities and opportunities for members to meet in groups for social, recreational and cultural purposes
- To use resources for individual, group and neighborhood growth
- To promote and encourage better inter-racial understanding

The archive of the NCC emerges out of the community mobilization and organizing that was characteristic of the centre. It was created through the NCC's educational and cultural programming,

advocacy work, and connections with other groups. The records tell stories of community achievements, community building, as well as tensions and struggles. They also document the various networks of relationships that sustained the centre.

Community archives bring to light the narratives that shaped communities over time. The materials found within those archives can trigger memory, prompt discussion, and foster engagement. The memories of the individual and collective experiences of those who



were involved in the NCC are intimately tied to the archive. They hold the stories that the records cannot tell in isolation. They are a vehicle through which an understanding of history can emerge. Community archives are not static. Through interpreting, using, and re-using archival documents, we are able to tell stories, revisit events, and engage with history.

Archives are sites of identity, culture, social memory, and history. They are created in and by communities, and this should not be forgotten once materials formally enter the holdings of an archival repository. By removing archives from communities entirely, we risk losing insights, connec-

tions, and context that allow us to better understand the material and the stories they convey. Archival materials can, and should, be used by the public and the community or communities that created the records as a means to engage with and begin to understand the nuanced histories of individuals, organizations, and communities.

The belief that primary research is the domain of scholars and higher education persists and should be vehemently resisted. While archives are necessarily used for research purposes, they should also be available for other forms of exploration, engagement, and discovery. Education is just one way to meaningfully engage with non-traditional users of archival materials. It is necessary for archivists to step outside their institutions and bring their holdings to these new-to-them user communities.

Educational possibilities are many. When seeking to (re)activate an archive such as the NCC's, learning can, and should, take place both inside and outside the archive. Community archives can be brought to the classroom and into communities to foster engagement, understanding, and learning. Introducing undergraduate students to archival materials in a classroom setting provides students with first-hand experience of historical research and archival literacy skills. Actively engaging with primary sources sparks curiosity and provide real, tangible connections to history.

In 'Telling stories,' the course offered at Concordia University in 2017, undergraduate students were able to connect to the history of the NCC, to its members, and to its partner organizations, and did so in the classroom, the reading room, and the community itself. The course provided students with the opportunity to conduct extensive archival research, an infrequent requirement of undergraduate coursework. By working directly with and from the archive, students learned about community

organizing and community archives, the NCC, and the history of part of Montreal's Black community. Students also had the opportunity to bring the stories they uncovered back to the community, fostering dialogue and eliciting memories. Through research-creation projects, students were able to share their interpretations of the documentation and make them accessible to a wider audience.

Keeping an archive alive means ensuring the accessibility and use of the material by all individuals, regardless of their affiliations. By getting students and community members engaged with archival records, the archive is being (re)activated. New users animate archival records by imbuing them with new, or alternative, perspectives. Their interactions with the records also prompt reminiscences in the community or communities that created the documents and help forge new ones in those individuals engaging with the documents and the stories they communicate. This is precisely what happened during the final event for the class, where the student projects were showcased and the archive was launched. Members of the NCC shared their memories of the centre, interacted with the students, and engaged with their projects and reproductions from the

archive, giving students the opportunity to expand their understanding and excitement for the history of this important centre and its surrounding communities. These encounters helped to deepen understandings of history and prompt discussions that will hopefully lead to further exploration, partnerships and collaborations.

Another result of bringing the NCC archive to the classroom and the community is the establishment of relationships and the opening of dialogue between academia and the wider public. These relationships further enrich and enliven the archive, and encourage engagement with the materials and the histories represented. An added effect of community engagement is the potential to expand archival holdings. Greater visibility and accessibility leads to greater use of an archive, making it more likely that community members will deposit their own papers with an archival institution. Any additional documentation would provide users with a more comprehensive view of communities and their histories.

Encounters between people, records, memory and history through the use of archives foster learning and discovery. This is especially important in the case of the NCC archive, as the building that last

housed the centre no longer exists. Since the NCC's physical home was demolished in 2014, keeping its archive alive will help ensure that the centre's legacy continues, while cultivating new opportunities for connections, collaborations and community building.

Sources:

The Negro Community Centre / Charles H. Este Cultural Centre Fonds, F013, Special Collections, Concordia University Library.

"The Negro Community Centre: Historical background," (no date), Box HA01379, folder 3.

"Report of the Negro Community Centre (a neighborhood house), 1967," Box HA04245, folder 10.

Alexandra Mills is the Special Collections archivist at Concordia University.

Désirée Rochat is a PhD. candidate in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University.



TACKLING RACISM IN MONTREAL'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The NCC and the QBBE's Advocacy for Black Students

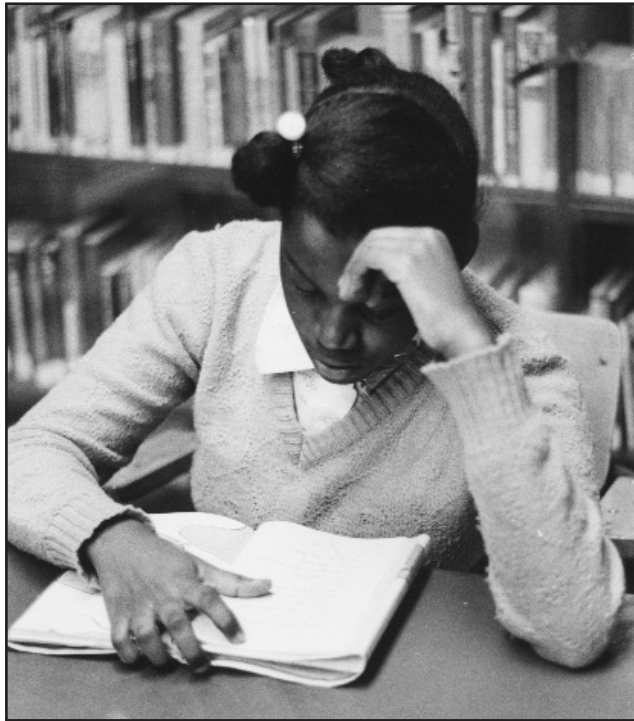
by Chelsea Matheson

Given its strong advocacy in the face of societal racism, the NCC went to great lengths to protect the community's youngest and most vulnerable members – significantly, Black students within the Montreal school system. By partnering with other organizations, especially the Quebec Board of Black Educators, by lobbying the government, and by hosting anti-racist programming for Black students, the NCC played a significant role in combating racism in Montreal schools during the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

The inadequacies of the education system was one of the main issues plaguing young people in the Black community, and required concerted action. In a January 1973 letter to Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa detailing the main issues faced by the Anglophone Black community, NCC director Lawrence Sitahal decried the “increasing and alarming rate at which Black youth [are] becoming alienated... due to the persisting racism and white ethnocentricity perpetuated by the school system... These combined factors quickly strip Black youth of their sense of worth and identity.” Aside from formally lobbying the government with letters such as this, the NCC took an Afrocentric approach in its own youth programming to help develop Black pride and consciousness. The archive contains a file of resources and ideas for teachers educating Black children, with different exercises and activities to “develop and strengthen an African consciousness” through educational and recreational activities, and “a sense of the collective: feeling responsible to other Black people, love and pride in the Black commu-

nity, self-confidence, valuing the human over the material, [and] commitment to the struggle.”

In 1974, recognizing the difficulties in navigating the education system, the NCC held a workshop for parents and educators, focusing on the problems encountered by Black students and the limits of parental experience with the school system. The workshop's conclu-



sion: “the Canadian educational system is designed to create exploiters and the exploited. Naturally, Black youth are being modeled to become the exploited generation of tomorrow. It is therefore the duty of the Black community, parents and educators to equip their young to counteract this process.”

The NCC took its part in this mission seriously. It provided essential support for the Montreal chapter of the National Congress of Black Women (NCBW), which held an important education conference in 1981. As an

acknowledgment of this support, the NCBW's final report was addressed to Lawrence Sitahal: “Many thanks to you and to members of your staff for the generous assistance extended to us throughout the planning of this conference.” A key organizer of the conference was Vera Jackson, who was not only a prominent NCC employee, but also acting president of the NCBW and an outreach worker for the Quebec Board of Black Educators. Hosting educational workshops, providing support for major conferences, and bringing together various educational stakeholders and activists did much to promote the needs of Black students and to combat racism in Montreal schools.

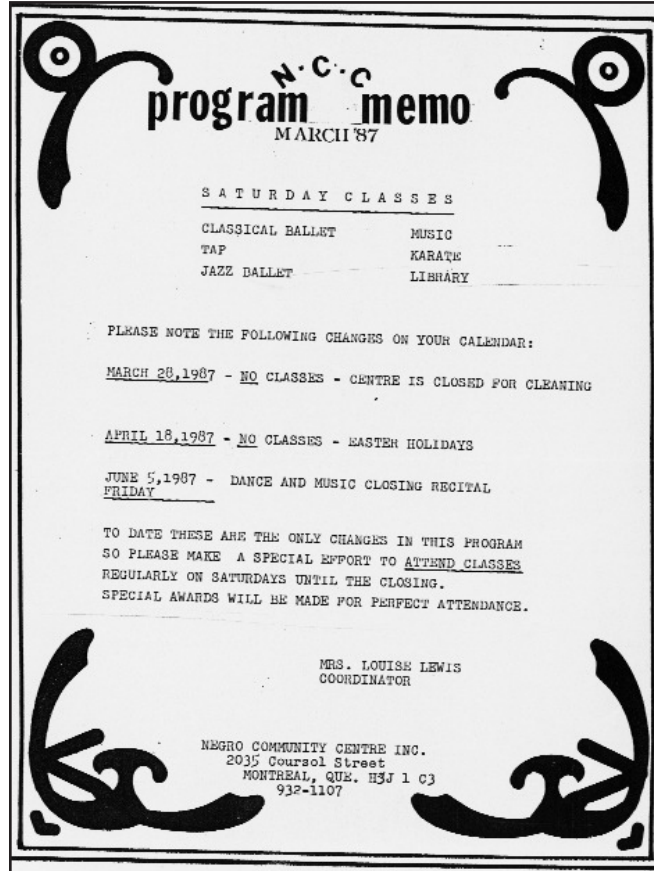
Another way that the NCC engaged in educational advocacy was by partnering with the Quebec Board of Black Educators, which had an office within the NCC building itself. The QBBE, formed “to safeguard the interests of Anglophone Black students in Quebec,” was an absolutely pivotal organization combating racism directly within the Montreal school system. The aims of the QBBE reflected a need for direct intervention: to fight for equal educational opportunity, to address failures of the school system by running its own programming for Black students, to rid the curriculum of its racist content, and to include more Black studies. The QBBE successfully lobbied the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal to hire a Black liaison officer, who would be chosen by the QBBE. This officer would be responsible for intervening within the Montreal education system on behalf of vulnerable Black students facing racism at school, sensitizing teachers to the needs of Black students,

and setting up Black studies programs.

The QBBE not only engaged in direct advocacy within the education system, but also provided programs outside of school for Black students. It aimed "to motivate and build a positive self-concept in the students in a rich Black environment," and to make up for the failures of the school system with targeted programming to address issues faced by Black students. The main issues were: racism from teachers, lower expectations for Black students, the trend of funneling Black students into lower academic streams, the Eurocentric curriculum, low numbers of Black teachers and administrators, and a sense of alienation of Black students in school. To address these issues, the QBBE created the Da Costa Hall Program for Black high school students to help them get accepted into CEGEP and to provide crucial support during the years where dropout was common. The QBBE also created the Charles Drew program, to help Black students deemed to be two or more years below their grade level, and the Bana program, hosted at the NCC, to aid Black elementary students in their educational development. Recognizing the crucial importance of Black representation within teaching and administration, and of Black role models who understood the lived Black reality of their students, the QBBE especially strived to staff its programs with Black educators. It also ran its programs with the fundamental assertion that Black students were under-performing in schools not because of academic inferiority, but because of a hostile school environment and marginalization. The QBBE also went to extensive lengths to include Black studies, creating content that reflected the students' reality by bringing Black people out from the margins of Eurocentric history and into the forefront, and helping them understand their place in the world as Black citizens in a racially divided society.

The NCC and the QBBE were both pivotal organizations serving and advocating for the Black community,

leaving significant legacies in their wake. Montreal schools not only had failed Black students in terms of academic achievement, but also were actively destructive, constituting hostile spaces where Black students regularly faced innumerable forms of racism. Both the NCC and the QBBE took up



the charge to combat this racism from within school walls. To reach children and youth in the community who had their self-esteem and self-concept beaten down by a racist Eurocentric school system, both organizations provided programs to envelop children and youth in a supportive environment that would develop their pride in being Black and give them a second chance at academic success.

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Chelsea Matheson is currently a Master's student at McGill University pursuing an Education degree. Originally from Edmonton, she was first exposed to issues of racism within Montreal schools while doing the research for this article. As a result of this experience, she is planning to continue this research during her current degree, and will be making anti-racist pedagogy a central aspect of her future career as a teacher.

AFRO FESTIVAL

Unpacking the Montreal Black Community's Largest Annual Event by Teejay Bhalla

By the 1970s, Montreal's ethnically diverse Black community had begun to disperse from the St. Antoine District (aka Little Burgundy) to different neighbourhoods around the city, yet the Negro Community Centre remained committed to fostering a sense of community and unification. It achieved this in part by organizing both local and large-scale events, often in collaboration with Black community groups from other parts of Montreal. Of these events, the largest was the annual city-wide Afro Festival.

Beginning in the summer of 1973, Afro Festival featured different daily events over seven to twelve days, usually in July, with the aim of bringing all ages and ethnicities together. The wide array of events changed as the festival evolved, but the objective was always the uplifting of Black youths and the unification of the community. From athletic competitions between municipalities to bus excursions bringing families to enjoy a picnic outside the city, Afro Festival featured events for every age group and interest. There was something to do every night of the festival, whether it was a film screening, a dance, or a presentation from the Black Theatre Workshop. These events led to a final music festival held at Girouard Park in NDG.

On the surface, Afro Festival was simply a celebration of Montreal's Black community and history. However, organizers had more than just the amusement of the population as motivation for the event; the festival was used as a unification tool for Montreal's internally diverse and geographically dispersed Black population. In addition, the festival aimed at providing a much-needed outlet for Black artists to showcase their talents, and to promote African history to Black Montrealers and the rest of Quebec.

Afro Festival was promoted under the banner of the Black Community Central Administration of Quebec, an umbrella organization that also included the NCC,

the Lasalle Black Community Association, the Black Studies Centre (Que.) Inc, Walker Credit Union, the N.D.G. Black Community Association, the Quebec Board of Black Educators, Black Community Communications Media and the Cote des Neiges Black Community Association. As their titles implied, these groups represented the municipalities with the highest concentration of Black inhabitants. The BCCAQ saw the event as an opportunity to unite as Black Montrealers in order "to stimulate a sense of community among Black people of diverse national origins living in Quebec." With a massive outreach in all of these districts of the city, Afro Festival was designed to unite thousands of Black Montrealers and "make the Quebec public aware of this Black cultural experience." It was important not only to unite Montreal's Black community, but also to represent it to the rest of the province.

In the pursuit of representation, festival organizers encouraged participation from many different Black organizations around the city. For years, the Black Theatre Workshop had offered a safe place for Black artists to perform their own works. For this reason, BTW was accorded its own event during Afro Festival to showcase the talents of Black Montrealers and to present unique performances of Black stories. The 1975 edition of the festival featured two acts presented at Revue Theatre on Maisonneuve Street. The first, *Bonanza 72*, "a rhythmic and biting satire on politics and attitudes in the Black Community," depicted the life of a West Indian woman working in Toronto as a domestic servant. The second piece, *The Black Experience*, offered a complete history of "Black life," beginning with human origins in Africa and continuing through life before the slave trade, the horrors of the middle passage, Black life in the New World, and finally the Black Panther movement in the 1960s. The piece used Shango drum rhythms to evoke a sense of African spiritualism. By choosing these

two pieces, BTW was mirroring the intentions of the rest of the festival: to promote local Black artists and represent the often unspoken voice of the Black community and the realities it faced in North America, while reminding the audience of the greater implications of their roots.

The Black Art Exhibition ran throughout the festival, and along with the Creative Black Arts Awards, "aimed at developing and encouraging the creative talents of potential Black Artists." The awards included a variety show, which allowed performers to demonstrate their abilities in front of an audience and judges. The awards were separated into five categories: music, dance, poetry, drama and visual arts. The most popular of these categories was dance, and the festival organizers often had to emphasize the other categories to promote participation. Both of these events encouraged a pursuit of excellence in artistic fields within the Black community, while providing participants with a venue to demonstrate their talents to the rest of the city.

Afro Festival was a celebration of the internal diversity of Montreal's Black community. One event, "Pot Pourri," exemplified the festival's intention of bringing all the different Black nationalities together by serving many dishes from these countries. A cookbook was prepared with recipes boasting that they would take you on "a gourmet trip around the Black world!" Local participants had submitted handwritten recipes – Lamb Soleil from Senegal, Mseto from Tanzania, Pepper Pot from Guyana, and Conkies from Barbados, to name only a few – which were then typed and bound for sale. Twelve different African and Caribbean countries were represented in this cookbook, and cumulatively they speak to the diversity of Montreal's Black community. The introduction stated that "the recipes in this book reflect the experiences of the former house slaves who dined on the master's leftovers and made them even more delectable than the original main course." Even

a cookbook, then, was an opportunity to evoke the historical injustices their community faced.

Afro Festival's main coordinator, Jim Ashby, explained why it was important to include these types of messages for Montreal's Black community: "The Afro-Festival program content is designed to encourage ethno-cultural identity which is prone to confusion and distortion because of the peculiar historical situation facing peoples of African descent in North America and the Diaspora as a whole." Ashby was directly implying that Blacks in North America needed to have events such as Afro Festival in order to remind them of their unique heritage, and that their reality is diluted by North American culture. It is evident that events such as Pot Pourri were crucial to the festival's broader agenda.

Afro Festival brought thousands of people from different parts of town together for a few nights in the summer to celebrate a culture and history that was unified despite being internally diverse. Culture was not only to be enjoyed but also passed along to the next generation and to the rest of the city. In this regard, the BCCAQ was successful in fostering a sense of unity within a diverse community.

By including subtle hints of Black history in its events such as Pot Pourri, and more obvious ones by the Black Theatre Workshop, Afro Festival was a vehicle through which the community could remember where it fit within the North American context. There were usually many events over several days, so Afro Festival required considerable monetary and volunteer support, but without the participation of the Black community, it would not have been as successful throughout the 1970s. Unfortunately, the slow and eventual demise of the NCC in the late 1980s and early 1990s appears to have corresponded to the end of Afro Festival. Today, there is no event in the Black community that reaches out to all areas on the island – or none that holds the same deep significance ingrained in the organization of Afro Festival.

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Teejay Bhalla is a Concordia University History and Film Studies student. She was born and raised in Montreal.

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Left: NCC After School Program, Concordia University Library, NCC/Charles H. Este Cultural Centre Fonds, F013, HA04194, folder 67.

Right: Site of the NCC, 2017. Photo: Kelann Currie-Williams.



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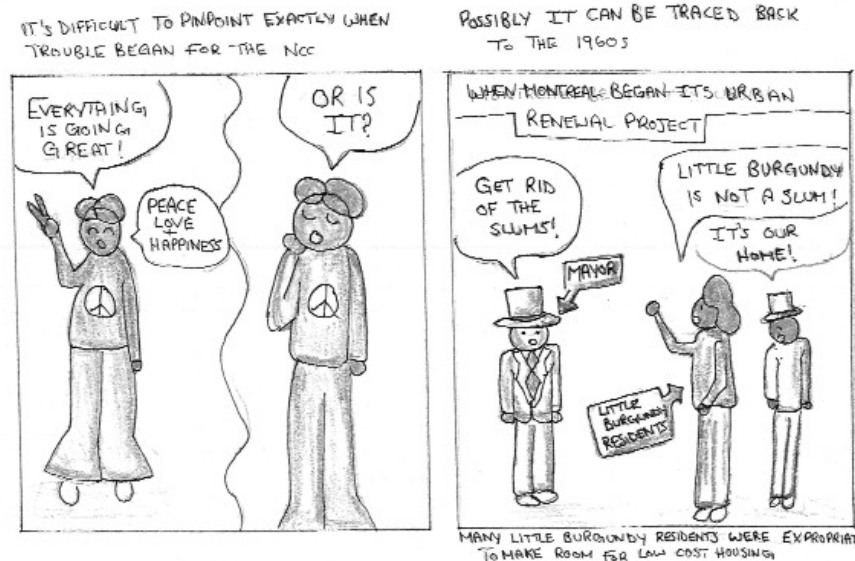
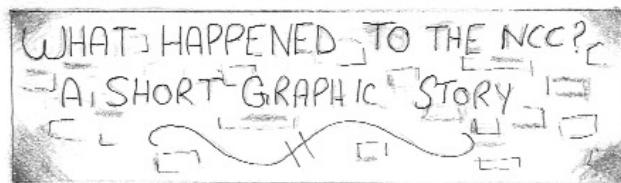
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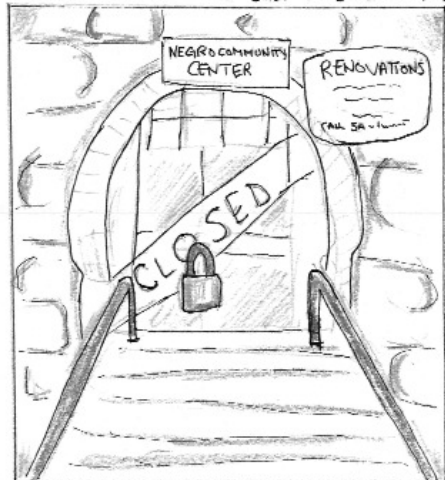
Illustration : Vincent Lafortune

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NCC

by Leslie Szabo



BUT FOR SURE WE KNOW THAT THE 1980S WAS NOT THE BEST TIME FOR THE NCC.



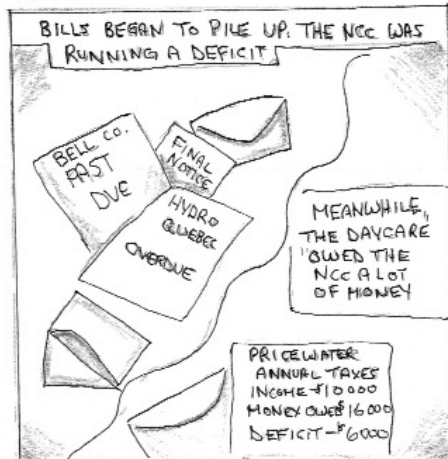
IN 1989, DOROTHY WILLIAMS CLOSED THE DOORS OF THE NCC FOR THE LAST TIME

THE MAJOR CATALYST WAS A LOSS OF INCOME FOR THE NCC.

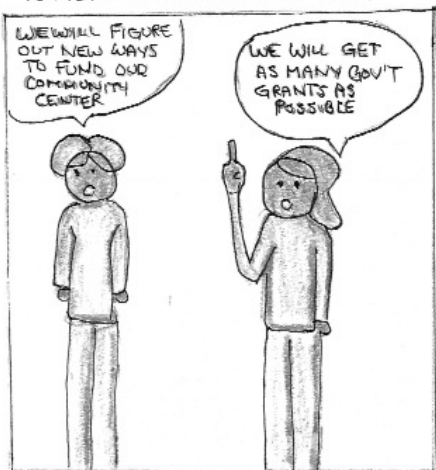


IN 1986, CENTRAIDE CUT THEIR FUNDING TO THE NCC...

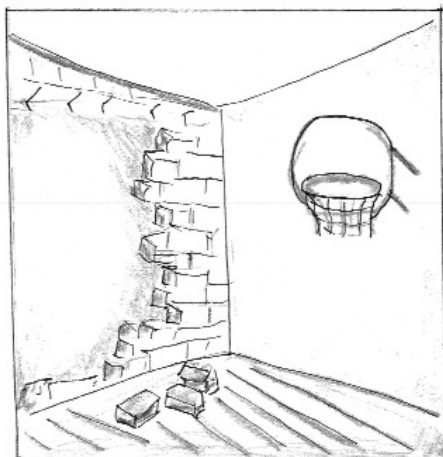
...AND THINGS WENT DOWNHILL FROM THERE.



BUT FOR THOSE WHO DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO THE NCC THEY NEVER LOST HOPE.



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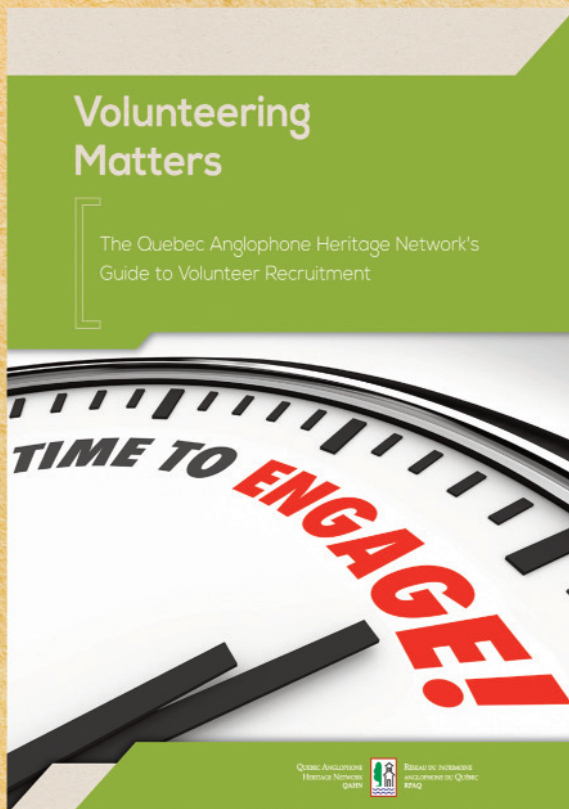
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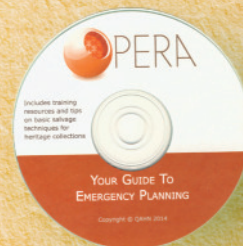
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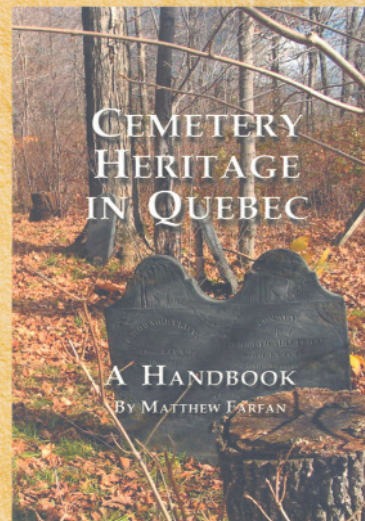
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AFRO-CAN

The Local, Historical and Global Reach of a Community Newspaper

by Sinéad O'Halloran

The Negro Community Centre's achievements, local concerns and broad political positions were captured in its affiliated newspaper *Afro-Can*, published between 1981 and 1994. Produced for the community by members of the community, the newspaper served both as a resource to reach outside the St. Antoine District and as an outlet for internal community dialogue. The founding editor of the paper, Dr. Leo W. Bertley, was paramount in developing the structure and objectives of *Afro-Can*: to reflect what mattered to the Black community at large, the local, historical and global components of the Black experience.

Dr. Bertley was a dynamic force, "very focused in trying to define himself and Black culture," which quite clearly became the underlying mission of *Afro-Can* (Héroux). Born in Pointe-à-Pierre, Trinidad, in 1934, Bertley had Black history instilled in him by his parents, Constance and Nicholson Bertley. "My parents ingrained my history in me, taught me its worth and importance," Bertley once told a reporter. "It is inbred and I won't forget it." He was a very strong student his entire academic career, which garnered him several scholarships in primary and secondary school; after relocating to Montreal in 1954 he acquired seven Post-Secondary degrees. Bertley's innate love for learning inevitably lead him to a career of teaching, which he naturally excelled at; colleagues and students remembered him as a revered, influential and passionate educator. For 36 years he worked as a professor and lecturer at McGill, Vermont, and St. Lawrence universities and at Vanier College, teaching Afrocentric History with a concentration on the Black Canadian experience. Bertley lit-

erally wrote the book on African Canadian history: *Canada and Its People of African Descent* (1977). Bertley's legacy also extends to the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), of which he was an active member and firm advocate of Garveyism as a means of empowering the international Black community. Education, Black history and Garveyism were cornerstones of Bertley's identity, and he was able to bring these together in *Afro-Can*.

Can featured milestones within the community: the birthday announcement and life tribute "Annie Stucker Hurdles to 100" (Vol.7, No.1, 1987) was only one among hundreds of tender and intimate messages of congratulations, support or appreciation. *Afro-Can* also continued the long NCC tradition of Black empowerment through specialized services and advice, as well as the exposure of racial injustice in Montreal. Richard Lord, a respected community figure and advocate for education and multiculturalism, wrote a regular immigration column featuring practical legal advice for new immigrants, with necessary paperwork included right in the issue. *Afro-Can* was bold in its detection and denunciation of injustice in Montreal, preferring not to wait for the city to act but rather to call for immediate action. The 1987 issue contained a political cartoon entitled "Help the police, beat yourself up!" accompanying an article by Dwight Jenkins, "Your Right and the Law," outlining ways to deal with law enforcement for people of colour in Montreal.

Afro-Can reasserted the Black experience in the Canadian historical narrative. This objective was of the utmost importance to Dr. Bertley, who in his lifetime "made a significant contribution in raising the consciousness of the contributions of Black people in Quebec and Canada" (Héroux) through his books, as a founding member of the Quebec Board of Black Educators, and, of course, with *Afro-Can*. The newspaper's historical content educated its readers about the largely overlooked achievements and struggles of African Canadians, and provided commentary on both the realities of historical whitewashing in Canada and the significance of remembering the truth. The cover of the February 1984 Black history month



Afro-Can was created in 1981 as a community resource with a further reach than the NCC building itself. Deindustrialization had resulted in the dispersal of the Black community beyond the St. Antoine District, and so the NCC turned to print as way to make connections, publishing regular segments such as "Community Calendar" and "Church News" in order to close the growing physical gaps between Black Montrealers. *Afro-*

issue depicted dozens of prominent moments in Canadian Black history spanning hundreds of years – a means of straightforwardly asserting this history into public space. Another striking piece on the historical Black presence in Canada is “Nobody Knows Our Names,” in which author Gosnell I.O.R. Yorke compares the oppressive practice of slaves being denied their own names and African descendants symbolically being denied the dignity of knowing their own names, in terms of their own histories.

Afro-Can’s world view was wide-ranging, tying together Bertley’s Garveyism and Pan-Africanism with the social justice and Black empowerment promoted by the NCC. The newspaper’s involvement in the betterment of the global Black community is clear not only from its published content, but also from its support for far-reaching issues. The content enabled the local Black community to stay informed on matters familiar to them, and to learn about issues that were less familiar. For years, *Afro-Can* devoted a page or more in every issue to the struggle against Apartheid, through both regular updates on the situation within South Africa and insight into what needed to be done by those outside. “A Model Intervenes:

Foreign Role Vital - Mandela” was an interview by reporter Larry Olmstead with Winnie Mandela, who emphasized the need for maintaining international pressure on the Apartheid regime. *Afro-Can* also called for activism over race relations in the United States, the Haitian dictatorships, and the development of other African nations. Regular columns connected the local community with current events in other Black nations, primarily in the Caribbean: “World View” catered to the large West Indian immigrant population in Montreal, fostering the Garveyite notion of the confraternity of Black people globally.

Afro-Can continued publishing for a few years after the NCC closed its doors in 1989, but was unable to remain financially independent. The spirit of *Afro-Can* survived in a new publication, the *Afro-Canadian*, and is still present in *Montreal Community Contact*, which serves today’s Black community. As a pioneer publication, and as the media arm of the NCC, *Afro-Can* asserted the Black presence in the Canadian historical narrative and forged solidarity with the global Black community. Through the ideological influence of Dr. Leo W. Bertley and the nuanced explorations of the Black experience by all the writers and editors involved, *Afro-Can* set the

standard for just how far a community paper can reach. *Afro-Can*’s goal to retell Black Canadian history has now come full circle, acting as a physical memory of the Montreal Black community from 1981 to 1994, and insuring through its permanent location in the NCC archive that the stories it told will not be forgotten.

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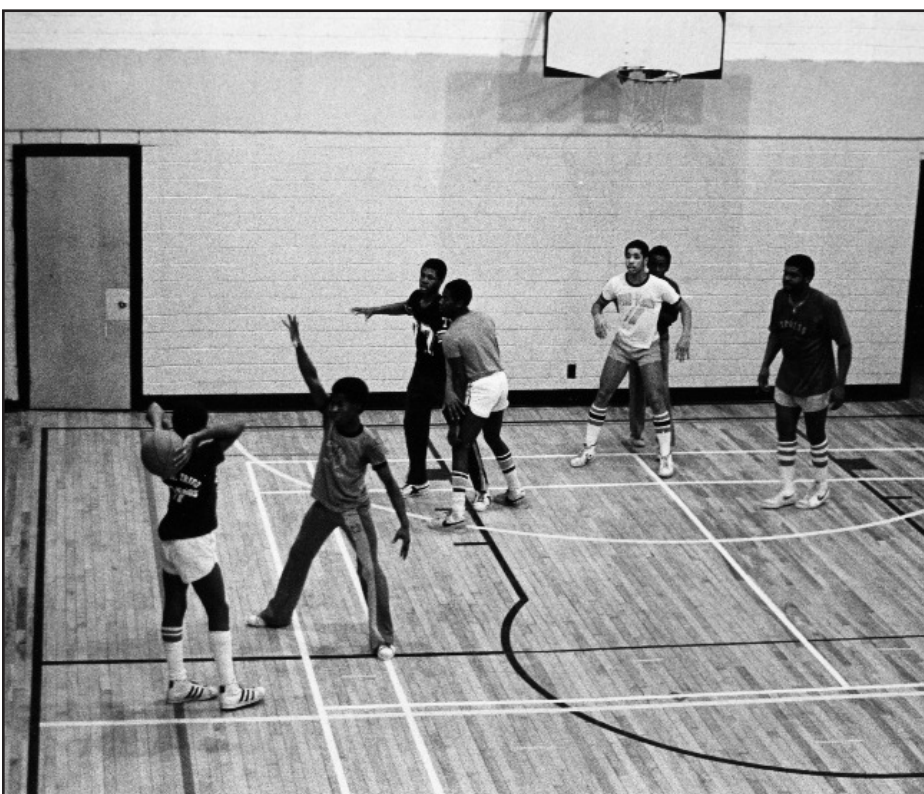
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Sinéad O’Halloran is from Calgary, Alberta, and is currently a Concordia undergraduate double majoring in Honours History and Irish Studies.



Boys playing basketball at the Negro Community Centre, 1981. Photo: Graeme Clyke. Concordia University Library, Graeme Clyke Fonds, F027-02-126.

THE NCC's YOUNG MOTHERS PROGRAM

by Chloé Houde

The Young Mothers Program was started in 1983 but ran more officially from 1985 to 1987. The NCC recognized that many young, single Black mothers were living in poverty with their children. The program offered support to these young mothers with the goal of helping them go back to school or prepare for the job market, all the while encouraging self-esteem and teaching them parenting and home management skills. The program lasted a few short years, but it had a positive impact on the young mothers who participated.

Teenage pregnancy rates in Canada declined from 1974 to 1986, but then began to increase. The increase started earlier in Quebec, although Quebec remained a province with one of the lowest teenage birth rates. Concern over teenage pregnancy mounted because mothers were increasingly unmarried, poor, and having to drop out of school. The rate of pregnant unmarried teenagers rose from 25% to 81% in the twenty years between 1974 and 1994. The job market at that time started requiring higher levels of education, which meant that not finishing high school had dire consequences for many teenage mothers, who often had to settle for low-paying jobs or welfare assistance.

In 1979, concerned organizations such as the NCC, the CLSC Côte des Neiges, and Ville Marie Social Services came together to discuss the rise of teenage pregnancies in Montreal's Black population, especially in Côte des Neiges. The increase was attributed to ignorance about sex and its consequences, limited sex education in high schools, and a lack of information about birth control.

An initial teen mothers program began in 1983 as a Canada Works Project focused on helping young mothers return to school. Recognizing the need for this project to continue and expand, the NCC appointed Jeanne Rowe as

special program worker in charge of expanding the teenage mothers program. Rowe conducted extensive research with relevant organizations and institutions such as the YWCA, Elizabeth House, Head and Hands, various CLSCs and hospitals, and a few high schools. These contacts enabled her to receive referrals and have the appropriate experts and specialists as references.

In March 1985, Dorothy I. Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, wrote an article for *Ebony* magazine entitled "What Must be Done about Children Having Children." Height focused on the importance of Black family networks and their fragmentation in recent decades because of urban life, Black unemployment, and economic depression. She argued that this fragmentation led to increasing numbers of Black teenage mothers living in poverty and without support systems, and that Black community organizations had to help reinforce family networks in vulnerable communities. These concepts were very much incorporated in the NCC's Young Mothers Program.

A few weeks after Height's article appeared, NCC Director Lawrence Sitahal wrote to Joe Berlettano, chair of the Youth Services Committee of the Rotary Club of Montreal, requesting a donation of \$500 for equipment and supplies for the new teenage mothers program, which was offered free of charge to participants. Sitahal described teenage mothers in need as generally living alone and isolated, separated from family, on social welfare benefits, inexperienced in parenting and home management skills, forced to drop out of school, and ill prepared for jobs. He stated that 8 to 10 mothers had been attending the weekly meetings of the program, which included counselling, home management training (budgeting, cooking, sewing), discussion sessions, lectures, exercise activities, and career planning.

After a year of inactivity, the teenage mothers program resumed oper-

ations in the spring of 1986, at which time Leith Hamilton succeeded Sitahal as NCC executive director. Hamilton sent a program proposal to Centraide, mentioning that the NCC had experienced "recent problems" but it had since changed its board and mandate. Changes included a focus on the Black family and the NCC's role as a community organization in solidifying this structure. The proposal to Centraide explained how the NCC implemented its new Family Support Programs in order to help Black families at risk for violence, delinquency, parent-child conflicts, sexual abuse, and other issues.

The Young Mothers program was renewed by Zoya Taylor, a social worker and the new director of the Family Support Programs, with the help of social work students Colleen Blenman and Theresa Boothe. The program's new goals included developing self-help approaches for the participants, supportive peer group networks, and a range of services in cooperation with other community agencies and social service organizations; it also provided counselling to teenage mothers. Jeanne Rowe, the program's former coordinator, collaborated by contacting old members and helping to recruit teen mothers. Recruitment was also done through the distribution of flyers, word-of-mouth, and contact with relevant organizations that provided referrals.

The first sessions of the new Young Mothers program began in April 1986 with Group I, which consisted of 14 participants. Three volunteers provided childcare services during the meetings, which were once a week for 2 ½ hours. Activities and discussions focused on child development, parent-child relations, enhancing parenting skills, and self-help. One challenge arising from the Group I sessions was that it was not homogeneous; mothers came from various areas and backgrounds and did not necessarily share the same concerns and needs for their children and themselves.

Attendance was also an issue, as well as the mothers' isolation and low self-esteem that had not been addressed.

The Group II sessions began in September 1986. They spanned 12 weeks and had 18 participants, who met on Saturdays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. This time, participants were recruited from the NCC community, which made for a more homogeneous group; their children were at the same stage of development. Specialized workshops appealed to young mothers with topics including child development, family planning and birth control, budgeting on a limited income, nutritional needs of mothers and young children, and self-assertiveness and self-esteem building. There was also an educational focus on future life goals, transition to work, assertiveness training, and health care. The "mentor mothers / big sisters" initiative was also implemented during these sessions; former participants attended later sessions as facilitators and mentors to new young mothers.

On October 18, 1986, members of Group II completed evaluation forms about the Young Mothers Program. The evaluations were positive: mothers appreciated "the way we were allowed to speak out about subject," "the warmth [sic] friendly atmosphere," "the time and

patients [sic] of the facilitator," the way "all questions were answered completely," "the form of the presentation," and "the interaction between groups." The majority said they would recommend the program to others; the rest had not answered that question on the evaluation form. 'Graduate' mothers also showed interest in being part of a Young Mothers Advisory Committee and acting as mentor mothers for the next group.

The Group III sessions, which took place between January and April 1987, were held Fridays from 6-8 p.m. and had 18 participants. Workshops added to this session discussed myths about child development, alternative child discipline techniques, the legalities surrounding immigration, setting up cooperatives, and sexuality and relationships. Many of these workshops and discussions were facilitated by "graduates" who had come back as mentor mothers. Recruitment for this third instalment of the Young Mothers Program was conducted through information workshops, the distribution of flyers, telephone contact, home visits, and mentor mothers from the former two groups performing outreach to new young mothers.

After the Group III sessions, the Young Mothers Program seems to have been less active. In her program budget

prepared in early 1987, Zoya Taylor indicated that a \$1,000 grant had been received from the Montreal Rotary Club and that a grant proposal had been submitted to Quebec's Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration (MCCI) for \$6,000. Soon after, the MCCI approved a grant of \$4,500 for the Young Mothers Program. A calendar from July 1987 notes that a "Teen Mothers Group" met on Fridays but only lasted for the month. There is little or no mention of the Young Mothers Program after this, but other activities in the calendar continued until September 1987. Staff meetings in July also made a few mentions of the program and the grants received.

At that time, part of the NCC's exterior wall collapsed, forcing many programs to relocate or cease entirely. This event could explain the lack of subsequent records for the Young Mothers Program, although like many other activities, it probably ceased after the collapse.

Chloé Houde is an undergraduate History student at Concordia University, having previously studied Liberal Arts. She wants to pursue a career in the field of museums and heritage.

"TOWARDS A WORKING IDEOLOGY"

Left-wing Thought within the NCC

by Harris Frost

"Socialist" can be a loaded term, but to discuss the international Black struggle without addressing the contributions of socialist thinkers and activists would paint an incomplete picture. Angela Davis, C.L.R. James, Rosie Douglas and many other prominent Black activists and scholars have denounced capitalism as an integral part of the subjugation of Black people. It is therefore not surprising that the Negro Community Centre here in Montreal would be touched by this aspect of Black activism.

For almost my whole life, I lived in the neighbourhood of Little Burgundy (traditionally known in the Black community as the St. Antoine District), only

thirty feet away from the site of Montreal's Negro Community Centre. Although I vaguely knew what it had once been, I tended just to think of it as a mysterious boarded-up building. Shortly before its destruction, it was declared unsafe and fenced off, making it seem almost like a museum exhibit: right in front of you but inaccessible. Yet, the fence also seemed to command more attention for the NCC, giving it greater importance, even though (or perhaps because) it announced that the centre's days were numbered. Soon, the building that had for so long been a mere echo of what it represented would itself slip away. A few years later, the experience of look-

ing through the NCC's archive made it feel more real than all the years I spent living next to it. The archive transformed what had been, to me, a mere abstraction into a real and complex institution: not a monolithic organization but one informed by several ideas, some of them difficult to reconcile with others.

Differences within the NCC were naturally far less pronounced when it came to providing programs such as summer camps, dancing lessons and sports, but when the NCC had to position itself within the larger socio-political landscape, things were much less clear-cut. The goal of addressing the needs of Montreal's Black community

left room for many different interpretations. What struck me the most was the infrequent but tangible presence of socialist influence scattered throughout the NCC's archive.

The most obvious and striking examples of this influence were the clippings from leftist publications such as *The Militant*, a long-running American socialist newspaper, and *Contrast*, a Toronto-based paper aimed at Black Canadians that took a decidedly militant stance on political issues, particularly then-recent events concerning Black civil rights. In addition to this external material, the NCC's own *Afro-Can* would occasionally feature opinion pieces espousing socialism and criticizing capitalism. It is not difficult to imagine why the issues prioritized by these newspapers would be of interest to the NCC's membership, given its preoccupation with police discrimination, worker's rights, protesters' rights, community-oriented projects, and grassroots activism.

The archive also includes anti-colonial pamphlets and flyers speaking out in favour of African liberation. Once again, these were produced by outside organizations such as the Third World Peoples' Anti-Imperialist Committee and the All-African People's Revolutionary Party. Many of these would specifically advocate liberation from colonial rule and the creation of independent socialist republics throughout Africa. It is worth noting that there is considerably less socialist language in the abundance of literature condemning South African apartheid. This phenomenon is likely due to the comparatively high international profile of the South African cause, meaning that politically moderate groups were more likely to dominate the movement than smaller fringe groups. Again, we see the overlap between the interests of the NCC and socialist organizations.

Most intriguing is an anonymous document entitled "Capitalism and Social Life,"

a five page manifesto of sorts that emphatically and eruditely advocates the establishment of a secular "scientific socialist" society. The author describes how the educational system and broader capitalist society condition Black youth to be fearful and passive. Although it cannot be proven that this document was written by a member of the NCC or even a Montrealer, its presence in the archive suggests, more strongly perhaps than any other document, an ideological openness to radical socialism.

This is not to suggest that the NCC had a hidden socialist agenda. After all, the organization hesitated to present itself as explicitly political, even within its own internal documents. Furthermore, because it is impossible to know who within the NCC decided to include which documents in the archive, it would hardly be prudent to assume anything about the organization as a whole based on these files. It is quite likely that there was a group of vocal socialists within the NCC, but it is also possible that the organization simply shared some

these views with its members.

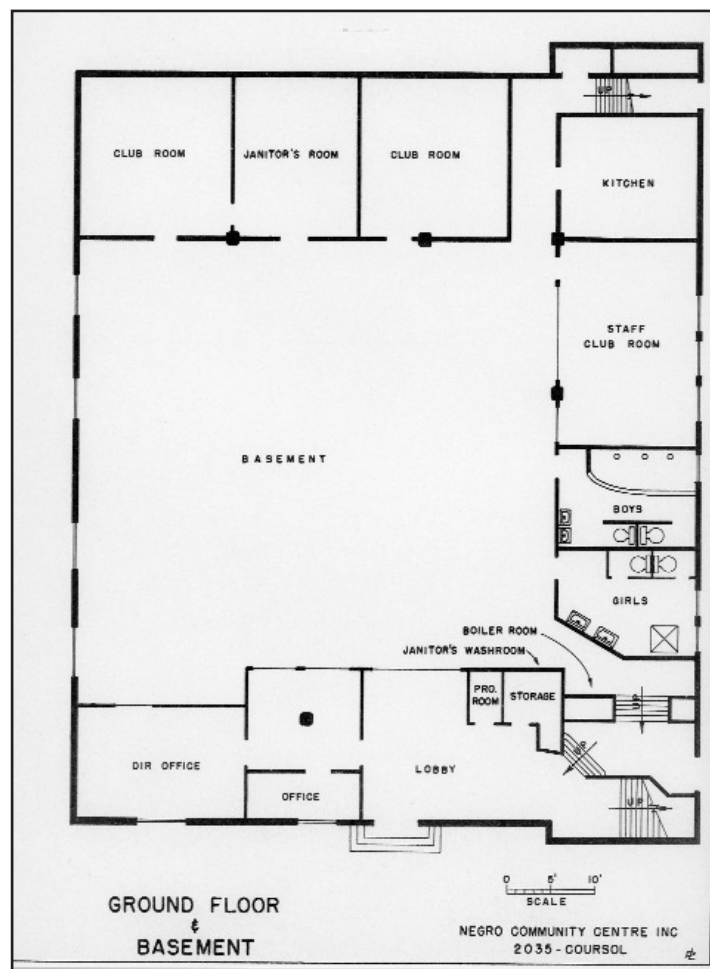
In fact, the closest thing to a definitive statement on the part of the NCC regarding socialism is a document entitled "Towards a Working Ideology," which rejects established ideologies – "Black Power, Nationalism, [and] Marxism" – as strong foundations on which to build a community organization. It argues these ideologies are too bogged down by global, over-ambitious goals to adequately serve communities on a smaller scale. As an alternative to these classical ideologies, the article proposes that community centres adopt "communology," defined as a means of setting aside ideological disputes in order to unify and empower the community.

Whether it is possible for an organization like the NCC to entirely dodge the issue of ideology is debatable. Nevertheless, the notion of "communology" remains a helpful lens through which to understand the NCC's presentation of itself. In the wake of the Sir George Williams Affair, for instance, NCC leaders chose to express sympathy for the

cause while emphasizing that they did not endorse violence, dissociating themselves somewhat from the politically contentious group of protesters. This moderate stance likely made it easier to focus on the community's material needs by protecting the NCC's public image.

What all these documents reveal is that the ideological core of the NCC was far more complex than one might expect. Too often we ignore the finer details of history and remember only the broad strokes. What archives can do is illuminate these details and uncertainties and help keep a place like the NCC from slipping entirely into the past.

Harris Frost is a recent graduate of Concordia University's Communications program. This project represented his first exposure to a historical archive.



“CLIMBING UP THE MAPLE TREE”

Black Poetic Activism in Montreal, 1970-1980

by Cassandra Marsillo

In early January 2017, almost fifty boxes were placed in rows in a Vanier Library study room. Heavy, imposing, silent, they sat along the desks as we circled through, reading the box listings, getting just a glimpse of what was stored inside. I quickly passed over two boxes before I reached 4147. Eyes scanning the box listing, they stopped at line 36: *The Entity I AM*, a book of poetry. I continued on, curious about what the others could hold, but as I ventured deeper into the rows, I found myself looking back every few boxes, making sure 4147 remained unclaimed.

Prose, poetry and the poet have power. Before even flipping through its forty poems spanning over 73 loose-leaf, type-written pages, *The Entity I AM* had exerted its quiet power over me: I made my way back to 4147 quickly, eager to delve in. Written by Jahleel Hilkiah Jubal in the 1980s, this unpublished book somehow ended up in the hands of someone at the Negro Community Centre. At some point, someone went through each poem leaving traces: check marks, question marks, one or two words here and there. Writing about freedom, spirituality, and identity, Jubal confronted a society that continued to hold Black community members captive to social, economic and political discrimination.

“Serious personal introspection has replaced the group excesses of the past,” declared school principal Alwyn Spence in a July 1977 speech to the Montreal Protestant school board, “and I would like to suggest that the present calm may be due to the fact that we have been lulled into passivity and even resignation by the passage of time and events that separate us from the 60s.” But Jubal’s poems did not reflect a “present calm,” and nothing in the NCC archive boxes suggested passivity. Well into the 1970s and 80s, the NCC continued to connect with various like-minded organizations around the world, to show pride in Garveyism, and to develop

programs for members of all ages.

In other boxes, I found a typed book, “Puzzle,” unpublished and undated, by Jacotte, and the creative writings of Rujeko Tasika and J. Ed Clarke. Although these instances of poetic activism are, in fact, works of self-reflexive and even autobiographical “serious personal introspection,” they consistently – and aggressively – confronted the larger issues faced by the African diaspora in Montreal and elsewhere. Poetic activism, therefore, continued the work of the “group excesses” of the 1960s, challenging the nostalgic idea of a lost, 1960s activist culture. These poems responded to the changes facing the NCC and Montreal’s Black community at that time. The poets’ words challenge the absence of narratives of slavery in Canada’s national history and the supposed lack of African Canadian culture in Black North America. In short, they were not silent when “climbing up the maple tree” (Jubal).

Much like demonstrations, marches and protests (which continued on into the 1970s and 80s, as evidenced by notices and bulletins in the archive), introspection is merely a different tool in the struggle. Poetic activism took up the cause. Artists began to understand the power of language as a weapon. In an essay on “slam poetry,” Gholnecsar Muhammad and Lee Gonzalez dug a little deeper:

Before slam and hip hop, communities that have been historically marginalized were claiming and reclaiming the power of language in order to assert ownership over language as well as human rights... They spoke truth to power by retaining their varied uses of language and learning the language of the oppressor. Understanding the multi-functions of language enabled them to communicate through oral, written, and performative practices.

Beyond a means for communication, language is a mechanism and tool for control.

In Montreal, French Canadians were told to “speak white” – meaning English. This correlation between Whiteness and English has serious implications. Rujeko Tasika’s “We Gots To” confronts this by playing with the English language, deconstructing its grammar and syntax to create choppy, but powerful phrases. The main verb “gots” is conjugated incorrectly, and words are missing endings or vowels. Tasika appropriates the English language to create a Black narrative told through a Black voice. Jacotte’s bilingual, almost epic-like, poem is 35 pages long and tells the story of searching for belonging in the present and understanding of the past. Jacotte echoes Tasika’s call to arms: “We’ve got to keep going!” It then shifts to the individual, commenting directly on language and asserting a certain sense of collectivity and universality – which is also seen quite often in Jubal’s poetry:

*I don't speak black
I don't speak white
I speak black and white and...
Colours in kaleidoscope patterns
I was born wrong colour
Wherever I go right colour.*

By claiming English as a Black language, this poetry fights back against the colonial implications of “speaking white.”

Through their poems, Jubal, Jacotte and Clarke also write the missing narrative of Black slavery in Canada. As with language, the history we choose to write can serve as a weapon, perpetuating violence with each story we choose to include or exclude. Canada, unlike the United States, has the reputation of a safe haven, propagated by the telling and

retelling of the story of the Underground Railroad. Jacotte writes :

*Je refuse de découdre, d'effacer,
d'oublier...
Je recouds, je repièce, je
patchworke,
J'essaie désespérément...
De recoller les morceaux
Du puzzle infini.*

Within Jacotte's work, and the work of Clarke and Jubal, there is an adamant refusal to forget the injustices of the past and to provide the pieces of the story that have been hidden away over time. As Black enslavement and liberation struggles became "tropes" and "metaphors" for the plight of French Canadians, it further negated the realities and the histories many Black people lived in Montreal, Quebec, and Canada.

Generally absent from the Canadian historical and national narratives, minority groups often find themselves navigating their hyphenated identities through more local dimensions. Community organizations take on great responsibilities. These institutions, including the Union United Church and the Negro Community Centre, have been social hubs for Montreal's Black community, providing everything from day-to-day activities to political services for its members. And what about these poems?

Jubal's poetry book was the only one that had clear evidence of interaction. I was unable to find any information about him, other than that he published *The Blatant Principles of Absolute Truth* with Arawak Publishing House in 1980. This book was probably a collection of short reflections, which he also included at the end of *The Entity I AM*, under the same title. The NCC still existed at that point, although 1980 marked the end of its centralized administrative set-up. I also cannot know who engaged with his poems or how they made their way to the NCC. Jubal writes about the "solo-self," and his concern for the balance between personal and collective identity is evident throughout. The role of the individual, as active and implicated, is crucial to the collective. But the collective is also embedded in the individual: the entity, I am. Like language and poetry, erasure can be violent.

What other stories does the vacant

lot on Coursol Street continue to tell?

Sources:

The Negro Community Centre / Charles H. Este Cultural Centre Fonds, F013, Special Collections, Concordia University Library.

Jacotte, "Puzzle" (no date), Box HA04131, Folder 2.

Jahleel Hilkiah Jubal, "My Way" in *The Entity I AM* (~1980), Box HA04147, Folder 36.

Alwyn Spence (July 1977), "From Dismay to Commitment" in *Focus UMOJA* 20, Box HA04147, Folder 41.

Lee Gonzalez and Gholnecsar Muhammad, "Slam Poetry: An Artistic Resistance Toward Identity, Agency, and Activism," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 49 (4), 2016, 444.

Cassandra Marsillo is an artist and budding public historian. She is starting her *Master's in Public History* at Carleton University, after completing two *Bachelor degrees* at Concordia University, in *Honours Public History and Studio Arts*, with a minor in Italian. She looks forward to dedicating the next two years to her oral history project on *Italo-Canadians in Montreal post World War II*.

"Puzzle"

A rich collection of poetry and prose, reminiscent of work from the 1950s Beat Generation, working between the linguistic margins of English and French to effortlessly comment on the racial divides present in the city of Montreal. Through the use of allegory and metaphor, the collection deals with the moments of pain caused by rejection and the instances of rebirth through exploration many Black Montrealers have had to withstand throughout their lives. The anonymous author refers to themselves as 'Jacotte' and there is no exact date associated with the work. Anonymity abounds.

—Kelann Currie-Williams

*She laid herself across the beach
Her body
Making a path to the sea
She had fallen...
But she stayed there
And every one thought
She was dead..."
But slowly, millions
Of buds started bursting all along
Her body.
Immortal Hydra
Rooted in the sea, the sand,
The forest and
The sky.*



NEW PASTS, OLD FUTURES

Reimagining the Narrative of Montreal's Negro Community Centre

by Kelann Currie-Williams

Strengthening a Community from Within

Blackness is ever-present. Across Montreal and throughout its history, Blackness is, and was, and will always be present. However, there are perpetual moments when Blackness is ignored, overlooked, and silenced or, perhaps more accurately, obscured. These moments are as tragic as they are frequent, but they need not be a constant reality. Indeed, they could be brought to a much-needed end.

From 1927 until its doors closed in 1989, the Negro Community Centre provided social, cultural and educational programs to residents of the St. Antoine District (today usually referred to as Little Burgundy) and beyond in the form of festivals, conferences, tutoring programs and financial support services. While the NCC was preoccupied above all with providing immediate community support for its members, it passionately sought to empower Blacks to recognize their presence and identity as relevant, significant and worthy of celebration. The NCC archive reveals an organization determined to celebrate the presence, visibility, and identity of Black Canadians. It is through the centre's many endeavours to educate its members on the importance of their Blackness, and on the symbiotic relationship of Blackness to Canadianess, that the legacy and life of the archive continues to exist.

The 'Unvisible' Black Canadian

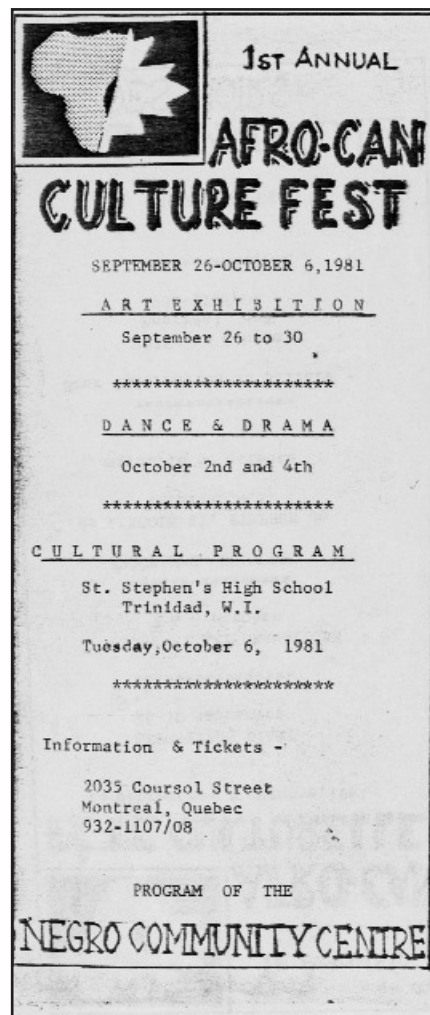
Despite the overt racism that Black Montrealers experienced in the many attempts to render them "unvisible," the NCC stood resolute in instilling ideas of community and support in its members, and empowering their perception of self. My use of the word "unvisible" instead of "invisible" or "not visible" is deliber-

ate. Black Montrealers, because of their small population size in comparison to White montrealers, were very visible, even hyper-visible. They were not simply lost among the majority; their race made them easily identifiable. Thus, the

The NCC's efforts to strengthen the St. Antoine District and the Black communities across Montreal came in the form of undoing the unvisibility of Blackness, which was rife in the city. However, becoming unvisible did not simply entail becoming more visible, but rather involved the active empowerment of bodies that had been rendered unvisible to see themselves as worth perceiving and to demand a new chapter in their narrative. And so, along with instilling ideas of community and support in its members, the NCC sought to change their mentality and perception of self. Members needed to see themselves as business owners, scientists, church leaders and writers, as well as in celebratory events such as the Afro Can Culture Festival, a day of festivities uniquely praising and celebrating Montreal's Afro-Canadian Culture. Photographs taken during the 1981 edition of the Festival are clear examples of the NCC educating its youth about their identity, but they also serve to dismantle the misconception that Blackness only exists outside of Canada, beyond "Canadianess," separate from ideas of Canadian identity.

The Negro Community Centre and Empowering the Black Canadian

In 1978, the Black Community Work Group issued its "Final Report on the Aspiration and Expectations of the Quebec Community with Regard to Education." The group, consisting of NCC members, proposed a program to enrich the lives of Black students who faced racial discrimination that posed serious problems to their overall character formation. Under the heading "The self-concept of Black student and the possible implications for guidance counselors," the report noted that "if the social image of an individual is debased, that



concept of the unvisible or of unvisibility – a term I borrow from Ralph Ellison, which has been expanded upon by Avery Gordon and Katherine McKittrick – does not explicitly mean that Blacks are not visible or are invisible, but rather that their visibility is ignored, looked over, not deemed worth perceiving or acknowledging, regarded as irrelevant.



individual will learn to accept himself through the devalued perception” and “if Black people must find means to effectively raise their self-concept, ethnic identity is indubitably an important element in this search.”

In this manner, the NCC provided moments and spaces where the celebration of Blackness, and specifically Blackness in Canada, could freely occur. Its presence throughout the neighbourhood, and especially its fixed presence at 2035 Coursol Street, did much to counter Black invisibility. The NCC did not merely exist, but served to signify spaces, affect spaces, act upon spaces, claim spaces, and in many instances create spaces to highlight Black identity and history, both physical and imaginative. The NCC affected the geography of the St. Antoine District, mapping that site onto the lives of residents; in turn, lives, identities and memories were mapped onto that very space.

Living Archives

The NCC archive is an indispensable entry point into the centre’s history, but it is not the only way one can see and experience the NCC’s continuing existence. I speak of “existence” well aware of the centre’s demolition in 2014. I speak having seen the hole in which it once rested and the rocks that were once part of the building still, after three years, positioned around the site at 2035 Coursol Street. But this existence is one that is fixed in memories, in photographs

and in living archives, both physical and digital. I speak of the centre’s existence after seeing what can only be understood as its absented-presence and invisible-visibility.



The NCC closed before I was born and, incidentally, its building was demolished the year I moved to Montreal

from Ottawa. I never had the pleasure of seeing the building. But its archives – its living archives – have provided me with the knowledge of the NCC’s endeavour to educate and serve as a pillar of the community through a sort of afterlife. As can be seen in the many articles generated from the archive, it is clear that through the sharing of memories, stories, and history with current generations, the Negro Community Centre is at once present, and at once visible.

Sources:

The Negro Community Centre / Charles H. Este Cultural Centre Fonds, F013, Special Collections, Concordia University Library.

Afro Can Culture Festival [1/4], 1981, File 32 Afro Can Culture Festival, Box HA04154.

The Black Community Work Group, Final report on the aspiration and expectations of the Quebec Black Community with regard to education, 1978, File 20, Box HA04139.

Kelann Currie-Williams is an undergraduate Communication and Media Studies student in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University. Her research interests include Postcolonial and Diasporic media, Black Studies, Oral history, and Performance studies.

RETAIL, RELIGION AND RINKS

Montreal at Christmas, 1865

by Robert N. Wilkins

On Christmas Day 1865, the *Montreal Gazette* issued a special holiday supplement for the enjoyment of its many faithful readers. This unique edition provides a wealth of information about what the city was like at holiday time 152 years ago.

In the 1860s, Montreal was a colonial town of slightly more than 100,000 people. Some were rich, while others, many others, were wretchedly poor. Christmas was a short but welcome distraction for most.

1865 had not been a particularly easy year for the burgeoning municipality. Indeed, the Victorian town was becoming noticeably dirty, with household garbage and animal carcasses littering numerous public places. Youth crime was up, with the wayward youngsters, many of “tender years” (as was so often reported), being sent off to the common jail to serve their time in near proximity to hardened criminals. Boys were no longer even permitted to play baseball in city parks and other public places as the activity had been forbidden by civic ordinance earlier that same year.

Christmas shopping was more judicious in the 1860s for there was not the abundance of relatively inexpensive products to choose from that we are so familiar with today. Neither was there the widespread wealth and easy credit that we currently come across. Furthermore, the disastrous American Civil War had ended earlier that same year, but the United States economy was still struggling; as a result, most imported Christmas goods to Montreal still came from Great Britain – although a profusion of items was also manufactured locally.

In 1865, the first Christmas adver-

tisement to appear in the regular daily *Montreal Gazette* did so on December 9, considerably later than it would these days. The ad, for the James Morison Dry Goods Store on Notre Dame Street, peddled a variety of women’s dresses, all greatly marked down and disseminated in the old British currency that Canada used at the time. No images whatsoever accompanied the rather modest and matter-of-fact announcement.

A profusion of items was also manufactured locally. Savage & Lyman, one of the town’s most reputable businesses

Old Montreal. The historic structure that housed the firm still stands, although the commerce is now long gone.

Unlike the times in which we live, where the secular nature of the holiday is front and centre, religion played a major, if not the primary part, in Yuletide festivities in the 1860s. Churches abounded, with several new ones having just recently made an appearance on St. Catherine Street (today’s Christmas avenue of choice); two of them, Christ Church Cathedral (1859) and the Church of St. James the Apostle (1864), survive to this day. Parenthetical-

ly, the latter was erected on the southwest corner of the city’s cricket field, necessitating the positioning of a metallic grille over the edifice’s colourful stain glass window overlooking Bishop Street. Although this sports pitch disappeared at the turn of the twentieth century, the protective screen was only removed in September of 2003!

Two other ecclesiastical structures were present on St. Catherine Street in 1865 but have since disappeared: Erskine Presbyterian Church (nearing completion in December of that year) at Peel Street, and St. Jacques Church at St. Denis. Elements of

the latter were incorporated into the Université du Québec à Montréal.

St. Catherine Street also featured a few other non-residential buildings of note. For instance, the Sisters of Providence nunnery stood at the corner of St. Hubert Street, where for 120 years the sisters served a soup lunch to the city’s needy, which was particularly appreciated at Christmas. The Protestant Orphan Asylum, where an extra effort was always made at Yuletide to bring a little joy to the heartbreaking lives of the young ones, was found at the corner of Stanley Street in the town’s west end.



of the 1850s and 1860s, promoted their famous merchandise in the 1865 *Gazette* supplement. Silversmiths in the finest Canadian tradition, Savage & Lyman manufactured gold and silver watches, fine jewellery, electro-plated ware, table cutlery, and marble mantle clocks. The superior quality of their products was such that the *Gazette* at one time volunteered that they were “the most convincing proof that Canada need not in future import presentation sets from abroad.” Their celebrated shop was located in the “Cathedral Block,” diagonally opposite Notre Dame Church in what is today

The Crystal Palace, inspired by the massive glass citadel erected in London for the Great Exhibition of 1851, stood near University Street. As Montreal was at the time a garrison town, its own Crystal Palace was frequently used by the British military to stage seasonal productions. One such "Promenade Concert" attracted some three thousand Montrealers to the site in 1865, just eleven days before Christmas.

Whether located on St. Catherine Street or elsewhere in the city, Montreal's many churches were almost always full for Christmas services. In 1865, however, this street ("an unpaved road, on marshy ground with a stream running through it") still had a mostly residential vocation. Since 1861, a single track ran down its centre to facilitate the town's omnibus public transportation network, which, just before Christmas in 1865, took the form of several horse drawn sleighs running the length of the soon-to-be famous road.

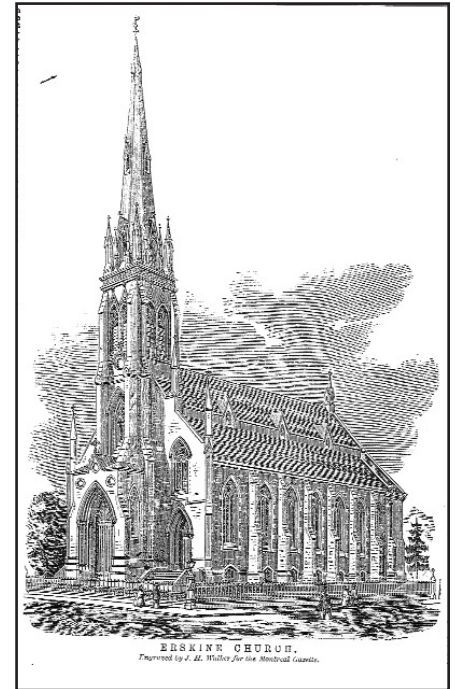
In December of that year, two eminent Montrealers resided on the street and were surely preparing for the period revelry in their own separate sectarian ways. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, then colonial Minister of Agriculture, lived at the corner of Drummond Street,

and the famous printer and publisher, John Lovell, resided at the corner of Union Avenue, where The Bay is located today. As we know, McGee was assassinated in 1868 and buried in Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery following a funeral at St. Patrick's Church. Lovell, a devout Anglican, died in 1893. The two were close friends.

In 1865, after an unusually mild autumn, the weather became increasingly cold and snowy as Christmas Day approached. For that reason, "Guilbault's Glaciarum" opened for skating on the evening of December 20. Located on St. Urbain Street, just north of Sherbrooke, this site was a botanical and zoological garden during the summer months. In the winter, however, it had a very different vocation. "A gala night will take place at this popular rink on Christmas evening, when the ice will be in fine condition, and a first-rate band will be in attendance," reported the *Gazette* two days before the big day.

And if that didn't tickle the fancy of Victorian Montrealers, the Officers of the 30th Regiment were staging their much-anticipated Christmas play in their very own Sphinx Theatre in the Molson Barracks in the city's east end. "We understand," pronounced the *Gazette*, "that

every exertion has been made to make the entertainment one of the pleasantest of our Christmas festivities."



Robert N. Wilkins is a local historian and author of Montreal 1909 (www.shorelinepress.ca).

THE REBELLION THAT SUCCEEDED

Part II: Bishop Ignace Bourget by Joseph Graham

One of the most influential people in Canadian history is barely explored in the history books, and that would be just fine by him.

Ignace Bourget had been Jean-Jacques Lartigue's right hand man since 1821. Lartigue named him his successor as Bishop of Montreal four years before he died, in 1840. Bourget would take Lartigue's initiatives to dizzying new levels, changing the fabric of Quebec society and the direction of history.

Both men were Ultramontane, believers in the central power of the pope, but it was the young, energetic Bourget who took their ideas forward. His diocese ran from James Bay to the American border, and from Upper Canada to the boundary of the diocese of the Bishop of Quebec, and he

was present, encouraging and expanding religious centres of education. He went to Europe, spending time in France, which was undergoing a period of religious growth. His objective was recruitment and he found new Sulpicians to come and join the order in Montreal, as well as Oblates, Jesuits, Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. He also had occasion to impress the new pope, Pius IX, who would become the first pope to endorse the notion of papal infallibility, and who would come to consider Bourget as the guiding spirit of the Canadian episcopate. Back home, he helped form the communities of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Anne. His objective was to ensure the

Catholic nature of his see, but he went well beyond that, encouraging the creation of a new see in Toronto and ultimately in Ottawa, as well as the creation of the ecclesiastical province of Quebec.

Before dismissing all of this as irrelevant religious history, we must consider Bourget's extreme anti-liberalism, the political influence that the Church was cultivating, and Lartigue's earlier opposition to the Patriote movement. The election of Reformers in Canada East in the 1840s and the divisions encouraged between them and the Parti Rouge, led by Jean-Baptiste Étienne Dorion, reveal the Church's strategy.

To understand the role of the Church, we must recall that Catholics were dependent upon its hospitals, primary and secondary schooling, and social services. The

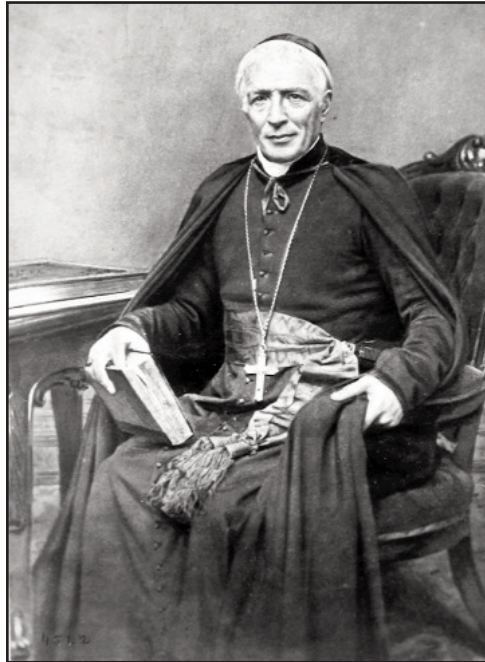
Church was also responsible for the civil registry of Catholics. These same files account for roughly 75% of the total budget of the Quebec government today. When the British Colonial Office left the choice of the new bishop to the Church, it was trusting in the traditional relationship that the two parties had formed since the 1760s when France abandoned New France. There was no reason to distrust the Catholic Church; it existed at the whim of the King of England and looked after a colonial people who were not of British descent. It was unthinkable that it could in any way threaten the Anglican Church in Lower Canada and the British Colonial Office had little patience for any other religions. In fact, it was Louis-Joseph Papineau, leading the Parti Canadien, who first stood up for the religious rights of the Jews. Before these two bishops, Lartigue and Bourget, the Catholic Church was answerable to the Colonial Office; after 1836, it wasn't — as we saw in the first part of this series.

Early in the 1830s, the Parti Canadien became the Parti Patriote, and its leader, Louis-Joseph Papineau, was leading the secular powers on a collision course with the Colonial Office. Their issues were similar to those of the American Patriots of just two generations earlier, but while the American Patriots managed to control their lower classes, the Lower Canadian Patriotes had to compete with the Church for support and control. Bishop Lartigue (who was Papineau's cousin, ironically) saw the Rebellion as a threat to the stability of the Church and an unnecessary risk. He publicly opposed the Rebellion and sent letters to his priests instructing them to condemn it from the pulpit.

After the failed rebellion, the real damage done to French Lower Canada was that the secular elite had been sidelined and no power remained to confront the newly reformed Roman Catholic Church of Lower Canada. The new French secular elite, led by Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, and the new Church, explored their common needs into the 1840s, and largely found that the Reformers' agenda did not conflict with the Church's priorities. Meanwhile, the remaining rebels promoted secularism and objected to the growing power of the Catholic Church; assuming that liberalism was inevitable, they headed for a second collision, this time with the Church itself.

Burdened with the forced union of

Lower and Upper Canada, LaFontaine partnered with the Upper Canadian Reform Party, and eventually won a majority in the Assembly in 1848, obliging the governor to name him the first prime minister of the Province of Canada. To achieve the support he needed, he depended also on the Catholic Church, and in return, he accommodated it on issues that were strongly opposed by the secular republican Dorion and the Parti Rouge. LaFontaine's single-minded objective of ministerial responsibility blinded him to the dangers of the growing



powers that the Church wielded, while a divided French Catholic secular elite played into the hands of Bishop Bourget's Roman Catholic priorities.

A more powerful force that LaFontaine perceived he had to beat was the English-speaking business elite in Quebec and Montreal whose interests were best served by supporting an appointed governor who generally saw things through their eyes. They also had members running for seats in the Assembly. They were not an organized party and their interests were not necessarily the same as those of Canada West.

The idea of political parties was different from what it is today. They were a more casual union of people who agreed on a few fundamentals but who could vote as they wished. There was no concept of a party whip, forcing party members to toe the line.

LaFontaine accepted a partnership

with Robert Baldwin and the Reformers of Upper Canada, and they worked together throughout the 1840s to win a majority of the seats in Upper Canada, or Canada West, where the Reform spirit was stronger. For his part, LaFontaine obliged the Church, and the Church delivered his majority in Canada East. The Parti Rouge was married to the concept of secularism and was officially opposed to the growing influence of the Church, having hopelessly underestimated just how great that power had already become under the stewardship of Bishop Lartigue and his successor, Bishop Bourget.

LaFontaine and Baldwin achieved their goal of creating our parliamentary democracy but they were both exhausted by 1849 and had no further vision of where to take this new society. Their last great act, the Rebellion Losses Bill, led to a failed uprising from the British elite in which the Parliament was burned. The uprising served only to confirm that the power of the British elite no longer flowed through the office of the governor, temporarily side-lining their influence. While Canada West was growing rapidly, Canada East was left in the hands of the Church, and it wasted no time. The next battle would be between the Church and its only remaining opposition, the liberal ideals of the Parti Rouge and the Institut Canadien. The absurdity of what happened next explains the Grand Noirceur, that period of deep civic slumber from which Quebec would only be awakened more than a century later, by the Quiet Revolution.

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Joseph Graham, author of *Naming the Laurentians*, is writing a book that re-examines much of our early history, the elements that drove European society, and the extraordinary damage these ideas inflicted on North America. The foregoing is an excerpt.

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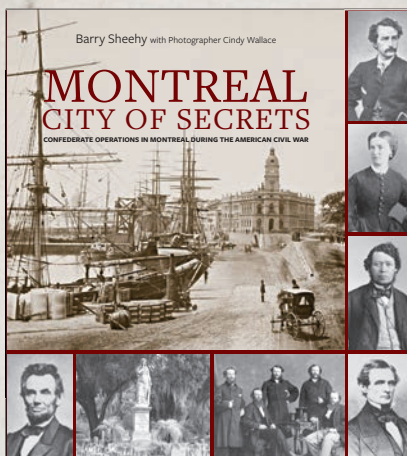
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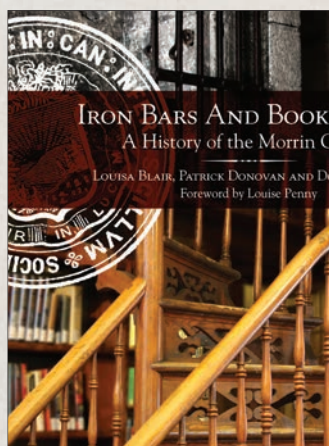
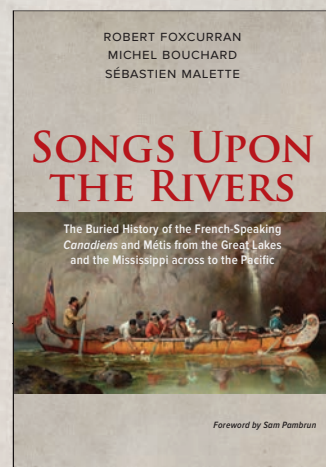
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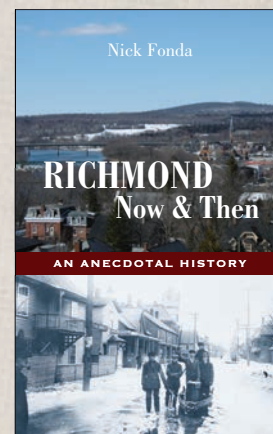
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