



# APROPOS

BATSHAW YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRES

News from Michael Udy, Executive Director

## MORE ABOUT BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

*(Contributed by Anna Renda, Chair, MR/MC Committee)*

All events planned were to capture the spirit of this year's theme: *Uniting Communities: Challenges and Solutions*.

A Panel Discussion took place February 21<sup>st</sup> with Mr. Jean-Ernest Célestin, first Black commander in the Montreal police force, Mr. Michael Applebaum, Mayor of NDG/Côte-des-Neiges Borough and Dr. Clarence S. Bayne, professor and member of the BCRC Board.

The final central event of the month was the luncheon on February 28<sup>th</sup> which was once again a tremendous success.

Numerous local events also took place at Prévost and Dorval Campuses, DYP, group homes, etc.

All the events are the result of hard work and dedication of many! I would like to sincerely thank those who contributed a great deal of their time either "behind the scenes", in the spotlight or both: Felicia Agyekum, Annie Alexander, Fred Anderson, Carol Antenucci, Hermina Antoine, Nick and Olga Argyropoulos, Sam Barile, Grace Boakye-Agyeman, Gail Bell, Jean Belhumeur and his team, Denise Bertrand, Debbie Boyer, Elena Buontempo, Shauna Callender, Reliana Caragea, Kerry-Ann Carty, Ray Coney and his team, Melvin Crawford, Bekaye Dembele, Filomena DeSantis, Nicolette DeSmit, Anna DiStefano, Margaret Douek, Huguette Dubé, Ola Dupelycz, Roy Durant and his team, Kathy Faludi, Gloria Francis, Margaret Godbeer, Gloria Julien, Serge Lebel and the FFA, Virginia Kerr, Lise Milne, MR/MC members, Suzanne Plaisance, Jonathan Potter-Mäl, Yves Provençal and his team, Beverley Robinson, Claire Roy, Rena Rubin, Mathew Skelton, Michael Udy, Marie-Pierre Ulysse and Clement Walker. As is often the case when you want to personally thank so many people, you hope you have not forgotten anyone inadvertently. If I did, my sincere apologies.

Our success to date is the result of many personal initiatives on which we keep building and creating new traditions. Our challenge is to continue to incorporate new ideas. Thank you for all your contributions over the years.

*A very special thank you to you Anna, the maître d'œuvre behind the BHM activities!*

## YOUNG BLACK ACHIEVERS AWARDS

At the Talent Extravaganza on February 7<sup>th</sup>, four young Black Achievers were recognized. May they be an inspiration to all!

**Brenda:** Even though Brenda experienced many challenges over the years, she has shown herself to be resilient and having the ability to "take the best and leave the rest". She has demonstrated great courage handling very difficult situations. This year she will be graduating from high school and has plans to attend college. School has always been difficult for her and at times she wanted to give up; however, she never did. Brenda has been a source of inspiration to many and especially an incredible source of strength and inspiration to her sister. She was recently instrumental in supporting her sister through a particularly difficult situation, which was much appreciated. Brenda has evolved to be a very mature individual, who is focused on the future. Her strength of character which will undoubtedly serve her well as she approaches the age of majority.

**Dave:** Dave has faced many challenges. Notwithstanding the fact that he is making the best of being in foster care, he would rather be at home with his mother. Dave is an intelligent young man and in spite of the many odds associated with children in placement achieving academically, especially

Black children, and more particularly Black boys, he has surmounted these odds very successfully. In fact education has been his sanctuary and solace from the difficulties of his family life. Dave has figured out that by having an education, many more options will be open to him. Dave scored 100% in the grade 10 Provincial History Exam. He was recently honoured at a function at Place des Arts. He plans to continue his education at CEGEP this fall. Dave is recognized for his outstanding achievements, especially for his marks in the history exam.

**Nellie:** Nellie was born in the Caribbean. She is 18 years old and is a delightful person who is very involved in school life. Nellie is a member of the student council. She has worked for the Generations' fund and helps with the daily Breakfast Club at school. This past Christmas she was responsible for the Christmas Tree Light campaign. One of Nellie's greatest strengths is her willingness to help others without being asked, particularly those with special needs. She gives so unconditionally of herself that she is an example to others. Nellie's determination is admirable. Despite not having the number of years of education that other students have had, she perseveres and strives toward her goal to graduate from high school. Nellie aims to please and we are very proud of her.

**Oliver:** Oliver is a 16-year-old youth born in the Caribbean, and has lived in Canada for a few years. He entered a special work-study program in September 2007. He has worked very hard and acquired skills in landscaping, snow removal, lamination and silk screening. He has mastered these skills and the quality of his work demonstrates his dedication. This is a very big accomplishment for Oliver being that school has always been very difficult for him. Since entering the program, Oliver made many positive changes in his life. He has learned to make the right choices. With what little he earns, he regularly sends money to his mother in the Caribbean to help out the family. He is currently saving money from work to visit his family this summer. He is a very committed and determined young man.

## REFLEXION ON MOVIE: JOURNEY TO JUSTICE shown on February 14<sup>th</sup>

*(Contributed by Grace Boakye-Agyeman, AM Worker, WI)*

The beauty of living together as people from different cultures lies in appreciating each other despite our differences. Our differences should be our strengths not our weaknesses. For we can be helpful to each other in our different ways.

Consider the piano keys – black and white. Strike a single key and you get no good music. Combine white and black keys and you get harmony. This illustrates the beauty of different cultures living in harmony.

As an agency, we need to appreciate each other in order to provide good service to our clients. People from all cultures must learn to live together to bring about change.

We always talk about change when we look at society in general. And change is good as we saw in the movie "Journey to Justice" during this year's Black History Month. But much as macro change will bring about major moves in policy, it is micro change that is necessary for everyday harmonic living, as a little personal experience is difficult to shed from one's memory. That is why I am calling on everybody to learn to appreciate each other and live together despite our differences to effect change in a personal way.

Color, culture, language, and personalities will all be beautiful notes in the symphony of life if we learn to appreciate our differences and live in harmony.

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