

Black Loyalist

HERITAGE SOCIETY

BIRCHTOWN, N.S.



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*Working together
for the advancement
of the universal
recognition of
Black Loyalists as a
founding Canadian
Cultural
Community...*

TRIBUTE TO DR. SHARON OLIVER



Our beloved friend Sharon (Clyke) Oliver passed away on January 19, 2011 at the Valley Regional Hospital, Kentville. She was the daughter of Emily (Davis) Clyke, Montreal and the late Stanley Clyke. Sharon

graduated from Westmount High School. Her degrees include an RN from the Montreal General Hospital; a Bachelor of Nursing and Diploma in Public Health from McGill University; and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Florida Law School of Law. She practiced public Health Nursing in Montreal and in Nova Scotia, and taught nursing at Mount Saint Vincent University and Lakehead University.

She held leadership roles in health-care policy and planning in Thunder Bay, ON; Montreal, QC; Gainesville, Florida; and Halifax, NS. Sharon was the founding Executive Director of the Maritime Council of Teaching Hospitals and the Halifax Metropolitan Hospital Advisory Committee and served as President of the Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations. In recognition of her outstanding professional contributions she was awarded a Progress Women of Excellence Award (Health Category). She was committed to improving health care in North America and was skilled at helping professionals deal with change.

As a teacher, she never ceased mentoring young people. As founding President of Oliver

Management Connexus Inc., Sharon completed Community Development projects in several Nova Scotia communities. She helped define the role of the Order of Nova Scotia Advisory Committee as its founding Chair. She was Vice-President of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society. Members of the Society will always remember Sharon for her wisdom, professionalism, energy, determination and her ability to motivate others. She was a special person and special friend. We are all grieving the loss. She always provided the members of the BLHS with special attention and mentoring. She was a generous, giving woman and had a smile that could light up a room. She was Vice-President of the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association and Executive Member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia. She believed firmly in the need for ordinary citizens to spearhead positive changes and create a better society.

Sharon served locally on the boards of Mount Saint Vincent University, Dalhousie University and Metro United Way; provincially on the Nova Scotia Minister's Advisory Committee on immigration; and nationally on the Federal Judicial Advisory Committee for Nova Scotia. Her wisdom in policy development and planning were sought by many organizations. She leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of achievement that we all admire.

"She was indeed a remarkable woman & I enjoyed very much working with her especially with regard to her beloved Black Loyalist Heritage Society. Her drive to involve all citizenry as agents of change will be profoundly missed but she left a legacy of activism for others to follow."

Dr. Jim Morrison

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would like to thank you for re-electing me at the Annual General Meeting on June 27th, 2010. Your faith in me to continue as your leader is truly inspiring. A lot has transpired over the last year which has kept the Board of Directors and staff very busy.



The BLHS secured support from the Nova Scotia Department of Economic & Rural Development to prepare an updated business plan. The BLHS selected the team of A. L. Arbic Consulting and Genesis Consulting to update the 2005 Business Plan to reflect the most current data and changes in anticipated conditions and trends. The October 2010 report identifies key recommendations and strategies to ensure the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre project is successful and sustainable.

We are continuing to work closely with our government partners, including federal, provincial and municipal, to complete our funding applications for the capital infrastructure and interpretive development. It is anticipated that all final applications will be submitted in May 2011. We have already submitted an application to Citizenship & Immigration Canada's Inter-Action program to assist with the costs associated with the interpretive development. This request for funding is still pending approval.

In December 2010, I had the opportunity to attend the public announcement in Halifax, given by the Honourable Percy Paris, Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Mayann Francis, that the United Nations has declared 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent. This celebration will be a time for African Nova Scotian communities to share their stories and connect to others of the African Diaspora. Halifax, Nova Scotia will also host the African Diaspora Heritage Trail Conference September 22-24, 2011. This annual conference draws hundreds of dignitaries, scholars and tourism operators from around the world who are focused on preserving and

promoting important sites and stories throughout the African Diaspora, the movement of Africans and their descendants throughout the world. In late December, Dowoti Desir visited the Birchtown site. Ms. Desir is Founder of the DDPA Watch Group, an international ad hoc human rights coalition working on the cultural, educational, and civil rights affecting the global South and issues of democracy related to the United Nations Durban Declaration & Programs of Action (DDPA). She is the host and producer of Progressive Agenda, a human rights roundtable airing this spring on Manhattan Neighborhood Network and is publisher of the on-line human rights quarterly newsletter, pawol. She will be actively participating in the ADHT Conference in September. She was intrigued by the historical background of Birchtown and the legacy of Black Loyalists. She will be discussing the international significance of our site at the ADHT Conference.

The BLHS Board of Directors has also been working on the fund-raising campaign for the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. The BLHS is required to contribute to the capital infrastructure and the interpretive development of the heritage centre. On February 11th, 2011 we hosted a fund-raising dinner at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax with special guests Lawrence Hill and Shelly Hamilton. This dinner launched the Provincial Fund-raising Campaign and sought to increase awareness and interest of the project, particularly within the corporate sector. There were over 60 guests in attendance at the dinner and a Fund-Raising Committee has been established. This committee will begin the necessary planning to develop a strong case for sponsorship and secure donations. A special thank you to our MC - Charla Williams who added her unique sense of charm and humor to the event.



On February 6th, 2011 we held the 6th Annual Chocolate Festival with special guest Neville MacKay. This is the second year that Neville has performed his floral demonstration and it opened with record attendance. And once again, he made

several stunning arrangements all of which were given to members of the audience. Thank you to our volunteers and supporters who donated their delicious chocolate treats. We raised \$954.

In celebration of African Heritage Month, on February 26th, we hosted a Dinner & Movie at the Birchtown Hall. The menu included spaghetti, caesar salad, garlic bread, dessert, tea/coffee and the feature film was "The Slave Trade", a UNESCO production on the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This film was presented by Edmund Moukala, a UNESCO program specialist based in Paris, to those in attendance at the public announcement recognizing 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent on December 15th, 2010 at Province House. On February 27th at the Trinity United Church in Shelburne, we hosted an afternoon of readings and spirituals with members of the BLHS and the Trinity United Church Choir. Readings were taken from Lawrence Hill's award winning novel "The Book of Negroes". Special guest George Borden, poet, who has published books of cultural poetry accounting the Black experience from Africa to Nova Scotia, read several poems he wrote on Birchtown. It was an afternoon filled with blessings. After the tragic fire and loss of administration building in 2006, Mr. Borden donated his personal collection of cultural books, texts, pamphlets and magazines to the BLHS library.



The BLHS will be hosting a March Break Day Camp for children ages 5-12 on March 14-18. Cost is \$40/child and includes daily snacks, drinks and a cultural meal prepared on the camp's closing day. Monday through Thursday, please bring a brown bag lunch with your child. The camps promote physical fitness, healthy life choices, nature exploration, and learning cultural identity. Pre-registration is required on or before March 7. Call the BLHS Office at 875-1310 for more information, applying for a subsidy or to register your child.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT CONTINUED...

Drop by our booth at "Our Community, Something for Everyone" on Saturday, April 16 at the Barrington High School from 11am to 3pm. This public event provides opportunity for non-profit groups, businesses and charitable organizations to showcase what they have to offer including opportunities to volunteer and mentor. Our annual Easter Bake Sale is scheduled for April 21 at the Shelburne Mall at 11am - come out and buy a home-made treat while supporting a good cause.

Our Annual Mother's Day Cheesecake Festival is scheduled for May 8. There will be home-made cheesecakes along with local musical entertainment and free door prizes for mom! On Saturday, May 21st, we will be hosting our annual Community Site Clean-Up and BBQ. Members of the community come together to rake, mow, weed and clean the properties on the Birchtown Historical Site to help us prepare for the summer tourist season. We finish off the event with a BBQ for all those who participated. Many hands make light work! Anyone welcome!



The Old School House Museum will open for the season on Tuesday, May 31st and hours of operation will be Tuesday through

Sunday, 11am to 5pm and open by appointment on Mondays. Admission is \$3/person. You can visit the museum anytime in the off season by calling Arlene at 875-1310 to arrange a guided tour. We will do our best to accommodate you!

On June 19th, we will be hosting our annual Father's Day Roast Turkey Supper at the Birchtown Hall from 4pm to 6pm. Bring Dad out for a special turkey dinner – complete with all the fixings. The Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, June 26th at 2pm in the Birchtown Community Centre. All members welcome!

The annual Summer Day Camps are scheduled for July 11-15 and August 22-26. The camps are for kids age 5-12, registration fee is \$40/child and snacks, drinks and Friday's cultural meal are included. Kids are asked to bring a brown bag lunch with the exception of Friday. Shelburne's

Annual Founder's Weekend is scheduled for July 21-24 to celebrate our rich and diverse culture and heritage. The BLHS will once again have its BBQ booth selling our delicious hotdogs and hamburgers. If you are interested in volunteering for a shift in the booth, or donating food items, please contact the administrative office at 875-1310.

During this weekend, we are also planning a Canadian Book Launch for author Kevin Lowther's book – The African American Odyssey of John Kizell. Mr. Lowther, a resident of Virginia, traveled to Birchtown a few years ago to do research for his book. He was impressed with our collection of genealogical material which aided his research tremendously. As the planning for this event continues, more details will follow in the near future.

Plans are also underway for a BLHS Cultural Weekend in September to coincide with the ADHT Conference. As we are anticipating a high volume of visitors to our site, we are planning a weekend of hands-on cultural activities which will include musical performances and a farmers market. It is also anticipated that we will once again host the Amistad Freedom Schooner. Amistad America is dedicated to working in partnership with other historical organizations to interpret the significance of the Amistad story and others who were affected by the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

As you can see we have a full year ahead of us with activities and events which are specifically designed to engage the community and provide a mechanism to bridge generation gaps and promote intercultural understanding. There will be opportunities for community members to participate in mentoring, volunteering, and to act as positive role models. Please feel free to send your suggestions to our staff – we are always open to improving our existing programs, developing new ones and we welcome new volunteers!

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Cromwell

2011 INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT



African Nova Scotians communities will share their stories

with the world during 2011, the United Nations International Year for People of African Descent. The United Nations has designated 2011 as a year to promote education and respect for the diverse cultures of people of African Descent, and to increase inclusion in all areas of society.

As part of its celebrations, Nova Scotia will host the African Diaspora Heritage Trail (ADHT) in Halifax, September 22ND – 24TH. The annual conference draws hundreds of dignitaries, scholars and tourism operators from around the world who are focused on preserving and promoting important sites and stories throughout the African Diaspora, the movement of Africans and their descendants throughout the world.

"It is wonderful to see Nova Scotia embrace this theme of celebrating heritage and culture of African descent. You have a rich history here that may not be well known around the world, but it certainly will become known in 2011."

Edmond Moukala, a UNESCO program specialist based in Paris

All above information was taken from

<http://gov.ns.ca/news/smr/2010-12-15-UN-Year/>



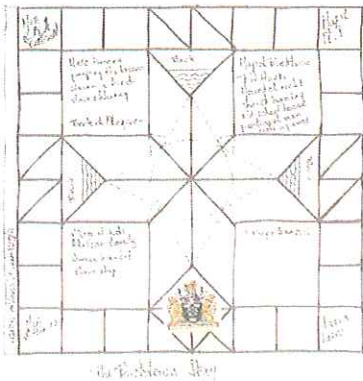
BIRCHTOWN QUILTING PROJECT

With assistance from the Municipality of the District of Shelburne Recreation & Parks Department – Age Friendly Municipal Initiatives Program, the Black Loyalist Heritage Society is proud to host the “Birchtown Quilting” project. This initiative will be held from February to October 2011 with quilter Jane Mason as the instructor.

Jane has been involved with quilting and fiber arts for over thirty (30) years. Most recently Jane started a Quilt Guild in Shelburne, Nimble Thimble Quilt Guild, which now has thirty-four (34) members.

The Birchtown Quilting group will meet twice per month at the Birchtown Community Centre. The sessions will include reviewing what has been completed, learning new techniques, interacting with other quilters, sharing ideas, etc. Participants will have the opportunity to produce and present the unique cultural heritage of South West Nova Scotia.

This quilt will showcase the legacy of the Black Loyalists and trace their journey from slavery to freedom. It will be a wonderful heritage piece for the community once it is completed. The quilt will be on



display at the Black Loyalist Heritage Society's Museum for generations to come.

For more information regarding this project or how you too can be a part of this great endeavor, please contact Arlene Butler at the Black Loyalist Heritage Society at (902) 875-1310 or via email arlene@blackloyalist.com.

RACE TO SIERRA LEONE

BY JACKIE RACE-RETFALVI

On November 18, 2010, my son Daniel and I began our journey to Sierra Leone, which was supported by CD Peace. CD Peace is a rural community-based non-profit



organization established in Sierra Leone since 1992 (www.cdpeace.org). The staff in Sierra Leone met us

at the airport, acted as our interpreters, kept us safe and facilitated our activities. Daniel and I were the first of what is hoped to be many delegations from the Maritimes.

Daniel & I had our own goal as well – to trace the steps left by the Black Loyalists in



Freetown. After meeting with the Minister of Tourism and through the planning from the CD Peace, we were able to see where the

Black Loyalists landed, the freedom steps, and the cotton tree. We got to see a hidden tunnel which the Black Loyalists or descendants of Nova Scotians as they are referred to in Africa, rescued fellow countrymen who were headed to slavery.



We toured Bunce Island and saw the remains of one of Britain's largest slave fortresses. It was a humbling experience to see

the impact made by the Black Loyalists. They fought against slavery, built roads, homes and created families.

It was a proud experience for me to see my son standing tall with the community embracing him and calling him their own.

My personal project was to teach food preservation to the local communities in rural areas. It was hoped that we would have twelve ladies attending. Well, fifty-four women showed

up and for two days we canned & jammed. I took some equipment, and the rest was open fires and the large pots of Africa. We canned local produce and created a Papaya Ginger Jam that the ladies will sell.



A cooperative has been formed and

they are in the business with trained trainers going into the local villages teaching women how to can for their own families.

Next steps- we are going back in December following a container filled with medical, school and factory supplies. Presently we are fund-raising the \$10,000 needed to transport the container there. Thanks to the BLHS for all their support we definitely felt your spirit while we were in Africa and told many stories about our friends. We felt every prayer and good wishes on both ends of the world. Thanks!

We have many more stories to



share and are happy to come and present to your group.

This is not our story – it is Africa's and yours and we want to give it back!

