

Black Loyalist

HERITAGE SOCIETY

BIRCHTOWN, N.S.



Newsletter

Summer 2014

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Debra Hill,

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Genealogist

Darrell Acker,

Site Maintenance Manager

Working together for the

advancement of the universal

recognition of Black Loyalists as a

founding Canadian Cultural

Community.

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President's Report

This has been a landmark year for the Black Loyalist Heritage Society. All of the years of hard work by our Board of Directors, Officers, Staff, Members and Supporters has finally been realized with the commencement of construction of the new Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. Construction began in March and is proceeding very well. Our dream of a new Black Loyalist Heritage Centre is finally coming to fruition!

In addition to the exciting news of the new building's construction, the BLHS has been very busy keeping up its profile in our community by hosting our annual events as well as adding some new ones.

To kick off African Heritage Month in February, the BLHS teamed up with the Town of Shelburne's Anti-Racism and Discrimination Committee and the office of African Nova Scotian Affairs (ANSA) to hold a Municipal Proclamation Launch for African Heritage Month 2014 at the Osprey Arts Centre on February 3rd. This year's theme for African Heritage Month was "Rising Stars-Celebrating Our Youth". Wayne Hamilton, from ANSA, as well as the Mayors and Wardens of our local communities joined with the Town of Shelburne to make the official proclamation in support of African Heritage Month.

On February 9th, we hosted our 4th Annual Floral Presentation with Neville Mackay along with our 8th Annual Chocolate Festival. Neville, as always, was entertaining and very informative. His beautiful floral presentations were very impressive. The delicious chocolate creations made by our volunteers really complimented Neville's presentation.

On February 22nd, the BLHS hosted a chili supper and film night featuring two films. The first film was shot right here in Birchtown by a group of youths.

Entitled "Birchtown: The Next Chapter", the short film explores issues of race, identity and the history of Birchtown. The second film is one of the earliest examples of a feature film by an African-American director. Oscar Micheaux's 1920, silent film, "Within Our Gates" is a formative film in African-American cinema. Both the chili supper and the films were a huge success.

On February 25th, the BLHS, hosted the Department of Correctional Services for a site tour and racial sensitivity workshop. BLHS Genealogist and Historian, Deb Hill, led a group of about 15 people through the history of the Black Loyalists as well as leading discussion of contemporary racial issues and prejudice.

Throughout the month of February (and well into March) the interim Programming and Outreach Coordinator, Ashley McDaniel, was busy travelling around South-West Nova Scotia giving presentations to various institutions. This year's presentations included visiting South West Nova Correctional Facility, as well as 12 different schools in the area. Some of these presentations have been followed up by class site-tours.



Filmmaker
Oscar Micheaux
(c. 1913)



Birchtown, Nova Scotia Canada
BLACK LOYALIST
HERITAGE SOCIETY



Then, on March 11th, construction finally began on the new Black Loyalist Heritage Centre! Birchtown Road is a lot busier than it used to be but we are all so happy with the building's progress. Everyone has been hard at work to ensure that the new building meets everyone's expectations.

In April, the BLHS began preparations for Founder's Days by attending community meetings. The BLHS hopes to take a leadership role in the community's effort in ensuring that this beloved community celebration continues to happen and that the BLHS has a prominent role in keeping the tradition alive.

On April 26th, the BLHS participated in the "Our Community, Something for Everyone" event at Shelburne Regional High School. This was a great opportunity to inform the community about our upcoming programmes as well as update them on the progress of our new building. Many attendees were new to the area so it was great to be able to tell them about the BLHS and encourage them to come visit the site!

May was a very exciting month! The BLHS hosted the cast and crew of "The Book of Negroes" mini-series for a barbeque on May 4th. Thanks to the Board, staff, members and volunteers, it was a resounding success. Lou Gossett Jr. (performing the role of Daddy Moses), Lyriq Bent (performing the role of Chekura) and many other members of the cast and crew braved the rainy day to enjoy the delicious food and a site tour led by Deb Hill.

The next day, May 5th, the staff and Board members were invited to visit the "Book of Negroes" filming set down on Dock Street in Shelburne. The board members in attendance had the chance to meet up with Lyriq Bent again and also meet Ben Chaplin who is performing the role of Capt. John Clarkson. The BLHS board and staff were then

invited to have lunch with the cast and crew. On May 6th, St. Paul's Anglican Church was used to film some "behind-the-scenes" footage featuring Mr. Gossett Jr.

On May 11th, we hosted our annual Mother's Day Cheesecake Festival with an added offering of chocolate cake for those uninclined towards cheesecake. Dave Burbine entertained for the event.

After finishing filming for the "Book of Negroes" mini-series, the Freedom Schooner Amistad remained in Shelburne to offer educational tours and programmes with the support of the BLHS. A movie night featuring Steven Spielberg's "Amistad" at the Osprey kicked off a weekend of Amistad events planned by ANSA, BLHS and Amistad America. The Town of Shelburne kindly waived the berthage fees for the ship after filming was complete to assist in offering the educational programming.

On May 24th, the B L H S hosted an Amistad Banquet to honor the major donors to the new Black Loyalist Heritage

Centre. Featuring a sail on the Amistad, a meal catered by Alison Stanton and entertainment from Louise Delisle, Manny Herbert & Curtis Mahaney, the event helped show our appreciation for those that helped to fund the new centre. The Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club hosted the event.

On May 25th, the BLHS hosted a fundraising benefit for Amistad America, also held at the Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club. This event also featured a day sail on the Freedom Schooner Amistad and a catered hors d'oeuvres



Site on March 11th



Everett Cromwell with Louis Gossett Jr.



The "Amistad" setting sail with the banquet guests

luncheon catered by the newly opened Hooked Gastropub. The funds raised from this event went to Amistad America for management and upkeep of the ship. In attendance were Hanifa Washington and Staci Detwiler from Amistad America. Members of the Djembe Drumming Programme at Hillcrest Academy offered some entertainment at the event.

On May 26th, the Djembe Drumming Programme at Hillcrest Academy in Shelburne held its finishing performance preceded by a pizza party for the participants.

On June 2nd, the Black Loyalist Historical Site opened for the summer. We would like to welcome back Natalia Ensor as the Summer Programme Coordinator. We look forward to having a fun and productive summer.

Our annual Day Camps will be held this summer during the weeks of July 7th-11th and August 18th-22nd. In addition to the usual activities, we are also working with the P.A.I.N.T.S. programme with Visual Arts Nova Scotia to bring some local professional artists in for workshops with the day camp students. It's shaping up to be a good time!

As we move forward, we know there will be challenges ahead. Construction, programming conferences, board development and establishing a management team with the Nova Scotia Museums are all opportunities to invite community members to become inclined to help shape the future of the new centre. As in the past, we accept the challenges!

I would also like to take this opportunity to say a special thanks to those Board Members who worked behind the scenes over the past year and a special thank you to our front line staff. Bev Cox has done an admirable job bringing the construction team along and continues to oversee the progress of everything. Her office staff, Shari Shortliffe, Deb Hill, Darrell Acker, Arlene Butler and Ashley McDaniel have our appreciation for their commitment, long hours, and good spirits.

Elizabeth Cromwell

African Heritage Month 2014

This past February was a very exciting and busy month for the BLHS. In addition to preparing for the beginning of the new Black Loyalist Heritage Centre's construction, we were also committed to fully celebrating African Heritage Month!

African Heritage Month was kicked off with a joint effort of the Town of Shelburne's Anti-Racism & Discrimination Committee and the BLHS. The Town of Shelburne was invited by the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs to participate in the yearly Municipal Proclamation Launch in Celebration of African Heritage Month.

On February 22nd, we held a Chilli Supper & Film Night. Supper was served on informational placemats used to educate the audience about the historical context of the film, a brief biography of the filmmaker and some trivia about the film's release and reception. We began the night with a short film entitled: "Birchtown: The Next Verse" which was made by a group of local and visiting young people. A few of the filmmakers were in attendance and everyone was very proud of their cinematic creation! Next, we showed Oscar Micheaux's 1920, silent film "Within Our Gates". This film is a formative one for African-American cinema as it deals with many important social and racial issues of its time.

On February 25th, the BLHS hosted its first Racial Sensitivity Workshop for the Department of Correctional Services. The workshop, which included a museum & site tour, was led by BLHS Genealogist and Ethno-Historian Deb Hill. It was a fun, enlightening day for everyone and the BLHS hopes to be able to host more of these types of workshops in the future.

These events, in addition our other events and the numerous school and institutional presentations that were given across the region contributed to a very successful African Heritage Month for the BLHS. We know that with the completion of the new centre, African Heritage Month will be an even bigger part of the overall programming and outreach efforts of the society!

DON'T FORGET!

The BLHS Multi-Cultural Daycamps
July 7th-11th & August 18th-22nd

\$50.00 per child

Call 902-875-1310

for more information or to register!



BLHS SCRAPBOOK 2014

BBQ & SITE TOUR WITH CAST & CREW OF "THE BOOK OF NEGROES" MINI-SERIES



AMISTAD BANQUET MAY 24TH, 2014

AMISTAD BENEFIT MAY 25TH, 2014



Black Loyalist Heritage Centre Construction Update

By: Beverly Cox, BLHS Site Manager

On March 10, 2014, after many months of fundraising and awarding contracts, the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre has begun. The last few months have been very exciting as we in Birchtown watch the building take shape before our eyes. First of all was the site preparations, followed by the foundation, steel work, roofing, pouring of the concrete slab and the walls going up.

The project contractors PCL Atlantic is responsible for hiring and managing all sub-contractors. Skyline Atlantic, in partnership with Lord Cultural Resource is developing the visitor experience for the new Centre.

The building is scheduled to be completed in October of 2014 and following completion, the exhibit will be installed.

We have begun entertaining how we will celebrate the opening of our new home. So, please stay tuned as we work towards our next milestone—the Grand Opening!



Construction commenced on March 10th. This photo, taken on **March 11th** shows the clearing of the construction site with the pit-house in the foreground.



After the site was cleared, it was time for the foundation to be poured. This photo, taken on **April 6th**, shows the framework for the concrete to be poured into.



After the foundation was poured, it was time for the frame to be put up! This photo, taken on **May 9th**, shows the crane moving the beams into place.



On **May 30th**, the building was being prepared for the floor to be poured.



Once the floor was poured, it was time to finish the framing. This photo was taken on **June 5th**.



Once the frame was complete, it was time to begin placing the exterior walls on the frame. This photo, taken on **June 17th**.

New Additions to the BLHS Family!

The Black Loyalist Heritage Society has the privilege of introducing you to the newest members of the BLHS family and the next generation of Black Loyalist Descendants, Carter Samuel Butler and Mac Kenzie Anne Cox! Both babies were born on the same day, October 7th, 2013.

Carter Samuel was born in the early hours of October 7th, 2013 to BLHS's Programming and Outreach Coordinator Arlene and her husband Terry Butler. He made his entrance into the world very hurriedly; he was almost 6 weeks early! Arlene's baby shower had been held at the Birchtown Community Centre on October 6th, and later that night, she went into labour! Carter's God-mother, and BLHS Office Manager Shari Shortliffe, made the early morning trek to Halifax to be there for his birth, making it just in time! Carter was born at the IWK Hospital. He weighed five (5) pounds thirteen (13) ounces and was eighteen (18) inches long.

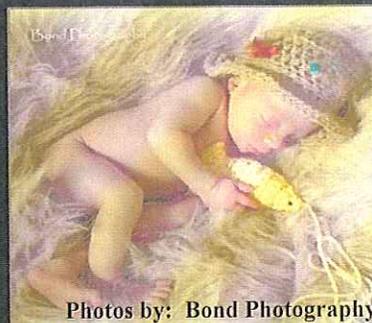
Mackenzie Anne was also born on October 7th at the IWK in Halifax to proud parents Haley and Cynthia Cox. Mackenzie is site manager, Beverly Cox's newest grandchild.

We would like to pass our congratulations and best wishes along to the children, parents and grandparents alike!

Carter Samuel

&

Mackenzie Anne



Photos by: Bond Photography