

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2018

Celebrating Black People's Contribution



We are all Connected

one human  
family

one  
race

one culture,

stories, ceremonies, rituals

# YOUR NEWS NOW



DARYL MCINTYRE & ERIN ISFELD



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EDMONTON

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PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

February 2018



Dear Friends:

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to the members of the National Black Coalition of Canada (NBCC) Edmonton chapter, and to everyone commemorating Black History Month in Canada.

Every February, Canadians celebrate Black History Month by acknowledging the remarkable achievements and contributions that Canadians of African and Caribbean descent have made, and continue to make, to our nation's success. This month, I encourage all Canadians to participate in the many events and activities that will take place in communities across the country to honour the integral role Black Canadians have played in shaping our democratic and free society.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the NBCC for preserving and promoting Black history and heritage in Canada. Your organization stands as an important reminder that our country is made stronger not in spite of our differences, but because of them.

Please accept my best wishes for a memorable celebration.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Hon. Justin P.J. Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada





Premier of Alberta

Office of the Premier, 307 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2R6 Canada



## Message from Honourable Rachel Notley Premier of Alberta

*On behalf of the Government of Alberta, I am proud to recognize February as Black History Month.*

*Every year, we take the time to honour the legacy of Alberta's black community during Black History Month. Black women and men have made, and continue to make, an important contribution to Alberta. From historical figures like Violet King, who became the first black person to graduate law in Alberta and be admitted to the Alberta Bar, making her also the first black female lawyer in Canada. Or figures like the legendary cowboy John Ware, or the pioneer families of Amber Valley, to those of African, African American and Caribbean origin who arrive every day to add their story to ours – we celebrate them all during Black History Month.*

*This time gives us the chance to learn more about the black experience in Alberta, to hear stories of struggle, of hope, and of triumph. It is a time for us to remember the past and anticipate the future, to salute those who overcame obstacles, and to celebrate individuals who continue to make remarkable achievements in our province.*

*I hope this month provides an opportunity for all Albertans to reflect on our history, and to inspire people of all backgrounds to work towards a better province for all of us. Our diversity is our strength and it should be celebrated now and for years to come.*

Rachel Notley

February 2018



**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi**  
M.P. for Edmonton Mill Woods



A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM HON. AMARJEET SOHI, P.C., MP

As Member of Parliament for Edmonton Mill Woods, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to extend my best wishes and warmest greetings to the National Black Coalition of Canada Edmonton and all those celebrating Black History Month in Edmonton.

Through your work in representing the voice of the Black community in Edmonton and through education, public awareness, collaboration, and building intercultural understanding, you have contributed to the livelihood and richness of Alberta. Your work has also strengthened the existing cultural diversity in Edmonton, which has made our city vibrant. Thank you for your dedicated efforts which have continuously helped to increase intercultural connectivity and strengthened our society's diversity through unity. On such an important occasion, I am happy to celebrate Black History Month.

**House of Commons**  
707, Confederation Building  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
Tel: 613-992-1013  
Fax: 613-992-1026

A. Sohi

[www.AmarjeetSohi.com](http://www.AmarjeetSohi.com)

**Constituency**  
9225 28 Avenue NW  
Edmonton, AB T6N1 1N1  
Tel: 780-497-3524  
Fax: 780-497-3511



**Message from Honourable Ricardo Miranda  
Minister of Culture and Tourism**

---

As Minister responsible for culture and tourism in the province, it is my pleasure to extend greetings for Black History Month 2018.

The story of our province's black community is one of triumph over barriers and hardships. From the beginning of our history to today, Black History Month recognizes the prejudice and obstacles faced by many, while celebrating the significant contributions the community has made to our province. It is an opportunity for us to learn and grow from the shadows of our past, and find inspiration in the incredible stories of Albertans of African descent.

My thanks to the National Black Coalition of Canada's Edmonton Chapter and its volunteers for sharing the heritage and history of Alberta's black community. Your ongoing efforts continue to make Alberta a welcoming and inclusive place by nurturing a deeper understanding of our multiculturalism and diversity across the province and the country.

All the best throughout Black History Month.



Ricardo Miranda  
Minister



## ***Message from His Worship Mayor Don Iveson***



On behalf of City Council and the people of Edmonton, Alberta's Capital City, I am honoured to help celebrate the culture, tradition and rich diversity of our city through Black History Month.

Each year, Black History Month provides an opportunity to celebrate the integral role black history has played in our city, province and country's development. It is a time to reflect on the contributions African-Canadians have made in areas such as education, medicine, art, public service, economic development, politics and human rights. It is also a time to look forward with hope and optimism as we promote diversity, inclusion and understanding.

Thank you to the National Black Coalition of Canada – Edmonton Chapter for your hard work and dedication in organizing events commemorating Black History Month. Your efforts help to foster an appreciation and understanding of African-Canadian culture, and the City of Edmonton values your commitment to such a significant part of our history.

I wish you all meaningful and empowering Black History Month celebrations!

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Iveson'.

Don Iveson  
Mayor





## **Message from the Edmonton Police Service Chief Rod R. Knecht**



The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is proud to extend our support and best wishes for the 2018 Black History Month celebrations.

From helping newcomers adjust to Canadian life to hosting events that share the rich diversity of African and Caribbean cultures with citizens, Edmonton's black community groups are passionate about making this city ever more vibrant and inclusive. The EPS is fortunate to enjoy strong ties with our black communities thanks to joint initiatives like the African Community Liaison Committee, the Black Community Liaison Committee and the Police and Youth Engagement Program (PYEP). -

Thanks to the National Black Coalition of Canada for coordinating the celebration of Black History Month in Edmonton. The EPS will continue to support this event and safeguard the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion that make Edmonton such a great city to live.

Best regards,



Rod R. Knecht  
Chief of Police

*A Message from*  
**DAVID SHEPHERD, MLA**



On behalf of Premier Rachel Notley and all my colleagues in the Government of Alberta, it's my pleasure to join the Edmonton chapter of the National Black Coalition of Canada in celebrating Black History Month in 2018.

The black community has been contributing to the prosperity and rich diversity of Alberta for over 100 years and I was proud last year to stand alongside Premier Notley as, for the first time, the Government of Alberta officially recognized those contributions and officially declared February as Black History Month in our province.

I am proud of my heritage as a black Canadian and since my election in 2015, it's been an honour to regularly meet with members of and leaders in the black community in Edmonton and Calgary, including the National Black Coalition of Canada, to recognize their accomplishments, join in cultural celebrations, hear their concerns, join in their advocacy and support their work to uplift and empower their communities.

I'm also proud to stand with a government that is committed to taking action to support our commitment to diversity in our province as we take the first steps to implement recommendations based on Minister David Eggen's consultations on combatting and eliminating racism and prejudice in Alberta and protect the rights of all Albertans.

I thank the NBCC's Edmonton and Calgary chapters for their years of support for Black History Month and work to empower black Albertans and look forward to continuing to work closely with them towards those ends.

Happy Black History Month 2018!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Shepherd'.

**David Shepherd**  
**MLA, Edmonton-Centre**



## Welcome to Black History Month, 2018

This topic and theme developed from many discussions with Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer from the University of Alberta about the number of Black and Indigenous children residing on Reserves throughout Alberta. There are also many bi-racial children living in different areas of the city. As an educator and counselor, I became concerned if these bi-racial children were being raised in both their cultures. How do they self-identify? How do they come to a sense of self and identity? What were their challenges on this "bi-racial" journey? What are the questions they ask about their parentage if both parents were not present in the home or co-parenting? Is one of their questions "why?" How do they connect to the "other culture" not practiced in the home? How do they connect in the wider community?

Idealistically, as parents of bi-racial children, you tell yourself "love has no colour." However, there are many issues in this society in terms of race, culture and personal differences. Yes, we embrace diversity. There are many wonders in recognizing our connection to others as we share our cultures and lives with all people. However, this "connection" comes with many issues and concerns for individuals, families, communities and society.

The enlightened individual shares the beauty and wonder of diversity and the connection between us as belonging to the human family. There are lessons in unconditional acceptance, love of self, family and community. When I had to write this article, I didn't have to go far to find cultural or racial diversity among my own family, friends and the students in my classroom. I spoke to many friends who are bi-racial adults, raising bi-racial children or involved in inter-racial relationships and asked them about their journeys. They were willing to share their youthful journey in search of their identity. One beautiful, well-adjusted woman felt making public her journey to find her black father might hurt her white mother and adopted white father. One beautiful well-adjusted young man (Jamaican -Scottish Canadian) spoke of the discrimination he remembered from Black peers because he was not "black enough."

Although I happily embrace diversity, I heard stories of discrimination, prejudice, bullying from young people and adults while living their lives as bi-racial children. I usually connect with people who I think might benefit from sharing our cultural or racial information about being black or Jamaican, (not very nice friends tell me I meddle too much!)

My interviews found that some bi-racial individuals are discriminated against because they are "not Black enough, not German enough, and not Native enough." These individuals have to develop and fight for their own sense of identity and self worth. As parents, we have to give these children the foundation to withstand society's harsher treatment. Some of the issues are ongoing until they find a place for themselves in their own eyes. Parents have to value these children, whether they are still with the other parent or not. How the parental relationship ended also plays a big role in these children's thought process and how they view themselves. They must be taught to embrace both cultures.

Whether these children were created through accident, wish, want and/or love, they are the ones facing the issues of being neither one nor the other, but both culture and race. They have to carve their own path with the help of teachers, mentors, and parents. They may have to find other children of bi-racial heritage, who share common experiences and support each other. They also need to be supported by the parent who comes from the other side: German, Scottish, Jamaican, Trinidad, Indigenous communities (Cree).

We need to most importantly, remember we share the most common element - we are connected by being of the human family - humans living a common experience, bleed the same red blood, breathe the same air, and need love and acceptance from families, friends and communities. These children should bring out the best in us because they are a piece of all of us.

All my grandchildren are bi-racial and tri-cultural. It is up to me to teach them about being Black and Jamaican: eat mangoes and sugarcane, tell them stories of my childhood and climb a coconut tree (without being stuck at the top, as my oldest son did at 16 years old. As if, I can do that!) However, I can "stone" (hit) a mango at the top of the tree with great accuracy, bringing down the ripest of the bunch... ok. I haven't done that in 30 years, (a skill any grandchild should have!) but I sure want to teach my grandchildren how to do the things "Jamaican" that I did, growing up in Jamaica. Then they will learn the connection between us culturally as well as by blood, which I hope they never forget!

See you in Jamaica under the mango tree. Let us connect!

**Dr. Mertella J. Montague,**  
**President, NBCC**

# Awards of Excellence 2017 Winners

The National Black Coalition of Canada (NBCC) - Edmonton Chapter, recognizes and honours individuals or groups in Edmonton, Alberta, who have made, outstanding contributions to our community and society at large.

## Fil Fraser Award Winner –

*Green Crusader Inc. (Operating as Diversity Magazine)*

The Fil Fraser Award is presented to an individual or group who has done outstanding work in literary, performing and/or visual Arts



## Rosalind Smith Professional Award Winner –

*Ms. Leta Montague Ms. Beatrice Ghettuba*

The Rosalind Smith Professional Award for Exceptional and Prolonged service working in a Profession



## Rosalind Smith Business Award Winner –

*Ms. Andrea Bailey-Brown*

*Mr. Dorian Andrews Ms. Donna Chen*

The Rosalind Smith Award for Exceptional and Prolonged Service from individuals or group from the Black Community Owning and Running a Business



## NBCC Youth Award Winner –

*Ms. Dunia Nur*

*Mr. Megah Tornwe*

The NBCC Youth Award for achieving academic excellence & or delivering exceptional programs and services in any area of the Black Community or society at large



## Clarence "Big" Miller Award Winner –

*Mr. Mboya Nicholson*

The Clarence "Big" Miller Award is for demonstrating excellence in music (vocal, instrumental performance, composition or instructions



## Mary Burlie Award Winner –

*Ms. Meheret Worku*

The Mary Burlie Award for effective program/and or services to the Black Community & or Community at large





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**hbpithva@hotmail.com**

**Black History Month Films**

**February 2018**

**Unarmed Verses | Charles Bradley: Soul of America | Step | Whose Streets? | Get Out | In the Heat of the Night | And more!**

**metro cinema** See more at [metrocinema.org](http://metrocinema.org)  
Metro Cinema at the Garneau | 8712-109 St.

**FREE w/RYTP  
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# FIL FRASER

**FIL FRASER, C.M., D.LITT (HON)**  
**Broadcaster, Journalist, Producer,**  
**Author, Teacher**

*By Anna Desmarais, CBC News*  
*cbc.ca*

## Canada's first black broadcaster dead at 85

### Fil Fraser spent 50 years in Alberta's broadcast industry

Legendary broadcaster, author and radio personality Fil Fraser died of heart failure Sunday at the age of 85.

For five decades, Fraser played an important role in the development of Alberta's arts and heritage community by supporting local artists, penning works that celebrated multiculturalism and being a strong advocate for social justice.

"He was always an encouraging mentor and a force for good," his daughter Kathryn Fraser told CBC News.

The Governor General's office recognized Fraser as Canada's first black broadcaster when he was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1991.

### 'I liked to be heard'

Fraser was born in Montreal to Caribbean parents in 1932. As he was growing up, he had a keen interest in broadcast journalism and worked at his high school radio station to prove that he could make it in the industry.

"I liked to be heard," Fraser told the Alberta Order of Excellence of his time in high school media.

His broadcast career took him to newsrooms across the country, but it was in Edmonton where Fraser spent the majority of his life.

He moved to the city in 1965 to work with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and eventually transitioned into co-anchoring CBC Edmonton's supper-hour news and ITV's Fil Fraser Show.

Fraser stayed in the city because he had high hopes for Alberta's capital.

"He wanted to make it Canada's Hollywood," his daughter said.

Fraser made sure to advocate for Edmonton's arts scene by giving his time to many of the city's artistic organizations, including the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Edmonton International Film Festival.

"No art, no life. Art decorates our lives. Art makes our lives meaningful. Without the arts, life would be plain and uninspiring and unforgiving," a well-known quote from Fraser reads.

His voice carried him to other roles in social justice advocacy throughout his long career, including a stint as chief commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, where he fought for the rights of the province's LGBTQ community.

### First black broadcaster

Being the country's first black broadcaster came with its own challenges.

His daughter said Fraser took an interest in radio broadcasting as a young man because he believed it was the only way he could get ahead in media as a black man.



Throughout his career, Fraser penned several books and articles about his experience as a black man growing up in Montreal. His memoir on Canadian multiculturalism, *Black Like Me*, was published in the 100th edition of *Saturday Night* magazine.

He also wrote *How the Blacks Created Canada*, a non-fiction work about the contributions black people made to the country.

"Blacks have played pivotal roles in the creation of Canada but ... that history has been virtually invisible to mainstream Canadians," Fraser wrote in the preamble to his book. "It's time to celebrate the contributions and achievements of those whose roots in our soil are as deep as anyone else's."

Fraser's daughter said her father always said he experienced "some racism," but that his career in broadcasting insulated him from "any real hardship."

## A good father

Although Fraser had a full career, he was still able to dedicate time to supporting his wife, Gladys Odegard, and his four children and five stepchildren.

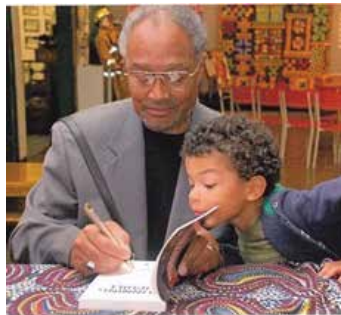
Fraser challenged Kathryn personally and intellectually, she said.

Kathryn remembered one time when her father was particularly supportive. He was so proud of his daughter while she was pursuing her doctoral program at the University of McGill that he offered to help her in any way with her work.

"He was the only one who read my doctoral dissertation, as dense and theoretical as it was, from beginning to end," Katherine said. "He called me after and said, 'Dr. Kathryn Fraser, this is amazing.'"

When Kathryn's son was born, she did not hesitate to name him after her father.

Kathryn said her son spent a lot of time with his grandfather in the hospital before he died, singing and reading to him.



## Premier offers condolences

Condolences poured out to Fraser's extended family on social media Monday from professors, intellectuals and members of the media to honour the contributions he made to the province.

"Alberta received a great gift when Fil, born and raised in Montreal, arrived here in 1965," Alberta Premier Rachel Notley said in a Facebook statement. "We will continue to be inspired by the life of this great Albertan and his amazing public and artistic legacy."

Kerrie Long, director of the Edmonton International Film Festival, wrote that long conversations with Fraser made her "want to be a better person."

**For more information on Fil Fraser go to [www.filfraser.ca](http://www.filfraser.ca)**

A logo for "black hair spot" featuring a stylized black circle with a white crescent inside. Below the logo is the text "black hair spot" in a bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the logo is a profile illustration of a Black woman with a large, dark afro, wearing a red flower in her hair and large hoop earrings. At the bottom of the advertisement is the website address "www.blackhairspot.com" in a white, sans-serif font.

**black hair spot**

[www.blackhairspot.com](http://www.blackhairspot.com)

An advertisement for "YVES SALON" featuring a black and white photograph of a woman with long, wavy hair. The text "YVES SALON" is at the top in a large, serif font. Below it is the name "Yvette Mitchell" in a cursive script, followed by "PROFESSIONAL HAIR STYLIST" in a smaller, sans-serif font. The text "Specializing in Weaves, Latches, Senegalese Twists, Wedding Updos, Custom Made Wigs and Wig Styling and Maintenance and Hair Extensions for hair loss due to cancer, baldness or alopecia." is in a small, sans-serif font. Below that is "Women • Men • Children". At the bottom is a list of services: "• Cut • Colour • Braids • Dread Locks • Relaxer • Perm • Hair Extensions •". At the very bottom is the phone number "ph: 780 604 0301" and the address "10340 - 134 Street, Edmonton AB".

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Women • Men • Children

• Cut • Colour • Braids • Dread Locks • Relaxer • Perm • Hair Extensions •

ph: 780 604 0301 10340 - 134 Street, Edmonton AB



# Calendar of Events

## **Black History Month Opening Ceremonies** *NBCC event*

Come celebrate the official kickoff to Black History Month 2018 with this free event at West Edmonton Mall! We'll have spoken word, entertainment and community vendor tables for you to engage with!

Saturday, January 27 @ 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
New Cap Stage by Sunrise Records  
West Edmonton Mall  
Level 1 Entrance 55 – 56  
Official Opening with Dignitaries: 1 pm to 3 pm  
Melisizwe Brothers

## **Black History Month Church Service** *NBCC event*

This service is a celebration for all people.  
Rev. Dr. Adenike Yesufu – Officiating

Sunday, January 28 @ 3:00 pm  
Multi Cultural Congregation  
St. Faith Anglican Church  
11725 93 St NW, Edmonton

## **Celebrating Black History Month 2018 by New Democrat Government Caucus**

MLA Shepherd would like to invite you, as well as all his African & Caribbean constituents, to join Alberta's NDP Caucus for its 2nd historical celebration of Black History Month!

Friday, February 2 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm  
Federal Building, 9820 – 107 Street  
Edmonton

## **Trincan Youth Development Program: Public Speaking Lessons**

Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program is a free 7 week public speaking and leadership course.

Saturdays February 3 - March 17  
@ 1:00pm - 3:00pm  
Ages 11-17  
Brookview Community League, 280 Bulyea Road NW

## **One Night in Harlem – 5 Artists 1 Love**

A stunning, annual African History Month celebration of the artistic vibrancy and range of Edmonton's African-Canadian communities, from Angola to Zanzibar, Togo to Tobago, or Brazil to Barbados!

Saturday, February 10 @ 7:00 pm - 11:30 pm  
MacEwan University – Allard Hall, City Centre Campus  
11104 104 Avenue NW  
Edmonton  
\$40 - \$75

## **Black Francophones who contributed to Humanity – United Congolese Society of Edmonton**

The theme is: black francophone who contributed to the humanity and black francophone who are contributing to the humanity in Canadian society in particular.

Friday, February 16 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
La Cité Francophone  
8627 Rue Marie-Anne Gaboury  
Edmonton



**FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO**  
**WWW.NBCCEDMONTON.CA**  
*Add your event for FREE!*

**Annual Black History Month Breakfast**

JAMAICA ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN ALBERTA  
Annual Black History Month Breakfast

Saturday, February 17 @ 10:00 am  
Potluck Restaurant  
140 41 Victoria Trail Edmonton  
Ticket: \$25.00 ea. No sale at the door.

**Black History Month Gospel Concert**  
*NBCC event*

This event showcases the best gospel music in the city! Gospel music is so closely tied to the past achievements and successes of black people in North America.

Saturday, February 24 @ 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm  
Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium  
11455 87 Avenue NW  
Cost: \$25  
Tickets at Ticketmaster or call Joy at 780.298.7074  
[www.nbccedmonton.ca/gospel](http://www.nbccedmonton.ca/gospel)

**Trincan Youth Development Program:  
Steel Pan Workshop**

This free interactive workshop will give youth a chance to learn songs on different steel pan instruments and learn about the history of steel pan.

Saturday, February 24 @ 10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Location: Crestwood Community Hall  
14325-96 Avenue  
Ages: 9 - 19 years old  
Cost: FREE!

**Trincan Youth Development Program:  
Soca and Calypso Dance Lessons**

Instruction will allow the students to learn choreographed dance pieces to Caribbean music that will consist of various movements.

Soca and Calypso Dance Lessons:  
Saturdays March 3 - July 28 @ 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
Socafit Studio (inside Dance Code), 10575-115 St NW  
Ages 8-19

**Black History Month Banquet &  
Awards of Excellence** *NBCC event*

This event recognizes and honours individuals or groups in Alberta, who have made outstanding contributions to our community and society at large.

Saturday, March 10 @ 6:30 pm - 2:00 am  
Cocktails - 6:30 pm, Supper - 7:00 pm  
Chateau Louis Hotel, 11727 Kingsway Ave  
Cost: Adults: \$50, Seniors & Youth: \$40  
12 & Under: \$20, 4 & Under: Free  
Tickets: Joy 780-298-7074 or Carl 780-554-8955

**Films at The Metro Cinema**

- In The Heat of the Night (1967)
- Get Out (2017) - (104 min)
- Step Movie (2017) - (84 min)
- Brother From Another Planet (1984) - (109 min)

- Whose Streets? (2017) - (90 min)
- Charles Bradley: Soul of America - (75 min)
- NFB Celebrates BHM with 21 Films
- Unarmed Verses - (86 min)

Check [www.metrocinema.org](http://www.metrocinema.org) or [www.nbccedmonton.ca](http://www.nbccedmonton.ca) for dates and times

**FOR A FULL LISTING OF ALL EVENTS**

# *Gospel Concert*

Tickets available at  
Ticketmaster  
\$25

*Come to Edmonton's Finest Gospel Concert*

*The Annual Black History Month 2018 Concert  
Featuring the Best Gospel Choirs & Singers in the City!*

Jubilee Auditorium  
11455-87 Avenue, Edmonton

Saturday, February 24, 2018 7:00 pm  
For more information contact:  
780-425-0319 or [info@nbccedmonton.ca](mailto:info@nbccedmonton.ca)

[www.nbccedmonton.ca](http://www.nbccedmonton.ca)



NATIONAL BLACK COALITION OF CANADA-EDMONTON

## *Banquet & Awards of Excellence*

**Saturday March 10, 2018 6:30 PM**

**Chateau Louis Hotel  
11727 Kingsway Ave,  
Edmonton Ab**

**Adults: \$50**

**Seniors & Youth: \$40**

**12 & under: \$20**

**4 & under: free**

**Cocktails: 6:30pm, Supper: 7:30pm**

**Music by the band Catalyst**

The National Black Coalition of Canada - Edmonton (NBCC) Awards for Excellence recognize and honor individuals and/or groups in Alberta who have made outstanding contributions to our community and society at large.

**The Award Categories are:**

Rosalind Smith Business Award

Peter Sugarfoot Award

Bill Miller Award

Fil Frasier Award

James Bell Award

NBCC Youth Award

Mary Burle Award

For 2018 nomination forms and banquet information call NBCC-Edmonton (780) 425-0319 or visit [www.nbccedmonton.ca](http://www.nbccedmonton.ca)



National Black Coalition of Canada - Edmonton

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# T'YANA KOOTENAY-FORBES

## Bi-racial and Growing up on a Reserve

Growing up in my Native community was never easy. I didn't realize that I was different until my peers started pointing it out. I went to school on reserve from kindergarten to Grade 3 and not a day went by that I wasn't bullied.

There was a girl who was the same age as me and went through the grades together. She was the worst. She'd walk by and would stick gum in my natural hair; she would ask me why my hair was so ugly, why my skin was so gross. She'd pick bugs outside and drop them in my hair and all my friends she took away from me. She'd punch me one day and kick me in the ribs the next. My journey at an on-reserve school ended when she called me "a nigger."

To this point in my whole life, I had not heard that word. I didn't know what it meant. I didn't understand it. However, the moment she said it, it ripped my heart in two. I dropped right there crying and I called my mom to come for me. I had no idea what I had done to her or why the way I looked bothered her so much.

My mother and I moved to Edmonton. She mended my heart and told me kids there were different but something in the back of my mind didn't believe her. That word haunted me. It made me feel like it was my secret to hold and somehow this girl figured it out and now I need to do everything I can to cover that secret up so nobody ever called me that again.

That following fall I started grade 4 at John. A. MacDougal School, covered in black from head to toe, trying to cover every inch on my body and wearing scarves over my hair to where only my face was showing.

I walked in with my head down, walking close to the walls, clinging for dear life to my mother's hand, begging her not to leave me when we got to my homeroom. I begged her to spend the first day with me. However, she couldn't. Being a single mother, she worked long hours to support us.

That bugged me. The behaviour I had that day was not me. I was this bright little girl with no care in the world about anything. All I wanted to do was play, laugh the loudest and make friends with everyone. However, that one girl ripped that spirit out of me and she replaced it with fear and insecurities at the age of seven.



As I looked around my classroom, I saw the most beautiful things. I saw tall kids and small kids, fat kids, skinny kids. I saw beautiful dark berries, darker than I could ever imagine and white children too. I saw my first Asian kids in that class; I saw kids who looked the same colour as me but were from areas in the world that I didn't even know about. Suddenly, I was nervous but not 'afraid of me' anymore.

I finished that year with four best friends. One was white, one was Vietnamese, one was Ethiopian, and one was from Africa (don't know where). I was still bullied in that school, but it was different now. I was being bullied because I wasn't this thing called "cool" and "popular" not because of how I looked. My posse and I didn't care if we were cool; we let the bully waste her time while we made the best memories and helped each other in school. That was by far my favourite school year.

That following summer for reasons I didn't understand at the time, I moved back to my community to live with my grandmother (kokum). She enrolled me in George. P. Vanier where I went for Gr.5 (last grade in elementary) then moved to Primeau for Grades 6-8 (junior high) and lastly M.C.H.S for 9-12 (high school) in a small community called Morinville.

I was now older facing different issues. The best part of that time was being raised with a strong and proud indigenous influence at home. Living in a community that didn't accept me because I was half black yet all these little boys and girls were dressing like my race, acted like my race, and were giving themselves "ghetto nicknames." In the mix of all that, I attended an all white school. Again being the ONLY ONE DIFFERENT! At school, I was cool, but on the bus to school, I was "scum" to the other Native kids and they were never afraid to let me know. At home, I was perfect.

It was a very difficult period of my life. I was trying to find my place in the world and figure out who I was – my identity. I had crushes and knew they would never like me because I didn't have fair skin, long straight hair and different coloured eyes like all the other girls. These girls were having their first kiss and being asked on dates. I decided to change how I looked and how I acted. I had my first boyfriend and I made sure he never knew what my natural hair looked like without the weave. I avoided as much as possible to explain why I was darker.

Now that I am 22 years old, I looked back on all that hate and I don't feel bad for my past anymore. I grew up being faced with responsibilities at a young age that most kids didn't have, but I loved my young life because it's made me who I am today. It took me a very long time to be okay with it but that journey doesn't matter anymore because I am proud of being half Jamaican- half Cree First Nation young woman with amazing dreams and goals for my life.

I still live in my community in which I have many friends who love me for me not for how I look. I have a long time boyfriend who has done something to my confidence I never thought possible. My family is my family even if I am the darkest in most photos. To this day, I still experience hate. I've been denied jobs because of my blackness. I get the odd comment here and there. It's has to be a sad life to hate on someone as beautiful as me, purely based on how I look. So I let those people live with that. I think now I am just beginning to figure out me and it's a very exciting journey. For other little half-Black and half-Native boys and girls, we come from two gorgeous people and our walk in this life may never be easy. We have to work 5 times harder to prove ourselves, which shouldn't be the case but guess what... we can do it and we do it, repeatedly.

Society pushed me and I answered back; they gave me statistics and I proved them wrong. We are strong children. My beautiful brothers and sisters, our histories on both sides prove we can get through anything handed to us and we do it with grace and style. Overcome the hate and you will see the potential in your life. Have standards in your friends and have standards in your life. "Yeah, so what? This is what I look like. Look at what I have accomplished!" Small successes lead to bigger ones. Heal the pain and hatred and own who you are. And, who is that? What you make of yourself! For me? A very proud woman who is the product of two very strong race of survivors! So I shall survive all this!





## ABOUT US




Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton runs a number of programs and provides support throughout the year.




## PROGRAMS/SUPPORT

- Horumuud Homework Club (Homework help after school hours.
- Mentoring program for youths
- Class for parents (parenting in two cultures & workshops )
- Settlement and immigration related support
- Reach Ahead Program (6 weeks after school closes in June.
- Graduation celebration events.
- Camp Toosoo (out of town 1 week camp where with up to 150 kids/youth)
- On going material development for crime prevention/advocacy
- Women's programs

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# Raising Children in a Tri-cultural World: Jamaican-German-Canadian

*- Written by Dale Montague*

I'm Jamaican born and raised in Canada since I was four years old. My wife is German-Canadian and my children are Jamaican-German-Canadian. I have found that being in an inter-racial relationship, having children of Jamaican-German heritage, in a western Canadian society is difficult for the children to identify with both the Jamaican and German culture. There will always be one more "dominant" than the other, which may be the preference of one parent, or the other, then the child.

A child of two very strong cultural heritages, it is difficult when socializing with others if you do not share the dominant culture. For example, my children don't speak German, are obviously of mixed heritage, and want to socialize with members of the German community. They would probably run into difficulty in being accepted by that group. They are part German, but if German isn't their first culture, they will not have the language or customs common to children raised fully in the culture.



Moreover, although the Canadian society embraces a multicultural mosaic and have festivals where people and others can enjoy days spent submerged in their culture e.g. Heritage Day Festival, Carifest (Caribbean), Black History Month etc. These are only a few days during the year where communities get together to celebrate diversity, consequently families will have to teach their children about their culture and cultural identities so they can discover their sense of self.

There are several ways for children, especially children who are racially mixed, to learn about, accept and express their bi or multi-culturalism. Children can learn about their cultural heritage by traveling to parent's or grandparents' homeland, experience the culture, learn the language, traditions and proper protocols which will form part of their identity and life experiences, eating the food, meeting extended relatives, learning family history, also making long term connections with people of that culture.

When ready, children can talk to their parents, grandparents or even great grandparents who will have a wealth of knowledge about the past, their traditions, language, food, their way of living their culture. This helps to develop one's sense of self in the forming of the self-identity.

My children are half-black (Jamaican) and half white (German). Therefore, they are darker skinned than your average German. If they don't practice the German culture they might not be accepted as German but as a "friend of the German culture." Being mixed with white, they are lighter skinned black; they don't speak the Jamaican patois, eat the foods or know the stories. Some might see my children as not "real Jamaican" because they were raised "white" or "Canadian" and that they don't understand what it means to be "black."

Both sides of this "race question" may say this, but do they understand what it's like to be neither? Not accepted as "German" because they are not fully German and not accepted as "Jamaican" or belonging to the "Black" race, because they are not fully black. Therefore, in this society, most kids of "mixed race or culture" find it easier to assimilate into the western Canadian culture with little debate or backlash to them. Since they are not accepted into either, they choose neither.

The unfortunate part is that they miss years and years of amazing, beautiful, educational, cultural experiences. These children need to learn and understand the meaning and benefits of being bi-or multicultural because they are also "Canadian." They are part of, not just a group, but more than one group, and more importantly, they are individuals, not categorized or classified to any one aspect of being. If they adopt and embrace both or all sides of their cultural or racial identities, they will be more than just boys and girls; they will see other cultures and see similarities and differences. They will see beauty and hope in other people. Most of all they will see that they are more than just "mixed" but embracing the diversity in themselves, as the new Canadian world, where they are accepted for who they are. They learn to accept themselves as the "sum of their parts make the whole just so much more interesting and beautiful."

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# My Creemaican (Cree- Jamaican) Son

*by Michelle Steinhauer, mother*

I was 19 years old when I graduated from high school and then went on to start the first year of college at a First Nation College. I decided it was time to move on my own, and moved to the city from the Reserve. I was a young student, no children and on my way to achieving my goal of higher education. I completed my Native Communications Certificate and then had my first child who is now 27 years old. He is Cree and the relationship with his father ended after 10 very unhealthy years. Today his father is involved in his life and we are grateful that we now have a good relationship between us.

I took a turn and met my next son's father. He was from Clarendon, Jamaica. I was so intrigued with his culture, his voice, the way he talked to me, and how interested he was to know about my culture. He met my family and I met his. Our relationship lasted for several years. Although the relationship ended he, and his family are still very involved with our son. It's a blessing.

How did I come up with "Creemaican?" His father was at a reggae party when I went into labour. When I gave birth to our son, my mom and aunt (who have since passed away) were with me during the birth of our son. My aunt took one look at the little man, held him, and said, "This is my Creemaican, mine, all mine," and we all laughed. Shortly after, his father showed up at the hospital and fell in love with our son.

So far, raising a bi-racial child has been quite the journey and continues to be. I talked to my son, Jermaine and let him know I would be writing this article. I asked him if he would like to contribute to the article. We discussed many memories and incidents. He reminded me of how tough it was in Elementary school; how both the white kids and native kids were mean to him. He was bullied, and did not fit in anywhere. No matter what school he attended, his experience was the same. I remember he would come home, pull his hair, try to brush the colour off his skin or try to flatten his butt. I had to keep his hair short and buy long shirts to cover his butt and put lotion on his skin and remind him that he was a beautiful child in my eyes, how much I loved him, and that what others say is their problem not his. As he got older, he learned to stick up for himself although his choices were not always great ones.

Throughout the years, Jermaine has been lost in a world of, "Where do I belong?" and "Am I good enough?" It has been painful to see and be a part of his journey.

Being Aboriginal, I have faced challenges living in a city full of racism. I was eight months pregnant when my father passed on and losing him was very stressful while pregnant. I believe Jermaine carried some of this stress. My children and I have had our journeys of self-discovery, finding our identities, increasing our feelings of self worth and actually liking/loving ourselves, individually and as a family. Our lives have been filled with our share of pain, joy, trials and tribulations. Nevertheless, we have maintained our connection to each other as a family, as well as our cross-cultural perspective.

Today Jermaine is twenty-one years and growing up into a beautiful man of color. He's willing to get to know his Jamaican roots and clearly looks Black more than Aboriginal. I am very grateful to his father and his father's family for always being there to love him and to show him who he is as a child of mixed culture and most of all, give him a sense of positive self-worth!

Jermaine is part of a diverse group of friends and has recognized his true friends are the ones who accept him for who he is. His best friend is a Creemaican; his other friend is from St Lucia/Trinidad; he has an African friend (unsure what country in Africa), Caucasian, Métis friends, and his Aboriginal bros. Like me, he's not racist and I'm grateful for that.

Jermaine loves the Jamaican culture: food (curry goat, oxtail, curry chicken, rice and peas) and now he's starting to cook and loves chicken with rice and gravy. He has his Jamaican flag in his room and his grandfather's picture of when he was Chief wearing headdress on his wall. As he matures, he's feeling a greater sense of self worth; he's showing his "true colours" being proud of his two cultures. He has never been to Jamaica and told me that one day he'll be going to Jamaica with me, and only me! (I have gone twice) I believe he says this because he's finding his identity as a bi-racial youth.

As a family, we share a great connection through our love for each other's differences and similarities. When the three of us go out to the mall or into community, we get some real crazy looks! My one son is green-eyed fair skinned Aboriginal, then my other son has curls and caramel skin and then me, clearly Aboriginal.

I remember one day we went for Jermaine's birthday supper and the waitress said, "Wow Miss, you sure are having fun with your friends."

We were all laughing with Jermaine's friends and brother. I said to her, "No Miss, those are my sons!"

Writing this article raised many emotions and memories; reminders that racism is unhealthy and knowing and accepting your roots is very vital to a well-adjusted, emotionally healthy life. Having an open heart and open mind can bring good things into your life journey. I love my sons, they have taught me so much, and they continue to teach me as they learn to accept who they are.

Mertella and NBCC, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the topic with my sons, as this too is a part of our healing journey and is straight from my heart.



# www.blackhistorycanada.ca

## Website for Black History Month across Canada

### NBCC Executives 2017/2018

The board of the National Black Coalition of Canada (Edmonton Chapter) is elected from the membership to be as diverse and representative of the community as possible.

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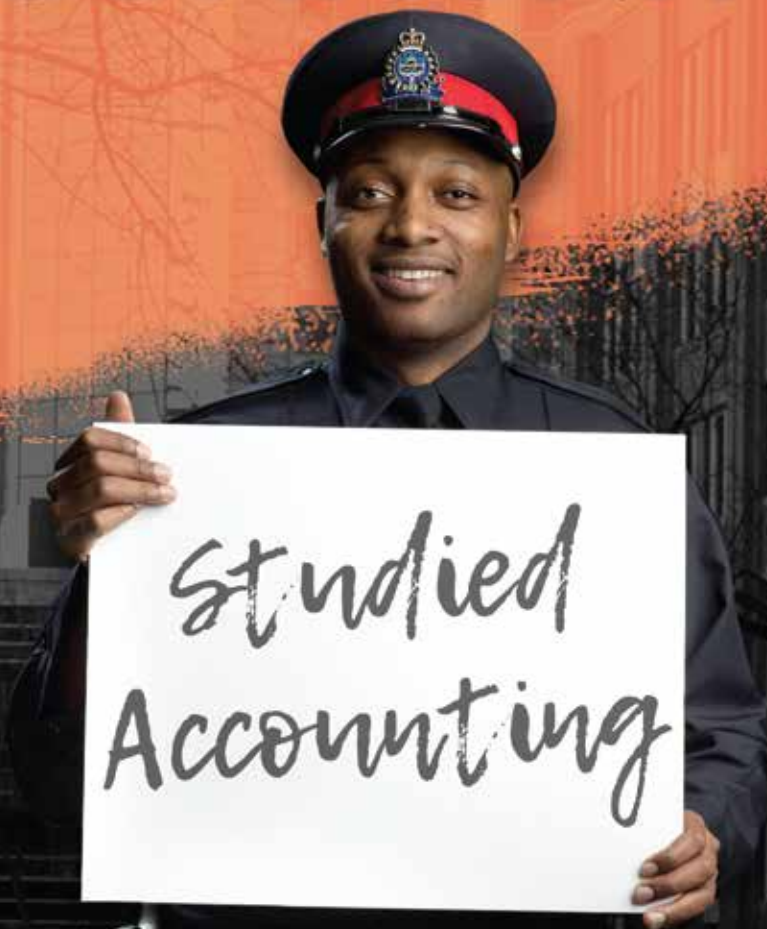
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# WE ARE CONNECTED TO ALL THINGS

*Stories told by Melvin Rabbit, Geraldine Cattleman (Indigenous Elders) and Phil Dua, Ghanaian*

Present at the interview were Melvin Rabbit, his wife Geraldine Cattleman and Phil Dua who had invited me. Elders, Melvin and Geraldine invited us into their home to share stories in the oral tradition of all Indigenous cultures. We presented them with Tobacco as required by protocol in the Indigenous Peoples' culture. I also presented Melvin and Geraldine with gifts from Jamaica: Peanut, cornmeal and banana porridge packaged in Jamaica.

Phil has worked with the people of Montana Reserve, Alberta since 2010 as the Director of Social Services and in 2015 became Director of Montana Integrated Services Department, an amalgamation of all the nation's human services. Phil was born in Ghana, Africa. I became interested when Phil said Melvin told him a Cree creation story of two brothers: the older brother was placed on the African continent and the younger brother was placed on the North American continent. The story showed the connection between the two brothers African and Cree Peoples. I was curious to hear the story from Melvin himself, hence the meeting. This meeting took a whole year to come to fruition.

I found it interesting that in the first five minutes of meeting, Melvin was making statements like "Connection," "we are all connected" "our brother is from Africa." I had not spoken to him or Phil about "being connected" or that was our "theme" for this year's Black History Month.

Phil spoke of his journey to working with the Montana Reserve and his feeling of connection and love for the People on Montana. "Connections" as Melvin re-affirmed.

Melvin and Geraldine's first story was of the migration of Indigenous peoples across North America. They laughed when they said that Indigenous people came across the Bering Strait. They said maybe the Inuit Peoples but not them, because the Inuit Peoples look more Chinese than they did. He talked about the changes over time with the coming of the white man to their shores, they were invited by the woman who said, "come ashore, our water is clean."

Beings other than humans walked the earth. Sasquatch exists as a race of Beings and they took pleasure in killing other beings, especially humans. The consequence for this behavior was that others would never see them again; they became invisible, although they continue to live in the forests. Phil connected this story with similar story in his culture; people referred to as "Forest Keepers."

Melvin spoke of the tribesmen of Africa who could run like or outpace gazelles. He saw them on National Geographic Channel (They watched this channel a lot). He said everyone is born with a Guardian and our Guardians can take any form. He said when he watched National Geographic channel he sees the African tribesman running and at times out-running the gazelles. The tribesman has taken on the spirit of the gazelle who is his Guardian. The Guardian is attached to the person and is inseparable. Melvin said their hunters have been given the gift of sight; they can see for miles.

Geraldine and Melvin spoke of their grandson who was 5 years old at the time and always seemed to be talking to someone. One day they had been travelling and he told them he had to get out of the truck. He got out and was on the side of the road doing a "pow-wow" dance. They laughed at his antics, and took pictures of him dancing. The camera captured pictures of two bears over their grandson. His Spirit Guardians.





Geraldine and Melvin spoke of the ceremonies of the Sundance, of Earth Ceremonies of Brazil and Maori peoples and their connection to Mother Earth. The ceremonies heal the Earth Mother. They said the elders predicted the impact of climate change many years ago. Melvin asked if Jamaica had mountains. I told him; yes, my ancestors came from the Cockpit country, the mountains in the centre of the Island. He laughingly said that soon we would be able to ski there. (Yipe! That's not funny! Hope we can still have our beautiful beaches!)



Melvin spoke of the importance of treating women with respect and supported Geraldine when she prepares the sweat lodge. European cultures treat women as lesser beings. In Indigenous cultures, prior to the coming of the Europeans, women were revered as they were part of the First Mother; the woman got the dream from the White Buffalo; the pipe was first given to the woman, and she in turn gave it to the man. As in Ghana, the Queen Mother, holds the highest position in the tribe. She is the spiritual and tribal leader. She chooses the bloodline of the Chief, prepares the ceremonies, and teaches the culture.

Melvin and Geraldine said never sit in judgment of people who are addicted to alcohol. They said these are the people with very sensitive souls and are troubled greatly by all they see. They drink to forget. The recovered alcoholic comes back with stronger prayers and faith in the Creator.

There were many more stories- they connected us to changing climate conditions, flies, moose, eagles, thunderbirds, seeds, the people living on Mother Earth (Red, Black, Brown, Yellow, White), the cultures that formed us - Cree, African, Inuit etc. From the Earth Mother we came and to her, we shall return. As Melvin said, we are connected to all things and all beings, yet he had not given us the story we came for- the connection between the peoples of Africa and peoples of North America – the two brothers. This will be for another day!

It was a pleasure to spend the afternoon with these wonderful people and listen to similarities in our culture from Ghana to Jamaica to Montana, Alberta. Hei! Hei!

*Written by Dr Mertella Montague*

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Ages 8-19, Socafit Studio (inside Dance Code), 10575-115 St NW

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