

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2019

Celebrating Black People's Contribution



"True leaders do not seek followers, followers are attracted to true leaders." - Nelson Mandela

Legacy is about the
next generation

True legacy is in people

Leadership is a relay, not a sprint

"As a leader, if you run hard enough, do your best and can pass the baton successfully with everything a bit better off, you can be proud." - Barack Obama

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NATIONAL BLACK COALITION OF CANADA-EDMONTON

YOUR NEWS NOW



DARYL MCINTYRE & ERIN ISFELD



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EDMONTON

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PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

February 2019

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone celebrating Black History Month.



Black History Month gives Canadians of all backgrounds a chance to celebrate the many contributions Canadians of African and Caribbean descent have made, and continue to make, to our nation. The activities and events planned for this month offer a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the history and heritage of Black Canadians, and to honour our rich cultural diversity.

I would like to commend the members of the National Black Coalition of Canada – Edmonton Chapter for promoting and strengthening multiculturalism 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 most memorable celebration.

Yours sincerely,

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



MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER OF ALBERTA

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

Each February, we take time to recognize the legacy of the black women and men who have left their mark on our province. Each struggle and every triumph tells a story, and these narratives continue to shape Alberta, as do the lives of all those of African, African-American and Caribbean heritage who arrive here every day.

Alberta's great strength is in its diversity. Our unique cultures and traditions make our province an exciting place to live and help us understand each other better. This is worth celebrating.

I'm inspired by the achievements and contributions of our black community, and I'm grateful that we all have the chance to learn more about and honour the black experience. Black History Month allows us to reflect on the past and see the future more clearly—a future in which every Albertan is part of building a better tomorrow.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Rachel Notley.

Rachel Notley, Premier of Alberta





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. Black History Month is a time for all Canadians to come together and acknowledge and celebrate the many achievements and contributions that Canadians of African and Caribbean heritage have made to our great country.

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 building and shaping the diversity and prosperity of Alberta. 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

www.AmarjeetSohi.com

Constituency

9225 28 Avenue NW

Edmonton, AB T6N1 1N1

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On behalf of 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 2019.

Since my election in 2015, it's been an honour to regularly meet with members of the black community in Edmonton and Calgary 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.

And at a time when we are sadly seeing the rise of voices of hatred and intolerance and when their rhetoric is being amplified and emboldened by political leaders, it's more important than ever that we take a proud stand in recognizing and celebrating the rich diversity of individuals and cultures that have helped and continue to help build our province and communities.

That's why, in 2017, I was proud to work with Premier Notley and Minister Miranda to have Alberta become the fourth province in Canada to officially recognize & celebrate February as Black History Month. And that's why I've been proud to support our government in forming an Anti-Racism Advisory Council, providing community grants for projects that raise awareness and understanding of racism and its impact on Albertans, creating a Provincial Hate Crimes Unit and offering grants to organizations that support women from diverse communities to take on positions of leadership and run for political office.

I am proud of my heritage as a black Canadian. I look forward to continuing to work with community partners like the Edmonton chapter of the National Black Coalition of Canada to recognize and celebrate the contributions of black Canadians and ensure that all have the opportunity to continue their legacy and thrive as members of communities across Alberta.

Happy Black History Month 2019!

David Shepherd

MLA, Edmonton-Centre



Message from His Worship Mayor Don Iveson



On behalf of City Council and the people of Edmonton, I'm pleased to join you in celebrating Black History Month.

Officially established in Canada in 1995, Black History Month celebrates the history, accomplishments and contributions of Black Canadians and highlights the stories of our thriving Black communities.

Over the next month, there will be many opportunities to explore the theme of "Black Migrations" and discuss issues, barriers and solutions around systemic discrimination that limits the rights of individuals. Together, these events will help promote diversity and inclusion in our city and encourage mutual respect among all our citizens.

My thanks to the National Black Coalition of Canada's Edmonton chapter and all those recognizing Black History Month. You are helping to create a more vibrant, welcoming city for us all.

Best wishes for a meaningful Black History Month!

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Don Iveson".

Don Iveson
Mayor



Message from the Edmonton Police Service Chief Kevin Brezinski



On behalf of the Edmonton Police Service (EPS), it is my pleasure to extend warm greetings to everyone attending Black History Month 2019 celebrations.

The EPS has a great appreciation for the many contributions our Black community makes to our city. From helping newly-arrived immigrants adjust to Canadian life, to hosting social events for friends and neighbours, Black community groups play key roles in ensuring Edmonton remains a great place to raise a family and a terrific place to do business.

Multiculturalism is one of the cornerstones of the truly vibrant community we have in Edmonton. The EPS is committed to ensuring our membership reflects the cultures of this great city and I encourage people of all ethnicities to consider a career in policing. Visit our website, drop us a line, we'd be happy to hear from you.

Warmest personal regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "KB".

Kevin Brezinski
Chief of Police



Welcome to Black History Month, 2019

Community Leadership: How do you ensure an effective succession plan? Are we as a community ready to "pass the baton" unto the next generation?

2019 Black History Month (BHM) theme developed from my feeling/observation that almost every week I heard another community elder had passed away. The question became important to many of us - are we, as a community training and

mentoring the younger generation to take over from us? Will our children and grandchildren remember our values and lessons as they move into their lives? What kind of community will they create for themselves and others? Most important, what are we doing to ensure that the next generation have the tools and opportunities to create a better society?

What we were talking about was succession planning in our organization and our community; "passing the baton." As a community organization, have we done our job in succession planning? Are we ready to "pass the baton?"

The principles of "Succession Planning" include "good leadership, finding the right candidate, mentorship, and a leaders who know when to physically leave, "to pass the baton." It's imperative as community leaders we are cognizant of the importance of succession planning. As we are voted in our positions, we must understand that these community positions are not lifelong and infinite. Even jobs we have, we eventually leave through retirement. For an organization to survive and continue to meet the needs of an evolving community, we need to ensure that our organizational and personal mandate must be, "We are seeking, finding, training, mentoring our next community leaders. Each of us hold this position in trust for a short period." Community organizations must retain the "wisdom of the elders" yet as times, people and technology change, we also need to change. We have to make it our duty and responsibility to engage the interest of the younger generation. It's about succession planning and sustainability, ensuring our values and our culture are passed on, not "holding "unto the old ways."

A true leader is one who sees the potential in every community member, takes the time to foster and develop this potential. A true leader will train, mentor, and role model the essence of a great leader.

An effective succession plan depends on leaders at all levels, in all areas and all age group. No leader should think of holding unto that baton forever. That's why we have lifetime members who can speak to the living history of a community or organization, aware of the past, plan for the present and able to vision the future.

The profiles showcased in this year's BHM Booklet are a representation of the diverse interest and abilities in the Edmonton community. Community Elders honour the younger generation who are finding their passion and living purposeful lives. We are proud and confident that we can "pass the baton" to the next generation of amazing Black Edmontonians.

**Dr. Mertella J. Montague,
President, NBCC,
Black History Month, 2019**

Awards of Excellence 2018 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 –

Ms. Chantal Londji Dang

The Fil Fraser award is presented to individuals or groups who have done outstanding work in literary, performing and /or visual arts



Rosalind Smith Professional Award Winner –

Inspector Joel Whittaker & Dr. Fatokun Olumide Johnson

The Rosalind Smith Professional Award for Exceptional and Prolonged Service from individuals or groups from the Black Community working in any profession.



Rosalind Smith Business Award Winner –

Mr. Shmelis Telila & Ms. Charity Durowaa

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. Kyneeshaw Brightley & Mr. McNeil Inyani Keri

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



Clarence “Big” Miller Award Winner –

The Melisizwe Brothers

The Clarence ‘Big’ Miller Award is for demonstrating excellence in vocal or instrumental performance, music composition or instruction.



Mary Burlie Award Winner –

Mr. Joseph Luri & Mr. Jibril Ibrahim

The Mary Burlie Award for Individuals and groups, regardless of ethnic origin who are delivering effective programs and / or services to the Black Community.



Peter Sugarfoot Cunningham Award Winner -

Ms. Ayanha Roy

The Peter Sugarfoot Cunningham Award is for demonstrating excellence in athletics or sports performance.



www.blackhistorycanada.ca

Website for Black History Month across Canada

NBCC Executives 2018/2019

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.

President: Dr. Mertella Montague

Vice President: Joy Thomas

Treasurer: Constance Thomas

Secretary: Carl Wilson

Program Coordinator: Desmond Francis

Youth Representative: Keenan Pascal

Public Relations: Nigel Williams



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Dr. Kara Otuomagie

Of British- Irish- Nigerian decent, Dr. Kara Otuomagie is an active member of our Edmonton community. As part of a local family business and as a chiropractor that works with athletes, including the Alberta Ballet and Grant MacEwan Griffins, she spends her time assisting her patients in accomplishing the personal and professional goals. In her spare time, you can find her supporting the Stollery Women's Network, as an active board member and running half-marathons in Edmonton's River Valley.

Dr. Kara completed her Bachelor of Science at the University of Alberta and went on to attend the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College and McMaster University for her Chiropractic and Acupuncture designations respectively.



As a child, my late father made it very clear that I would always be seen differently as a woman of color; and to allow my actions to represent who I am and who I want to be in this world.

"While I have lived in both Montreal and Toronto, Edmonton has always been home – why some may ask? It's the community – the vibrant network of people who work together to make Edmonton great. As a child, my late father made it very clear that I would always be seen differently as a woman of color; and to allow my actions to represent who I am and who I want to be in this world. Aspiring to be someone who makes a difference in the lives of others led me to my career, but more importantly, being someone who truly cares about others in an authentic way has brought me success. For me, being someone who is willing to listen selflessly, has always been what guides me to be a better person, for myself, and my community.

Hermon Mehari
Mortgage Associate



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Gospel Concert

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Jubilee Auditorium
11455-87 Avenue, Edmonton

Saturday, February 16th, 2019 7:00 pm

For more information contact:

780-425-0319 or info@nbccedmonton.ca

www.nbccedmonton.ca/tickets



National Black Coalition of Canada - Edmonton

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2019

Banquet & Awards of Excellence

Saturday, March 23, 2019

Chateau Louis Hotel: 11727 Kingsway Ave

Cocktails – 6:30 pm, Supper – 7:00 pm

Tickets: \$60

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:

Mary Burlie Award
James Bell Award
Fil Fraser Award
Clarence "Big" Miller Award
Youth (NBCC) Award

Peter "Sugarfoot" Cunningham Award
Rosalind Smith Award Professional
Rosalind Smith Award Business
Noel Chen Trade Award

For more information contact: 780-425-0319 or info@nbccedmonton.ca

For 2019 nomination forms and banquet information call NBCC-Edmonton (780) 425-0319 or visit www.nbccedmonton.ca



National Black Coalition of Canada - Edmonton



Calendar of Events

Black History Month Opening Ceremonies *NBCC event*

Come celebrate the official kickoff to Black History Month 2019 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 26 @ 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
West Edmonton Mall
8882 170 Street NW, Edmonton
Level 1 Entrance 55 – 56
Official Opening with Dignitaries: 1 pm to 3 pm
FREE

Caribbean Winter Festival

The Edmonton -CARIBBEAN WINTER FESTIVAL with a Taste of the Caribbean is a cultural/tourism event showcasing the culture, music, food, and dance while promoting a wide variety of local small businesses. The event features a food drive campaign which collects food for the Edmonton food bank, live steel drum ensemble, live calypso and reggae bands/artists, Caribbean gospel and African gospel performers, Caribbean and Latin dance groups and more.

Saturday January 26 @ 3:00 pm - 1:00 am
Aria Convention Center
9257 34a Ave NW, Edmonton
Youth \$13
Adult \$23
www.caribbeanwinterfestival.com

Black History Month Church Service *NBCC event*

This service is a celebration for all people.

Sunday January 27 @ 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Rhema Chapel
10830 96 Street, Edmonton
FREE

Jamaica Association of Northern Alberta - Annual Black History Month Breakfast

Entertainment representing our heritage.

Saturday February 2 @ 10:00 am
Garvey Centre
12626 - 126 Avenue, Edmonton
\$25.00
Contact:
Frank 780-975-8386
Ross 780-903-6455
Dawn 780-910-2010

VISIT www.nbccedmonton.ca





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

Health and Wellness Workshop

NBCC event

The focus will be on lifestyle changes in relationship to different aspects of nutrition, physical exercise and stress management/-mental health.

Saturday February 16, 2019 @ 10:30am

(please check website)

Edmonton Public Library, Clareview

FREE

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.

February 16 @ 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm

Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium

11455 87 Avenue NW

Edmonton

\$25

Tickets at Ticketmaster or call Joy at 780.298.7074

www.nbccedmonton.ca/gospel

Third Annual Footy for Fred Fundraiser

- Annual Soccer Tournament

Sickle Cell Foundation of Alberta

February 23 @ 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Edmonton Soccer Dome

3105 - 101 Street SW

Edmonton

\$20

AfroQuiz - Council of Canadians of African & Caribbean Heritage (CCACH)

AfroQuiz is an annual Jeopardy-style quiz competition for kids of all ages celebrating the rich history of people of African and Caribbean descent around the globe.

February 23 @ 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Citadel Theatre

9828 101A Avenue NW

Edmonton

FREE

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.

March 23 @ 6:30 pm - 11:00 pm

Chateau Louis Hotel

11727 Kingsway Ave

Edmonton

\$60

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"All leaders should be focused on passing the leadership to someone else and this is done elegantly through mentorship and succession planning."



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KEENAN PASCAL

I was the first child born to a Canadian-Caucasian mother and a father from Dominica on December 2nd, 1985. I've spent my life in Edmonton, growing with the city I love. I have a Bachelor of Commerce from University of Alberta and an MBA in Consulting & Strategic Management from UBC Sauder School of Business, including a term as lecturer.

I'm the co-founder and CEO of Token Naturals, a cannabis company focusing on extraction. Prior to cannabis, I spent more than eight years gaining financial and consulting experience at major banks such as Scotiabank and ATB Financial, paired with numerous entrepreneurial endeavours. With the support of the community that raised me, I've been lucky enough to enjoy a solid education that led to a career in finance, which in turn opened the door to a number of entrepreneurial opportunities.

This has extended into business; at Token we value and cultivate community through both our cannabis extraction arm and through our line of cocktail bitters.

Honouring community has become an invaluable part of our business success. The pinnacle of that community lies in Edmonton. Edmonton is home. I spent two years in Vancouver during my MBA and have traveled the world, but Edmonton is always where I will choose to put down roots. I love to explore and learn away from home so I can bring back the knowledge and experience of others and apply it here. We plan to continue growing the Token business in Edmonton and then scale across Canada and globally, all the while representing our hometown. We've already been lucky enough to represent Token and Alberta on two trade missions to Japan. I know that Edmonton is the best place to live and also to start a venture that can measure its success in the global marketplace.

At Token we have an inclusion policy we look to when hiring. We have an extremely diverse team and are proud of that. It was important to us from the get-go to bring jobs to the city in a new industry that isn't yet subject to ingrained discrimination. There is no stereotypical "cannabis employee". I feel it's very important to provide mentorship (and receive it) and to volunteer to give back. Time and effort spent contributing to community is never wasted.

I have been well supported to reach my goals. I'm always focused on building a strong community around me and having a positive effect on the people I interact with. My grandpa told us to live by the campfire rule:

"Always leave it better than you found it." Those words guide my choices every day.



Belan Samuel

I am Belen Samuel. I am a Zimbabwean-born Eritrean settler with migration experiences as a refugee, who currently exists on Treaty 6 territory. Born on November 3, 1992.

I completed my Master's Degree in Education in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta December 2019. I hold a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta with a double major in Political Science and Middle Eastern and African Studies (MEAS) and a double certificate in Peace and Post-conflict Studies as well as Global Citizenship.

My current employment is with a non-profit organization in Stony Plain, Alberta where I develop policies and procedures and maintain health and safety protocol for that supports children with disabilities.



My life goals as of yet are essentially rooted in my personal development:

- Pursuing ongoing education and continuing to learn in various ways.
- Taking the time to invest in myself: truly getting to know myself, my roots and histories, my intentions and redirecting as necessary is something I often try to do.
- Developing a life balance so that my stability is prioritized as opposed to the work that I am doing.

I am one of the few members of my family who has been able to access post-graduate education, especially if and when I complete a Ph.D.

My vision for Treaty 6 (Edmonton), I hope to see futures that Indigenous Peoples have been fighting to secure. On a more personal level, I would love to see more intentional relationships created between Black and Indigenous Peoples, by us, Black peoples. I hope that we are able to tackle similar and or shared issues and challenges that persist. I contribute towards this vision through my community involvement, anti-racism education and the critical lens I try to bring forth across various spaces.

My parents have always encouraged me to pursue education. I continue to pursue higher education. My culture, being Eritrean, African and Black have in various ways taught me the importance of strength and persistence. The self, and community/collective, work hand in hand and are able to complete each other. My ongoing involvement in the community has shown me that there is not only strength in community, but power is within the self.

"My parents have always encouraged me to pursue education."

Meric Moir

I'm Meric Moir. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been married for nearly seven years to my wife Jen, who I met in high school. We have three incredible kids under seven: Violet, Ronin, and Oswyn—and a fourth due in February. My mother's family is Jamaican, and my father's family is Scottish, but I was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. I've mostly lived in Edmonton, except for a few years in Ontario as a kid and two years as an adult in Nanaimo. My wife and I moved to Nanaimo with our, then, two kids for a change of pace, but we moved back to Edmonton to be closer to family when we had our third.



Right after high school, I went to the University of Alberta with help from my parents and academic scholarships, studying computing science. After three semesters, I realized that the program—and the future career—wasn't for me. I took a few years off practicing trades, doing various retail jobs, and starting my own business, a board gaming store in St. Albert. Board gaming has been a passion for me for a decade now. I love the way it brings people together around a single table. I love that I can flex my problem-solving skills face to face with my friends and have a good time as a competitor, collaborator, and host. Plus, I love the design, production, and work that goes into creating a board game.

Four years after I left U of A, I closed down my store and enrolled in a professional writing program at MacEwan University. Turns out, I loved to tell stories the most.

I've been a web writer and editor for more than four years with Stantec—an international engineering company based in Edmonton. In the last year, I've expanded my writing team and became a manager. In the next year or two, I expect to expand my team again. As a youngish professional in my field now moving into management, my goal is to apply the priorities of my generation to the workplace. I believe in recognizing mental health, and I believe in being honest and open with my colleagues, bosses, and employees.

I also believe that our greatest strength as a community is our diversity.

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of wisdom passed down from previous generations is something my grandmother used to say about thinking before you talk. "When you have something to say, ask yourself: is it true, is it kind, is it necessary."

Sarah Adomako-Ansah

I'm Sarah Adomako-Ansah. My birthday is June 14, 1989, which makes me nearly 30 years old. My family is from Ghana in West Africa. I'm Canadian, born and raised.

I graduated from the University of Alberta in 2013 with a Bachelor of Education, minoring in Special Education. Currently, I work for the Edmonton Catholic School District as a grade 5/6 teacher. I have taught in the same school, St. Pius X, for all 6 years of my career, thus far. I will be starting my Master's Degree this year in Educational Leadership in hopes of becoming a principal in ECSD.



My biggest goal is to be happy and find peace. My career brings me joy, which is why I want to further and better myself and become an administrator. My twin brother passed away 4 days before our 24th birthday, and currently, I'm travelling the road to peace.

I live in Edmonton amongst two amazing parents, my two remaining siblings, a slew of friends, aunts, uncles, co-workers, cousins, and students.

I don't know much about my heritage, truthfully. My eldest sibling has autism and my parents were told when he was young that they should focus on just the English language, so as not to confuse him. The doctors were proven wrong, as he is high functioning and conversational. I want to bring a sense of order to the community and also a sense of leadership. Selfishly, I am hoping to learn quite a bit. I feel as though I have a lot to learn still.

Very simply, my mother constantly finds a way to incorporate 'I love you,' in all of our conversations. It instills in me that I need to show my love and gratitude to everyone I meet. This is huge for me, as a teacher. I find that if my students know that I love and care for them, they are motivated to do well and try their best.

"Very simply, my mother constantly finds a way to incorporate 'I love you,' in all of our conversations. It instills in me that I need to show my love and gratitude to everyone I meet."



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NEVILLE WRIGHT

Meet Neville Wright, he's married to Wendy and the father of Nyah and Niko. Neville is an elite athlete residing in Edmonton, Alberta, a product of the Edmonton International Track Club. Neville competed in the 2005 and 2007 World University Games while studying to get his Bachelor of Physical Education in activity and nutrition from the U of A, as well as the 2007 IAAF World Championships. Neville's career in athletics and sport activities have spanned several years which makes him more than remarkable. In Track and Field he is a double Gold medalist as well as a double bronze medalists. In Bobsleigh, he is a four time National Gold Medalist and has competed in three successive Olympic Games - 2010, 2014, 2018.



Currently, Neville is an Acceleration & Speed Coach, Sports Performance Coach/Mentor, Remedial Massage Therapist and Motivational Speaker. Neville's personal goal is to continue to develop, learn and grow, always moving forward. Professionally, he sees himself as a role model who can inspire others by telling the story of his personal struggles. Confronting and overcoming these struggles have made him stronger, bringing him to where he is today, through determination to overcome and live a triumphant life.

Neville believes his life purpose is to be a representation of health and wellbeing through athletics and fitness. His personal experience as an athlete, and his professional training as a therapist and coach, gives him the experience and knowledge he needs to be an exceptional motivational speaker. He believes it's possible to rise above your environment and circumstances once you understand you do not have to be a product of your environment or your circumstances. This is how you achieve greatness; being a goal achiever.

Neville serves his community by making personal appearances in schools and community events; sharing his story and training to engage youths, parents and other professionals into making life changing decisions. He also supports different charitable events. Neville takes every opportunity to uplift, encourage and motivate others to never give up, to work hard and believe in themselves.



What motivates Neville to do what he does?

He said,

"I once heard someone say that you are always left with a choice, which made me realize that I decide if I will fall to my circumstance, or rise above it."

Faisa Omer

My name is Faisa Omer. I am 26 years old and I am Somali-Canadian. My parents immigrated to Canada in the early 90s to escape the Somali Civil War. I am the oldest of 7 children. My educational background includes a Bachelors in Neuroscience and Mental Health as well as a Masters in Neuroscience. I am currently pursuing a second Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology.

I am employed as a Mental Health Counsellor for the RAJO Project: The Somali Youth and Family Empowerment Project. I believe my greatest accomplishment was presenting my Master's Thesis on the holy Quran and the Brain at two universities back home in Somalia.



In the helping profession it's always important to maintain balance in one's personal and professional life. As you work with others, it's important as a professional helper that you engage in personal self-care. My self-care is expressing my creativity. When I'm not working as a Mental Health Counsellor I'm a freelance photographer, taking photographs of people in their happiest moments. I allow the creative side of my personality to help me maintain a positive outlook on life.

I am greatly motivated in the prospect of helping others and guiding them to help themselves as well. I see a future Edmonton that is tight-knit and cohesive. I would like to contribute to the vision of the community by using my career as a counsellor to reach those who might not necessarily have the means or the awareness of the accessibility of mental health services. I believe that taking active steps to maintain your mental health is not only extremely important but is imperative to a strong and stable community. If we don't take care of ourselves, then how can we take care of others?

"My father has always instilled in me that quitting is never an option which has driven me to accomplish what I have to date."

Gene Zwozdesky

By George Rogers

1948-2019

My dear friend Gene Zwozdesky or “Zwoz”, as he was affectionately known by many, was a man who left an indelible mark on his community, a very broad community, that being the Province of Alberta and indeed Canada. Gene was a trained educator who positively influenced many lives in his time at Victoria Composite High School (now named Victoria School for the Performing Arts). He was a very accomplished dancer and musician, who spent many years as a member of the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers, and later became its musical director; where their projects included a very successful tour of the Ukraine. He also served as musical director of the Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Company. He was an avid sportsman who excelled at golf, and served for many years as a minor hockey referee.



Gene gained greater prominence when he was elected to Alberta's Legislative Assembly in 1993, as a member of the Lawrence Decore-lead Liberal Party. He would cross the floor and join the Progressive Conservative Party under Ralph Klein in 1998, where he was first appointed to cabinet as the Junior Minister of Health. Gene went on to hold a number of other prominent cabinet posts including Community Development, Education, Health and Wellness, Aboriginal Relations, Deputy Government House Leader, and capped off his tenure as the Speaker from 2012 to 2015. I had the privilege of serving as Deputy Speaker with him, and this further cemented our 20-plus year relationship.

In addition to personal support, Gene was very instrumental in acquiring private and government support for many cultural groups, and was welcomed at many events across the Province. He was a very special friend to the Black community, and supported many events and numerous groups such as “Movements Afro-Caribbean Dance Ensemble” and others. His personal intervention helped secure funding for renovations to the Marcus Garvey Centre. He attended many events and welcomed members of our community to the Legislature on numerous occasions. Gene's accomplishments and his selfless dedication to his fellow man will be hard for anyone to duplicate; Alberta and all of us are better because of his legacy. We thank his wife Christine, his children, grandchildren and his extended family for sharing this great man with us.



May he rest in peace; “Walk good” my dear friend.



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Tarik Bramwell

My name is Tarik Bramwell. I was born on December 12th, 1977. I am Canadian of Jamaican heritage. I am father to an amazing 9 year old girl.

After completing High School I attended NAIT and graduated from the Engineering Design and Drafting program. I am a Senior Project Manager at Alberta Health Services in Capital Management. I am part of a team that manages construction projects on hospital sites to preserve and maintain the infrastructure of the buildings so they can assist in better patient care. I have held that position for 6 years after starting out as a janitor and working my way up to management through many positions. I have been with the Alberta Health Services for 20 years.



The most important role I could ever have is being a father. My main goal in life is to prepare my daughter to be ready for the world that awaits her. By being a good father and role model, I hope to instill in her core values that teach her, through my words and behaviour, and my own personal experience. I give back to our community with the knowledge I have gained from my own involvement with youths in need.

Statement said to me by my father: "You always have to be better and work harder than your competition."

My goal moving forward in my life, I recognize that I have learned a lot from life and I'm very fortunate to have had the role models and mentors that I've had. To give back to my community, I have been doing short presentations (as my work allows) to young people on my life story, focusing on what it takes to overcome setbacks and challenges; with a good balance of education, hard work, personal goals, a vision of what I want to achieve in life, develop good work ethics, all these will lead to professional and personal successes.

My final thought: Sometimes "You have to work twice as hard to get half as far."

Teach, give experience, and make someone greater than you are.

Nigel J. Williams

Nigel J. Williams, was born in Edmonton on May 23rd, 1978. He's of Canadian-Trinidadian heritage and is married to Charlene and blessed with four children, Nachon, Nuriah, Nylah, and Nayana

Nigel is an individual of many talents. His education in computer science, made him well versed in computer technology. He has good business ethics, makes a good living as a journeyman plumber, but also fills his life with music and volunteer work. He's a singer, motivational speaker, emcee and entrepreneur.



Nigel was born singing. Singing all through childhood from choir to choir, he developed an ear for sound. He has sung and played the piano for over 30 yrs. It is from this experience that he has tuned his voice and learned to train his ear for the sounds of soul. Ranging in octaves, he has sung all over the world from Canada, U.S.A., the Caribbean islands, and Europe. Currently, a member of the gospel choir Essence of Praise, he hopes to entertain listeners through the airwaves by bringing to Edmonton a gospel radio station in the very near future.

His further vision for his Edmonton community is to build a foundation for black entrepreneurs, musicians and inventors. Through the radio station he envisions, Nigel plans to provide many opportunities for artists, inventors, entrepreneurs and musicians to discover their talent and succeed in their personal dreams, goals and aspirations.

Remembered saying: His dad used to say, "Why save for tomorrow what you can do today?"

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