

Black Loyalist

HERITAGE SOCIETY

BIRCHTOWN, N.S.



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Debra Hill, Ethno-historian & Genealogist
Darrell Acker, Site Manager

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

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Many blessings have been bestowed upon the members of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society over the last year and it has been truly memorable.

The campaign leadership included Co-Chairs Allan Shaw C.M., Michael Duck, Elizabeth Cromwell, and Larry Gibson. The Campaign Cabinet included Dr. Vince Audain, Lee Bragg, Rita Deverell, Dr. Colin Dodds, Carolyn E. Fowler, Paul Kent, Dick Miller, Islay McGlynn, Clark Paynter, Rustum Southwell, Robbie Shaw, Carol Young C.M., and John Young. And of course, our friend, John Hennigar-Shuh, who said he would make it happen.

The Council of Patrons included Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Mayann E. Francis, Measha Bruegggosman, Lawrence Hill, Senator Donald H. Oliver, and Senator Don Meredith.

Through sheer determination and outstanding fund-raising abilities, the Campaign Cabinet has raised over \$1.9 million dollars to be held in trust for the construction of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre.

On February 5th we hosted the 7th Annual Chocolate Festival and Floral Presentation



with our home-town favorite, Neville MacKay. As always, Neville blew away the crowd with his floral creations and hilarious sense of humor.

On February 10th, 2012 the Black Loyalist



Heritage Society hosted an evening to launch the public

fund-raising campaign within our local community at the Osprey Arts Centre. Performances included the talented Shelley Hamilton, musician and actress and Shauntay Grant, award winning poet laureate. The interest expressed from our local community was phenomenal and a great evening was enjoyed by all.

This fundraising process has been a humbling experience for me. Each donation represents the generosity and trust of so many people, from the largest donations to the smallest has been truly inspiring and proves that so many people believe in our shared history.

On February 22nd, 2012 the Government of Canada, along with the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia, publicly

announced their support of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, Department of Canadian Heritage, will be contributing \$1.7 million; Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will be contributing \$800,000 and the Province of Nova Scotia will be contributing \$750,000. This was a day filled with many emotions for our supporters as we were witness to the fulfillment of our long standing dream.

The Ground Breaking Ceremony for the



construction phase took place on June 27th, 2012. Founding BLHS Member Everett Cromwell, along with Birchtown resident and Black Loyalist descendant, Daniel Race, turned the sod. It was a historical

event and joyous celebrations.

On April 28th spoken word performer Shauntay Grant brought her blend of words and music to Birchtown in celebration of National Poetry Month. Pianist Silvio Pupo, from Cuba, provided the musical soundtrack for Shauntay's newest collection of performance poems, called *t(her)e*. The work was developed in part at the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia (Cherry Brook) and the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, and it explored the artists' personal connection to people,



places, and landscapes in Nova Scotia's historic Black communities. The performance featured musical collaborations

with pianist Silvio Pupo, and vocalists Chelsea Amber, Suzy Hansen, and Dominique Oliver-Dares. The program was presented by Wordrhythm Productions with support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, and the Black Loyalist Heritage Society.



Our Annual Mother's Day Cheesecake Festival was held on May 13 with special musical guest Dave

Burbine. Moms enjoyed delicious cheesecakes and several went home with door prizes.

The Old School House Museum opened for the season on Friday, June 1st. We welcomed Natalia Ensor, our Student Program Coordinator, and Interpretive Guides Suzanne Newell, Janel Hartley and Billy Davis.

Remember, you can visit the museum anytime in the off season by calling Arlene at 875-1310 to arrange a guided tour. We will do our best to accommodate you!

On June 17th, we hosted our annual Father's Day Roast Turkey Supper at the Birchtown Hall. The Founders Weekend fund raiser was held from July 20-22 where we once again had our barbeque tent on Historic Dock Street in Shelburne.

Again this year the staff with the help of the summer staff and a few others from the community provided two cultural day camps for local children. The day camps were held July 9-13 and August 9-13.

On August 3rd at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax we hosted a special evening to recognize and thank the donors of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. Special guests included author Lawrence Hill, poet Shauntay Grant and musician Marco Simmonds.

Over the next year or so we will be extremely busy with the construction of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. We believe this to be a wonderful addition to our community as it will engage discussion of a part of nearly forgotten Canadian History. We will welcome visitors who hopefully will become interested in our community and the things that are happening here.

We have hired MHPM Project Management who will provide management services during

the construction phase of the BLHC. Services will include comprehensive planning, coordination and budget control for all aspects of the project. MHPM Project Team has a high level of expertise, extensive experience in the design and delivery of building projects and in-depth knowledge of construction delivery methods.

Our relationship with the Nova Scotia Museum will become more formal as we move to become a partner with the Family of NS Museum. This has been a long awaited dream and finally we will show and tell the story of the Black Loyalists, the original founding settlers of African heritage in Nova Scotia.

I would like to say good bye and thank Elaine MacAskill and Mary Anne Joudrey for their service as Board of Directors and wish them all the best. Both ladies dedicated countless hours to our events and fundraisers and were always there to lend a helping hand. They will be missed by all. As we say goodbye, we also welcome new board members Sylvia Hamilton, Carolyn Fowler and Rustum Southwell. Our new members have experience on non-profits boards and have a wealth of knowledge in African Nova Scotian history.

I applaud the dedication and hard work of our staff, board members and volunteers who continue to give countless hours of service to ensure the success of our events, programs and fund-raisers. The time they put in really shows and I thank them for doing a remarkable job.

Elizabeth Cromwell

The Future Black Loyalist Heritage Centre Presented by Emera Incorporated

For over twenty years, the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, centered in Birchtown, has been building awareness of the significant and compelling story of the Black Loyalists and Birchtown itself.

It has been a long standing dream of the Society to create a Heritage Centre in Birchtown to preserve and proudly celebrate the story of the Black Loyalist - our roots, our journey to freedom, our struggle for survival and contributions to the broader community.

In 2009, a team of architects, Filum Limited & Peter Henry Architects Limited, were hired to develop detailed plans for the 10,400 square foot Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. The blueprint and costing documents were completed in March 2010. Camus Productions Inc. completed the exhibit schematic design in 2012. The capital cost and exhibition development are projected to be \$7M.



The Black Loyalist Heritage Centre will be both a place of remembrance of the heroism of the Black Loyalists in the face of colonial racism, a celebration of the Black Loyalist legacy and a meeting place for diverse communities. The building will feature tall curving walls, babbling brook, main exhibit hall, multimedia technology, gift shop, community kitchen, boardroom and



offices. As well, a large green roof is both an

environmental gesture and a reminder of the first winters in Birchtown, where the people lived in desperate conditions in

“Pithouses”. The building will serve as an interpretive centre and a community gathering space, offering facilities suitable for meetings and symposia.

The design will highlight the Black Loyalist history and heritage, and also include aspects of community development and tourism including development of heritage educational programs and resources. The centre will accommodate core and special programs.

Over the past four years, the Society has been negotiating with all levels of government to secure commitments for significant contributions for both the capital costs and future operating expenses for the Centre. In late March 2011, the province of Nova Scotia committed \$750,000 to support the development of both the building and the exhibit. The province has also agreed to invest \$250,000 annually in operating support for the Society. On May 24th, 2011, Canada Cultural Spaces Fund confirmed \$1.7 million towards the project. In September 2011, Atlantic Canadian Opportunities Agency came aboard with \$800,000. The Municipality of the District of Shelburne donated \$50,000 in August 2011 and the Town of Shelburne donated \$5,000 in June 2012. These agencies have been involved in highly open and transparent negotiations with the Society and have indicated financial support totaling \$3.8 million. That leaves \$3.2 million to be sought from the community. Once the centre is built, we will become the 28th member of the Nova Scotia Family of Museums.

On February 11th, 2011 at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, members of the

ARTICLE BY:
ARLENE BUTLER,
PROGRAMMING &
OUTREACH
COORDINATOR

BLHS hosted a “Friend” Raising Dinner to share our vision of creating the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre and to spark interest in joining our project. Invited guests included successful entrepreneurs and business owners, history enthusiasts and human rights activists from all over Nova Scotia.

Renowned author of the Book of Negroes, Lawrence Hill, spoke to the crowd with a strong voice yet gentle heart. He stressed the importance of obtaining international recognition for the Black Loyalists and their contributions to global history. Play-right and songstress Shelley Hamilton reminded us all of the human connection we share.

The dinner resulted in the establishment of the Fundraising Cabinet along with several substantial donations to the project. The cabinet is currently undertaking the fundraising campaign to secure \$2.2 million from the private sector for the capital build. Currently we have fundraised \$1.9 million.

To make a donation towards the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre, please send a cheque or money order to PO Box 1194, Shelburne, NS, B0T 1W0. All funds raised will be held in trust and a charitable receipt will be issued.



Black Loyalist Heritage Centre Ground Breaking Ceremony



Members of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society were witness to the historic Ground Breaking Ceremony for the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre on June 27th, 2012. With the sun shining down upon us, over 150 invited guests sat in awe as the BLHS President Elizabeth Cromwell spoke to the crowd. Obstacles were



many and requests were denied but years of hard work and perseverance resulted

in this dream come true. The Centre will be a place for all Canadians to learn of the courageous men and women who battled against obstacles, prejudices and discrimination while contributing to the greater good of society.

The BLHS officially announced the naming of the *Black Loyalist Heritage Centre - presented by Emera* at the ceremony in Birchtown, NS “*Emera and its shareholders are extremely proud to support our local communities,*” says Chris Huskilson, President and CEO of Emera Inc. “*The Black Loyalist story is compelling and inspiring, and celebrating this history nurtures the vitality of the community as a whole.*”

Founding member and Black Loyalist descendant, Everett Cromwell, along with youth and Black Loyalist descendant Daniel Race, had the honour of breaking the ground. Sizwe



Adekeyode, native of Sierra Leone, Africa, preformed a libation ceremony to pay homage to our ancestors.

ARTICLE BY: SHARI SHORTLIFFE OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Special guest speakers included The Honourable Percy Paris, Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs; The Honourable Leonard Preyra, Minister of Communities Culture and Heritage; Sherm Embree, Warden of The Municipality of the District of Shelburne; Chris Huskilson, President and CEO of Emera Inc. and Allan Shaw, Co-chair of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre Fundraising Campaign.

SITE MANAGER UPDATE BY: BEVERLY COX

What an exciting fall we have had here in Birchtown. The weather has been beautiful and we continue to get fall visitors who are interested in Black Loyalist story and the Birchtown site.

MHPM Project Managers have been hired to assist the BLHS in completing the final touches on the project move forward plan for the future Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. An in-depth review of the project budget and a Class A project cost estimate revealed the project was over budget.

The BLHS Board of Directors, staff & project managers have been working closely all summer and fall to finalize construction budgets with the architects & exhibit budgets with the museography designers. We still continue to fundraise for the project as we have a shortfall of \$1.6 M.

We truly look forward to starting construction next spring with an anticipated 14 months of construction with an official opening in the summer of 2014.

Three members of our organization attended the African Diaspora Heritage conference in Bridgetown, Barbados. They were part of a delegation from Nova Scotia accompanying Minister Paris. All returned home with fresh ideas, rejuvenated after sharing our Nova Scotian history to the rest of the world. Yes, the world, participants travel from all corners of the world to participate in this power house four day conference.

Arlene Butler, Program Outreach Coordinator and I had the opportunity to attend the Gros Morne Institute of Sustainable Tourism - Edge of the Wedge program in Rocky Harbor Nfld in October. What an intensive, informative program we got to experience and learn the tools necessary to transform the tourism sector with experiential tourism. We look forward to sharing our ideas with other community partners & taking tourism here in our community to another level.

