An African Canadian Heritage Association Resource

FOR LOVE OF AFRICAN CHILDREN

Maintaining Excellence in African Heritage Programming

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Table of Contents

What's happening to African heritage programs?

This question may not be on the minds of many African parents but it should be. Black youth and educators consistently report that Black or African[1] heritage programs are dwindling in both numbers and quality. Funding support from Education Boards are drying up. Political momentum amongst Black parents appears to be on the wane. High levels of alienation of youth of African heritage persist in our educational system. What can be done? What should be done?

The members of the African Canadian Heritage Association (ACHA) do not pretend to have all the answers. We do recognize the importance of the questions however, as well as the critical role that Black leadership must play in addressing the issues. This report is one piece in that big

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[1] The terms Black and African are used interchangeably within this report to reflect the current widespread use of both terms within the African Canadian community.

puzzle. The ACHA, (formerly the Black Heritage Program - BHP) recently completed a study of its 30 year history. Following 6 months of information gathering, including surveys, focus groups, interviews and visits to a variety of local heritage programs, the organizers held a symposium in November 2000 to secure consensus on future direction. In essence, to strategize and discuss solutions to the challenges facing African Heritage Programs.

With this document, as well as its research report, *Best Practices in Heritage Programming*, ACHA seeks to generate momentum in the community towards the renewal of African Heritage programming.

The Historic Gathering

The symposium on *Best Practices in African Heritage* proved to be the first of its kind in Toronto.

More than 80 people attended the symposium. Many of which were teachers and supporters of heritage programs that had participated in the research project. Some participants were also educators in schools with large Black populations. Some had their own heritage experiences to relate; others wanted to fill the heritage vacuum in their

schools. What followed were lively and challenging discussions with ACHA participants. **A sense of momentum developed throughout the day and participants repeatedly expressed the view that something new may have been born at the symposium.** This report distills the key findings of the research report and the symposium. The emphasis is upon readability and functionality for any African heritage programmer.

Background

The keynote speaker at this unprecedented gathering of African Canadian heritage programmers was **Malik Yakini,** the Founder and Director of an independent African school in Detroit, the Nsoroma Institute. Malik described various aspects of their school, including learning activities for both students and teachers such as trips to the Caribbean and Africa. Brother Yakini also explained the philosophy of the program that utilized African cultural values and systems such as the Nguzo Saba (described within) and Ma'at (The complete life and living philosophy of ancient Kemet). He shared experiences about the ongoing resource challenges that his Institute faced in striving to build an African

centred place of learning. For instance, Brother Yakini described their efforts to secure a diverse mix in the cultural make-up of their teachers (i.e. linguistically and ethnically) so as to best reflect pan-African realities as well as the challenges this posed in finding the right people. Ten years-strong, Nsoroma is still expanding with tremendous parental and community support.

Resource people at the conference included researchers Akwatu Khenti and Debbie Thompson, as well as a range of local expertise, including Aisha Wickham, Dr. George Dei, Kai Camara, David Melville, Veronica Sullivan, Denise Jeffers, Nneka Rhooms, Tamari Kitossa, Tafari and Dr. Gloria Fiati.

The sessions generated a great variety of recommendations. The following points reflect common themes and topics around which some consensus emerged. African Heritage programs should strive to:
➢ Encourage true knowledge of self'
➢ Rites of Passage should be an intrinsic aspect of heritage programming
➢ Build traditional family values, entrepreneurship, dramatic arts etc., into a Rites of Passage (Children need to see people living not just

KEY PROGRAMMING ISSUES & CONSIDERATIONS

✓ The African Origins of humanity and civilization are downplayed, ignored or distorted within mainstream accounts of human history.
✓ Africa in general, and Black people in particular, are almost completely absent from the popular accounts of philosophy and science.
✓ Foundations for World Civilization found in the Nile Valley(such as architecture) are generally depicted as works of Non-Blacks/Non-Africans
✓ The destruction associated with the European Trade in Africans and Colonialism is downplayed; especially with respect to the links to current circumstances.
✓ The historic experiences and conditions facing African people within Canadian society are not highlighted and do not inform Canada's account of its first three centuries.
✓ Current conditions, and stereotypes such as *Black crime,* are not rooted in the historic experiences of Black people within Canadian Society.

Key Study Recommendations

✓ Heritage programs should build on Kwanzaa principles, the Nguzo Saba, by developing a range of Kwanzaa competencies from elementary to university level learning.

✓ Programs should develop gender specific programming components -modules for the children as well as adult learning activities for the parents and volunteers - to ensure that critical needs and issues are addressed fully for all participants and not ignored.

✓ Programs should constantly monitor the participants for signs of boredom and should have in place specific activities to minimize boredom among the older youth (more problem centred learning, more specifically targeted educational activities for the older youth)

✓ Having an educator develop enriched learning program for teens and adults provides added incentives for long term commitment by participants as they go through different developmental stages of life.

✓ Whenever possible, programs should include community and spirituality components more directly in program plans.

✓ The program should be promoted as a community to the participants.

✓ Independent heritage programs should strive to utilize administrative support to ensure consistent professionalism and organization. Breakdowns due to poor organization serve to defeat the purpose of the lessons.

✓ Heritage programs should ensure that all aspects of the program are evaluated consistently and that participants' knowledge and values are surveyed at the beginning and end of each annual session.

memorizing the Nguzo Saba)

➢ Swahili should be taught as a second language
➢ Foster parental involvement and planning as a community
➢ Structure a clear sense of purpose and sound organizational skills throughout activities and in the lesson plans
➢ Programming should contain visual, knowledge and physical representation of African people
➢ The education should be co-operative. There should be instructional and pedagogic practices that promote collective learning and responsibility
➢ Equity, accommodation and values should be part and parcel of the curricular approaches
➢ There should be a recognition of emotionality, spirituality and intuitiveness
➢ A training program for volunteers
➢ Evaluation should aim to document the efficacy of the activities that are part of the program and to ascertain how child (and parent) has changed behaviour and values (especially eliminating self-defeating behaviours)
➢ The Evaluation should also be broader than a test; seeking to assess

self-esteem of participants through self-representation; reaction to put-downs; journal writing

The External Context

The historic context within which African heritage programs function, inform and shape the learning priorities of the programmers. It is therefore essential for effective assessment of such programs that context be taken into account.

In examining various curriculum texts across the world, it is evident that African 'history' is either ignored or distorted for the period prior to the European Slave Trade that began in the mid-fifteenth century.

Very little cultural context is offered for Africans as they are found in North America in the 17th centuries and thereafter. The roots of African people are viewed as being of little significance and unconnected to their North American experiences. African centred accounts of the Black Experience must therefore begin with a 'reconstruction' of the cultural connection between the African (continental) and African Canadian experiences in order to correct for this deficiency. This is essential

to giving a sense of cultural continuity, and humanity in the sense of independent experience, to African Canadians.

A second critical point is that the experiences of African Canadians are not analyzed as those of a distinct ethnic entity, a people with a collective history. Black history is often a disjointed person history. Thus, in reading the story of African Canadian experiences from the 17th century onwards, it appears as though one is encountering disjointed recordings of individual Black experiences as with Mathieu de Costa, Oliver Le Jeune and Marie-Joseph Angelique. No collective thread appears to connect different eras or stages of the Black Canadian experience.

Another critical feature of dominant accounts or understanding of African people is the general lack of historical background offered or concern with the development of the African Diaspora as an entity. Although the ebbs and flows of the African Canadian experience is significantly tied to experiences of Africans elsewhere (in the Diaspora), one will rarely find readings which provide an integrated understanding of how the different segments of the Diaspora interact and

are inter-related. Case in point, the African community of Nova Scotia grew and diminished significantly because of British battles with Jamaican Maroons.

Another underlying assumption is that there is no sense of cultural unity amongst people of African descent. Black peoples, even though they share basic cultural traits, are usually treated as unrelated and their differences highlighted. Their religious practices and social characteristics are not explained in relationship to each other. For instance, the various religious denominations that have emerged in the African Canadian community amongst different groups (be they of American or Caribbean origin) have developed similar manners of worship and liturgical focus. These religious adaptations, which can be found all over the Western Hemisphere, support the existence of underlying cultural unity.

There is also little emphasis upon how Africans have resisted domination throughout the ages. In the case of the situation in Nova Scotia, the experiences have not been characterized as domination. Thus, the pattern of resistance evident in this group providing the...*continued on page 5*

Why have an African Heritage Program?

The key reason why African heritage programs hold tremendous value is described in the ACHA research study as **"the need to have some 'educational space' given over or shared with the Black experience."**

The following comments are reflective of persistent themes:

✓ *"There are virtually no places within the predominantly Euro-centric school curriculum where peoples and places and times important to peoples of African origin are heard and valuable discussion is able to take place in a non-threatening way"*

✓ *"These programs provide a protective mechanism for African children who come scarred from racism...These programs strengthen their identification of who they are through exposure that allows them to see the richness of their heritage..*

✓ *"The program is an outlet in which cultural/heritage awareness and historical and contemporary contributions are exposed. For children of African ancestry...the program is essentially a buffer and aid in dispelling the negative stereotypes that exist within society, and within the school system itself."*

Living Skills for Black Youth

✓ Family and community life need to be appreciated and celebrated consistently

✓ Historic social and economic barriers need to be identified and understood

✓ They need to know how their present place in the world is contrasted to earlier greatness

✓ They need to know that they can achieve against all odds

✓ They need practical strategies for surmounting contemporary challenges, including the need for lifelong learning, making and keeping money, and planning for retirement

✓ They need to learn from the biographies of people who went through similar experiences and triumphed

✓ Black youth also need to learn nutritional, spiritual and cultural self-preservation

proportionately largest number of returnees to Africa is often lost.

Finally, there is scant analysis of the obstacles Africans have faced from a global perspective. The ebbs and flows of African Canadian life have not been related to global efforts to control Africa and African people.

One gets a sense of British and French colonists in Canada interacting with Blacks independent from the designs and actions of Europe with Africa. Indeed, the Colonial encounters with Africans, whether in Jamaica, Haiti or West Africa, were crucial to decisions regarding the expansion of slavery in Canada. New France's desire to build a diversified economy upon slave labor, thereby reducing its dependence on fur, were stymied by France because of the economic role of the Caribbean. Thus, the conditions facing enslaved Africans in Canada's historic New France owed a lot to French intentions regarding the colony.
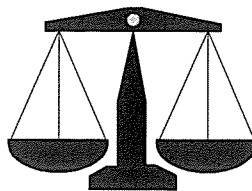
The Meaning of African Centredness and Afrocentricity

The term **Afrocentric** refers to the process of centering or socializing young people of African heritage within their own cultural, historic and contemporary circumstances so that they can become active agents in their own lives. African centredness refers to the source and content of the value system being used: the system referring to values developed over millennia within the African continent and among African Diasporic people.

From a heritage perspective the distinctions are primarily semantics as they both essentially refer to the process of inoculating Africans against negative cultural self-esteem and under-achievement.

Heritage programs are considered to be both Afrocentric and African-centered when they aim to empower Black youth and their families with a sense of African identity that fosters self-actualization, a sense of purpose, creativity and faith. That sense of identity can be

5

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based upon several different traditional African value systems: for instance, the principles of **Ma'at** - truth, justice, propriety, harmony, reciprocity, balance and order. It can also be built upon principles enunciated by the social scientist, Dr. Maulana Karenga, in the value system known as the **Nguzo Saba**. This system elaborates upon 7 principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. What these value systems all share is a focus upon the collective sense of self, collective need and interests. As John Mbiti found in his comprehensive work, African Religions and Philosophy, traditional African values have always emphasized "**I am because we are; and because we are, therefore I am**"(Mbiti, 1970:103). Thus, an African centred perspective means that heritage program strategies should treat individuals as reflections of their family, community and society: incorporating geopolitics, racism, sexism, classism, community realities and family issues in the program planning. It is important to note that positive identity and cultural self-esteem have been shown to strengthen the ability of youth of African heritage to face socio-economic and cultural barriers. Among the

key attributes that African American researchers describe in African American youth that abstain from destructive behaviours, are feelings of self-worth emanating from positive acceptance of oneself as a black person and a sense of identification with accomplishments in which one can take pride.

At-risk African American youth have also responded positively to programs with a focus on African values such as unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, co-operative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

Questions about the Kwanzaa principles, the Nguzo Saba

What are they?

The Kwanzaa Principles, the Nguzo Saba, were developed by a social scientist and Black Nationalist leader, Dr. Maulana Karenga, during and following the turbulent years of the American civil rights struggles (the 1960s). Dr. Karenga named the principles **Nguzo Saba**, or First Fruits, based on various Continental and Diasporan African values and practices related to harvest celebrations. Each principle is known by its Swahili name because Karenga sought to *...continued on page 7*

The Symbols of Kwanzaa:
1. Crops - Mazao: The historical roots of Kwanzaa : the first fruit or harvest celebrations. It symbolizes self-conscious coming together and productive labour.

2. Mat - Mkeka: The symbol of tradition. A traditional African item to reflect a commitment to tradition, history and foundations.

3. Candleholder - Kinara: Symbolic of the parents of all Black people, the continental Africans, it also holds the seven candles.

4. Corn - Muhindi: Represents children and all the hopes and challenges attached to them.

5. Gifts: Zawadi: Symbolic of the seeds sown by the children. Suggested gifts: A book and a heritage symbol.

6. The Unity Cup: Kikombe cha Umoja: This cup is used to pour libations and share as a united people. With the libations, we call forth ancestors so as to evoke their achievements and sacrifices.

7. The Seven Candles - Mishumaa Saba: The candles represent the 7 principles that are the heart and spirit of Kwanzaa. By lighting these candles we symbolically illuminate the 7 principles.

build upon a language system that was not restricted by ethnicity.

Why is it important to focus upon values?

African culture continues to be influenced negatively, and to some extent derived from, media images and stereotypes associated with popular culture.

More importantly, there are many features of popular culture that is inconsistent with key features of African values and heritage. For instance the concepts of illegitimate children, single parent families and children being equal to their elders. From an African perspective, family has never been a fixed nuclear set of 4 persons. Nor has parenting been a primary mother-father responsibility. Indeed, children have never been equal with the elders in the family. It is by such comparisons that we come away with a sense of inequality and inequity.

What is the rational behind Kwanzaa and is it really relevant?

The Nguzo Saba is a system designed to inoculate African people against the experiences and social forces that operate negatively upon their thoughts and actions.

The essential rationale is that historic experience with slavery, colonization, and modern marginalization, has left African people unbalanced. The way Black people function in society continues to be a major challenge to the well being of African children. The unbalanced representation and participation of Blacks in business, health, education etc. continues to undermine the self-esteem of the Black individual and justifies a range of self-destructive behaviours.

The Nguzo Saba provides a set of values that illuminate the distinctiveness of African culture and being-ness. The Kwanzaa ideas also foster a higher level of social functioning among African people as well as between Africans and non-Africans.

These principles should serve as guides for living 365 days a year. Collective conditions influence every Black individual to a great extent and Umoja (Unity) speaks to these issues. Umoja: To strive for a principled and harmonious togetherness in the family, community, nation and world African community. According to Karenga, "*is a principled and harmonious togetherness not simply being together*". It is active solidarity. The unity of

the father and mother, the community and the nation, are equally important.

Living amidst value system that is contrary to many cultural traditions calls for clarity of cultural self-definition. Karenga points out that Kujichagulia the principle of self-determination, demands *"that we as an African people define, defend and develop ourselves instead of allowing or encouraging others to do this. It requires that we recover lost memory and once again shape the world in our own image and interest"*.

Ujima, the principle of collective work and responsibility, reflects the value that individual effort is a reflection and/or instrument of communal or collective survival. The optimal way of functioning is with mutual respect and encouragement. According to Karenga, *"it is a commitment to active and informed togetherness on matters of common interest"...it also means that we accept the fact that we are collectively responsible for our failures and setbacks as well as our victories and achievements"*.

Ujamaa, co-operative economics, reflects the value attached to co-operation. Karenga asserts that the

optimal way of functioning is with mutual respect and encouragement. *"It is essentially a commitment to the practice of shared social wealth and the work necessary to achieve it."*

For a people that are bombarded with a range of negative paths and possibilities, Nia, the principle of purpose, is critical. Nia makes our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

For a people with tremendous potential, Kuumba, the principle of creativity, is an invaluable resource. In Karenga's words, it is *"to do always as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it."*

Imani, the principle of faith, remains critical to the survival of African people. According to Karenga: *"In the context of African spirituality, it begins with a belief in the creator, and in the positiveness of the creation, and logically leads to a belief in the essential goodness and possibility of the human personality.... Faith in ourselves is key, faith in our capacity to self correct."*

A Model of African Heritage Learning for Youth

I. African Values
Children, youth and their families learn about African values that have stood the test of time such as respect for Ancestors and Elders, parenting traditions, saving practices. They also learn about the contrary values that are having a disastrous impact.

II. African culture
Children, youth and their families learn about the role of expressive and creative arts in sustaining African life. The critical role of the drum, African patterns of communicating and living are the areas of study.

III. Family history & Connectedness
Children, youth and their families study their own family history and connect it up to the larger African community. People, places, geographic and historic paths are examined and related to the wider experiences.

IV. Paths to fulfilment.
Children, youth and their families learn about alternative paths and the skills necessary to succeed in different walks of life. The role of education, skills and attitudes and its relationship to self-determination should be examined and understood. Areas of family ties and community are also examined.

V. Living well/Coping great
Children, youth and their families learn about functioning effectively in this society. The basic economic skills, health and well being practices, ways of accessing community resources are strengthened.

VI. Pride and Respect
Children, youth and their families learn about habits associated with proud and respectful functioning in family, community and society. Positive courtesies and habits, including attitudes to time, organization and relationships are illustrated and examined.

VII. Evaluation and Graduation
Children, youth and their families take time to understand their recent heritage journey, celebrate their achievement and entrench lessons learnt for the struggles ahead.

What do you need to know and do to start an African heritage program?

The participants at the ACHA symposium identified the following essentials:

1. Commitment and dedication are essential prerequisites among all participants, especially the adults.

2. A shared idea or philosophy is critical to guide the program; especially its choices about learning objectives, choice of reading materials and activities etc.

3. Identifiable community resources to tap into and integrate into lessons. This includes knowing where to find and access bookstores such as A Different Booklist, Burkes Frames and Books, and organizations such as the Congress of Black Women.

4. Structure: All the good intentions will come to naught if there are no structured programs and processes in place to 'raise participants' knowledge and awareness'.

5. Accountability: All participants must be held accountable and be supported to deliver on promises and responsibilities to the program.

6. Celebrations: The keys to Black survival, finding joy in communing with each other, humour, laughter, music and dance, should also be treated with the highest priority. This does not reduce the importance of serious scholarly endeavour; rather, it is enhanced.

7. Independent funding sources: The programs that endure are the ones that maintain a heavy dose of self-reliance.

8. Continuous evaluations and innovations: In the contemporary era, failure to evaluate and innovate is a recipe for redundancy.

A Sample Program for Children

1. Perform an opening ceremony: a unity circle and/or a group pledge.

2. Start journal entries.

3. Form African village groups.

4. Have communal snacks.

5. Conduct heritage instruction according to age, village set (especially 2 1/2 - 4; 5-6; 7-8; 9-11; 12+).

6. Have components for creative expressions such as poetry, dance and storytelling.

7. Have a theme of the day.

8. Have a closing ceremony; a unity circle and/or reflections.

Best Practices Identified by Program

School based Programs

✓ Bringing community into the school in a real way, as volunteers and resource persons, is essential to filling the positive role model and knowledge/images gap in schools

✓ Take home and school based projects, school displays, assemblies, and guest appearances are important mediums for African students to transfer knowledge to parents, staff and the community

✓ The heritage program should be integrated into the school day. Being added on to the end of the school day does not work because students are tired and hungry

✓ Lessons should be connected to all areas of the modern African

...*Continued from page 9*

World: the African Continent, Europe, the American continents and the Caribbean
✓ Evaluation of all ages and stages is critical for determining the effectiveness of programs and making improvements where necessary

By Independent School & Saturday Programs
✓ Programs such as these are able to provide positive reinforcement of
✓ Children's African-ness/Blackness in ways

are not likely to happen in mainstream schools. This reinforcement takes place through the children viewing African people in decision making roles, exercising leadership, teaching and volunteering. It also happens through the pervasive depiction of positive Black images and through socialization aimed at building resistance values (to counter stereotypes of Black attitudes and values)
✓ The involvement of parents and community

allows for immediate feedback about children's accomplishments, issues and collaborative responses
✓ The annual gatherings and follow up build a strong sense of community and communal sharing
✓ The experience of being among other African children offers each child an opportunity to be part of a mainstream (the sense of being part of a majority vs. being always in the minority)

Some Research Findings

➢ 69 individuals, comprising 92 % of the participants in the study, viewed the BHP/ACHA experience as positive and fun
➢ 66 participants, comprising some 88 %, perceived the environment as safe and stable
➢ 83.1% of participants reported that the program raised their level of pride. This may not be a significant achievement however since 86.2 % of the participants indicated that they were proud of their heritage prior to joining ACHA. Similar revelations hold true for achievement in raising educational commitment (69.6%), commitment to science and technology (63.6%) and social awareness (86.6%).
➢ 82.8 % reported learning about the enslavement of African people and 92.8% that reported learning about Kwanzaa.
➢ 68.7% of the past participants reported celebrating Kwanzaa after learning about it at ACHA.
➢ 77.5 % of the participants reported an appreciation for the community prior to joining ACHA while 95.7 % expressed the post program view that participation in community activities was important.
➢ 33% of the female participants reported putting the lessons to use while only 24% of the male participants expressed a similar pattern. In total 57% of the participants indicated that they utilized the lessons learned at the BHP/ACHA in their daily lives.

Concerns that need to be addressed

✓ 54.7% of participants disagreed that identity was important; with 8.7% disagreeing with the statement that all Black people are Africans and 10.1% not sure.
✓ Teacher did not always show up therefore learning was inconsistent
✓ Program not always organized, didn't always follow through on plans
✓ Not meeting needs of children...insufficient challenge...Children grew bored
✓ Program failed to grow and build on information provide

Equal and equitable partnerships with community groups around joint programming and evaluation about their heritage and community in ways that relate to the participants' lived experiences allows for more relevant evaluation and deeper awareness

Conclusions from Recent Heritage Programming Research

There were unmistakable signs of accomplishments in the findings. Evidence of extraordinary voluntary commitments indicates that the people in African heritage programs are an exemplary group in terms of both accomplishment and attitude. Researchers encountered signs of real learning, high levels of satisfaction with the BHP/ACHA experience, signs of changes in cultural practices (the most difficult to change). At the elementary school level, the BHP/ACHA appears to be successful beyond any doubt.

Problems appear to begin when children approach adolescence and need different kinds of stimulation. The quality of programming provided to high school age youth does not match that which is provided in the earlier stages. This gap should be seen as a program priority requiring immediate

attention, as it is a primary source of dissatisfaction.

Demographic Implications

The details that have been elaborated also indicate complex circumstances with few simple and clear-cut options available to the BHP/ACHA leadership. For one, the effort that went into securing the data deserves further consideration. Researchers encountered resistance to the compilation of the data; especially to the efforts to compile demographic information, prior values and subsequent impact. This may complicate plans to establish an evidence-based approach to programming. Greater effort will have to be made to educate current participants about the value of collecting and analyzing hard data.

A second point concerns the issue of gender. The greater number of female participants, as well as respondents, suggests that gender issues should certainly be featured in the heritage programming, if only to enhance understanding of the dynamics underlying the gender ratio of the participants. The complicating but important factor is that female participants also reported making greater daily use of

INDISPENSABLE AFRICAN HERITAGE KNOWLEDGE
The African Origin of Civilization

✓ The earliest evidence of Homo sapiens, modern human beings, is the fossil finds in the East African Valley of Omo, which have been estimated to be at least 130, 000 years old.
✓ African were the first human beings to populate Eurasia about 35,000 years ago. They developed what is called the Aurignacian Industry in Europe - stone tools such as the hand-axe. This is Europe's oldest stone industry.

African Arts, Philosophy and Sciences

✓ The Africans of the Nile were the first to have specialists in the various forms of medicine. These were separate guilds of bonesetters who treated fractures and dislocations, dentists and dieticians. Indeed, a historical document - The Edwin Smith Papyrus, contains minutely described descriptions of 48 cases of brain injury.

✓ Documents such as the Moscow Papyrus contain problems involving the surface area of the sphere and the volume of the pyramid. For instance, these ancient Africans could calculate the areas and volumes of abstract geometric figures such as a circle, the area of the sphere was known to be 4 pi r squared.

11

✓ The Dogon of Mali possess a very sophisticated view of our solar system. They have known for at least 700 years that a billion worlds spiraled in space, that the moon was dead, that Sirius A had a companion star (a 20th century discovery), and that Sirius B had an elliptical orbit around Sirius A that took 50 years to complete

✓ The Mano of Liberia have used principles of vaccination and quarantine to deal with infectious diseases such as small pox for hundreds of years...and all African people have vast knowledge of plant use

Africa's Influence upon other World Civilizations

✓ The list of philosophical ideas owed to Africa includes the philosophical concept of the opposites, harmony, fire, mind, immortality and the summum bonum. These ideas were attributed to Pythagoras as well as to Heraclitus, Parmenides, Democritus, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

✓ Plutarch in the 2nd century AD, wrote that the wisest of the Greeks: Thales, Plato, Eudoxus, and Pythagoras, spent years studying in Egypt. Socrates, in the Phaidros, called the Egyptian God Thoth, the inventor of writing, astronomy and geometry.

...Continued from page 11

knowledge gleaned in the program. Thus, more male directed programming might actually be called for. This could be encapsulated in a Rite of Passage Program.

The level of continental African representation also calls for further consideration and possible study. Participation in the BHP/ACHA is not reflective of proportions within the general Black population. It may be that issues of critical concern to people born in the Diaspora are of less concern to individuals with African languages and cultural norms fairly intact. However, evidence of patterns of significant under-achievement, alienation and unemployment among African born youth suggest that this is unlikely to be the case in the long term.
The pattern of family income, well above the norms for Black Toronto, also gives rise to several considerations. At first glance, it suggests that lower income individuals and families cannot afford the time or the costs associated with participation in a heritage program that mandates parental involvement. The pattern of Black church involvement, with its attendant voluntary requirements upon this very group, suggests a more complicated picture. Priorities may be a large part

of the issue. This appears more likely when one considers that there have been several lower income parents who participated effectively in the BHP/ACHA. It may also be the case that the ACHA parents are simply more cognizant of identity needs because of the negative stereotypes and forces that they encountered in their efforts to achieve and succeed.

African Canadian history suggests that the generations of parents that have participated in the BHP/ACHA are contending with historical challenges that have confronted all Black immigrants. A pattern persists across two centuries such that many African Canadians, arriving with higher levels of education, skills and resources than the local Black population, have had to face the prospects of their descendents being less educated, skilled and resourced. Further study will be required to reveal whether ACHA parents have been able to withstand and surmount this historical force.

The Endless Possibilities in African Heritage Education
When most people think about African heritage education, they think its about teaching dates, people, places and accomplishments.

This is where the process begins. However, where it goes and ends is a different matter. **As ACHA and other heritage program determine their directions and strategy for this period in African people's history, they should keep in mind the various African approaches to education that can be built upon...not just for African people but also for humanity.**

It's important to do this because the challenges facing African people in the 21st century are very complex. It no longer involves simply oppressive systems denying African people access to information and knowledge. Rather, African people themselves are tuning out and not pursuing essential knowledge in critical areas, especially technology and ·science. Wider challenges to humanity also have special relevance for African people and these need to be addressed, including the issue of genetic engineering, globalization, the impact of the Internet.

The driving question may very well be: Do we need to take more pages from these ancestors' books for our heritage programs? Put another way, what do we need to learn from the various educational experiences of African people, given our current struggles?

Functioning in the Western World

Consider basic literacy issues and how we dealt with these. There has always been **Africans who recognized the life and death implications of basic literacy and numeracy skills and sacrificed much to provide us with such education.** For instance, in the Maritimes we had Black Loyalist educators like Isaac Limerick (Halifax), Adam and Catherine Abernathy (Preston), and in Little Tracadie, Thomas Brownspriggs. During 19th century Canada, we had educators like Mary Ann Shadd, Wilson Abbott and Isaac Cary.

The African headmasters and teachers in the Caribbean also managed to educate children in the most adverse circumstances to be equal to any student anywhere regardless of origin or circumstances. In the Caribbean it was the nameless teachers and headmasters who created educational conditions that produced Samuel Selvon, William Harris, Derek Walcott, Vic Reid, George Lamming, Eric Williams and Walter Rodney.

A relevant question at this

INDISPENSABLE KNOWLEDGE (continued from page 12)

✓ Black Moors played a major role in Islamic and Western civilization. Up to medieval times in Europe, prominent Black people were identified by the fact that they had Maur, or a derivative, as part of their name. For instance, Mauritius the Moor, was known to be Black because of his name. So too, Johannes Morus, Vizier of Sicily around 1100 AD.

✓ The Moors laid the groundwork for the development of eyeglasses. Their scientists in 1100 were the first to trace the curvilinear path of rays through light. They introduced principles of astronomy in the 8th century that would not be accepted in the West for 400 years.

The African Canadian Heritage

✓ The first known Black person to arrive in Canada was Mathieu Da Costa. This Portuguese speaking explorer arrived in 1604 and soon secured a job as a translator; translating French into Micmac

✓ The second known individual of African heritage was named Olivier Le Jeune. He arrived in 1628 as an enslaved African child (from either Ghana or Mauritius) and was eventually sold for 50 half crowns. He is the first enslaved Black person on record to have been sold on what has since become Canadian soil.

✓ Marie-Joseph-Angelique is an African Canadian woman who set a fire as a diversion for her 1734 escape from slavery in Montreal. Her case was front-page news because the fire caused considerable damage to the city. She was caught, tortured and hung.

point might be the following: **Are we now standing at a point where scientific and technological literacy demands the same recognition and commitment from African leaders and educators?**

Functioning as African People

We need to also go beyond the obvious educational needs associated with functioning in the Western World to what is needed by way of education to function as African people. The structures and underlying concepts behind such systems as the Kemetic Mystery System (Egyptian Mystery System) should receive systematic attention. **As Heritage programs contemplate alternative ways to educate people for lifelong learning, they should not hesitate to incorporate ancient and relevant traditions.** It may be significant that one of our ancient systems was organized as a priesthood with priests organized into various orders and trained according to their rank - this made the priesthood the custodians of learning until the modern era and pointed to Africans as the first professors in Higher Education. The Seven Liberal Arts were the focus of the Egyptian Mystery System. These subjects formed the basis of the education of the priests, who also had to study astronomy, mathematical symbolism and hieroglyphics.

The process of education was not simply the acquisition of knowledge but the transformation of self, the path to becoming a new person. We made it essential for our students to study nature. Indeed, it may be due to such studies that all African belief systems assert the essential unity of all things in the universe (and one supreme God). Interestingly, ours was the first education system with an open admission policy such that access was not tied to heredity. The children of the Pharaoh went through the same process of education as the children of the workers.

It may also be of contemporary relevance that the first step in the ancient educational process was to be trained as a scribe. Five thousand years ago, one began one's education by copying serious works. This system of education was highly respected and there were large numbers of "foreign students" trying to get this education. An ancient scholar/journalist named Plutarch wrote: *"Witness to this also that the wisest of the Greeks: Solon,*

Thales, Plato, Eudoxus, Pythagoras...came to Egypt and consorted with the priests". It is important to note that aspects of this African system still survive among isolated peoples like the Dogon of Mali.

Consider the Opportunities

If the heritage challenges look daunting and unrealistic you need to revisit societal changes taking place around you. We have entered a period in world history that has moved beyond the adage of 'thinking beyond the box'. Futurists are now saying that the only way to survive during this period is "to kick down the box".

This is what African people need to do. And it does not always have to be obvious. Booker T. Washington kicked down a box when he built the University of Tuskegee in America and provided the educational base for millions of Black people. He was often disparaged because his vision was not always obvious. Marcus Mosiah Garvey was also a great box kicker. Who would have thought before Garvey that you could build a multilingual, mass global movement without the support of mass communications...before the Internet. **So heritage**

programmers, do not hesitate to kick your boxes down. You, of course, will not need to be reminded that the more things change, the more they stay the same. So be sure to nurture the traditions that have worked for African people over thousands of years.

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