



# The Preserver

BLACK CULTURAL CENTRE FOR NOVA SCOTIA NEWSLETTER

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## Historic Visit of Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers

Another highlight of the 2009 summer season came in the form of the thrilling visit by the Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers.



On August 7th these modern-day Maroons brought their music and their story. It was marvelous! The visitors were much moved to learn that our Centre tells the story of the Trelawny Maroons who migrated to Nova Scotia in 1796 and who later settled in Sierra Leone over 200 years ago.

The drummers and dancers portrayed cultural moments of the Jamaican Maroon heritage. The major performance, called 'Dance Afana!', the 'machete dance', tells the story of the deportation of the Trelawny Maroons to Halifax in 1796, effectively ending the Second Maroon War against the British. The highly acclaimed troupe was formed by Col. Frank Lumsden, elected chief of the Maroon settlement of Charles Town, one of four major Maroon settlements in Jamaica. Col. Lumsden paid the Black Cultural Center a great honour by presenting his personal abeng to Dr. Oliver, President of the Black Cultural Society. The abeng is a cow horn that Maroons used to communicate (see article by Dr. Henry Bishop for more detail) The Centre will

prepare an appropriate display using the abeng that was presented to us. Dr. Bishop joined the drummers for a portion of



their performance, an experience that he treasures.



## The Jamaican Maroon "Abeng"

By Dr. Henry Bishop

The Maroon community of Jamaica have a truly remarkable history. This independence, communalisms and self-sufficiency are values stemming from their "freedom-focused" and strong-willed nature.

The leads me to the topic of a ceremonial and traditional practice used as an anchor of Maroon identity to this very day. This is the "abeng" horn player.



The "abeng", is a side-blown cow or bull horn, currently played during various rituals. Historically, however, it was once communicated warnings and/or messages between the maroons settlements, especially during early conflicts between the Spanish and British (1738-1739) & (1794-1795). The "abeng" was an ingenious method of conveying secret coded-information that reflected the ancient tonal

language feature of the Ashante people of Africa.

Nowadays, the "abeng" is used to summon residents to town meetings, announce emergencies, and deaths. As well is plays an important role in recognition of holidays or special events!

The Black Cultural Centre was honoured with an authentic "abeng" donation by the "Charlestown" Maroon drummers & dancers leader; Colonel Frank Rumsden.

## President's Corner

Dr. Leslie H. Oliver



The Centre was enriched when the Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers brought their music and enthusiastic desire to embrace the Maroon heritage. We are now designing a fitting way to display the abeng (Maroon cow horn) which they presented to us on August 8th. The thrilling celebration of African Nova Scotian and Jamacian Maroon experiences was made through their expressive drumming and dancing.

The Centre staff, Directors and officers had several opportunities to participate in "Black Freedom 175", Nova Scotia's celebration of the 175th anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery by the British Parliament on August 1st, 1834. On August 5th the Black Freedom 175 celebration included an event at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, featuring the crew of freedom Schooner Amistad, members of the Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers and

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**President's Corner continued**

local youth community performers. The Honorable Percy Paris, Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and Her Excellency, Evadne Coye, Jamaica High Commissioner to Canada, addressed that gathering on behalf of their governments.

This year's annual gathering of the African United Baptist Association included a unique special occasion, the unveiling of a national historic plaque to honor the memory of Rev. Richard Preston, the AUBA founder. We have been active over the past several years in helping the government identify and document historically significant events and we are proud to witness the unveiling of this important historical marker. The Black Cultural Society will continue to promote efforts that commemorate historically significant people, places and events that provide witness to the contribution of African Nova Scotians in building Canadian society.

September 19, 2009 will be our AGM and Board election. Memberships should be renewed right away for anyone who wishes to participate in the nomination, election and AGM procedures.

The Centre continues to welcome a steady flow of visitors. We appreciated the energetic work of our Summer Students, Matthew Byard, Samuel Provo, Jayde Tynes and Nehnika Williams and we wish them great success as they return to their university studies.



Board Member, Sarah Hayward of Sydney

July and August saw the reopening of our renovated elevator and basement rooms at the Centre. They had been out of service since the fire and flood almost 9 months earlier. The photo shows Board Member, Sarah Hayward of Sydney as she emerged from the elevator on its first day back in service. The elevator is important for many visiting tourists who continued to use the Centre as a source of information and inspiration. The renovated basement meeting room provided an ideal location for hosting a meal for the Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers when ANSMA brought them to the Centre prior to their performance on August 8th.

**People @ the BCC**

*A brief profile of staff, and volunteers who help make the operations at the Black Cultural Centre successful.*

**Jayde Tynes**

My name is Jayde Tynes I am eighteen years old, and a first year student at Dalhousie University. I was born in Halifax Nova Scotia and at the age of eight I moved to London,

Ontario and lived there for seven years. I attended H.B Beal Secondary School there where I studied dance along with the basic high school academics. When I returned to Nova Scotia I continued my post-secondary studies at Auburn Drive high school. The change in high school environment from Ontario to Nova Scotia was a major culture shock but I feel it was also a positive improvement. I was fortunate enough to become involved in my community by becoming an assistant coach, and program director, and involved in extra curricular activities within my high school. By graduating high school with honors I was able to receive scholarships paying for over half of my first year. At Dalhousie University I will be studying Commerce a co-op program, majoring in International Business. My future aspirations include continuing my education onto a MBA, and gaining employment within the Canadian Embassy.

**This Newsletter Published by:**

The Black Cultural Society of Nova Scotia  
1149 Main St., Dartmouth, NS B2Z 1A8  
Tel: 902-434-6223 or Toll Free: 1-800-465-0767  
with support from:

**Nehnika Williams**

I am a First year student at Dalhousie University in the Bachelor of Arts Program now entering into my second year. I was privileged to be employed at Black Cultural Centre and had an opportunity to meet lots of people. While conducting tours at the Centre this summer, I gained lots of knowledge of Black history and stories of courage and pride. The displays and history showcased at the Centre is something everyone should take an opportunity to see.

My future aspiration is to be a Immigration Lawyer, and being a part of the Centre this summer was a good stepping stone.

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Your Support !*

**Join Us !**

Become A Member of the  
Black Cultural Society / Centre

**Annual General Meeting**

Saturday September 19, 2009  
10:00 AM

Black Cultural Centre  
1149 Main Street,  
Dartmouth, NS

All Welcome: General Public  
and Society Members.

Call us for details  
1-800-465-0767  
www.bccns.com