



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC



NUMBER 014



1st SESSION



41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, November 24, 2011



Chair

The Honourable Rob Moore

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Thursday, November 24, 2011

• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Good morning. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

We're very pleased to have with us today two witnesses: Rosemary Sadlier is president of the Ontario Black History Society, and Anthony Sherwood is director of Anthony Sherwood Productions.

We were going to have with us Mr. Leslie Oliver, from the Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia, but as those of us who are from Atlantic Canada know, we got a little bit of a snowstorm the other day. He was unable to fly here. We tried to teleconference him in, but that wasn't going to work. But he does want to appear, and he is going to appear at a later date.

Welcome to our two witnesses.

I explained to Mr. Sherwood earlier that at this committee we don't expect at this point that everyone is going to have every answer on 2017. We're only beginning our study now. We're looking for people to bring their perspective, because one thing we have heard is it's not too early to start planning. That's one thing we've heard from witnesses who have been a part of major productions before.

We are going to get started now. Each witness will have 10 minutes, approximately, to present, and then we'll go into our rounds of questions.

Mr. Sherwood has a video he'd like us to see first.

So, Mr. Sherwood, I'll give you the floor and you can cue that up.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood (Director, Anthony Sherwood Productions Inc.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before I introduce the video, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Anthony Sherwood. I'm a film producer, actor, writer, and director who has worked in the entertainment business for over 35 years.

My production company has produced many high-profile projects for the federal Government of Canada, and for the past 20 years we've produced a number of events for the Department of Canadian Heritage. For seven years, I was the national co-chairman of the March 21 campaign for the federal government. March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I also helped create and formulate for the Department of Canadian

Heritage the "Racism. Stop It." national video competition for students across the country, which still exists today.

Just recently I produced a special project for the Department of Canadian Heritage commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. This was produced in Halifax, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

Mostly recently, this year I produced for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada a series of promotional videos to promote Black History Month.

I'd like to introduce one of those right now.

Thank you.

[Video Presentation]

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: The nation of Canada has been built by many hands of different colours. Canada's diversity is what makes it strong and makes it the envy of the rest of the world. Today, Canada is a mosaic of many different cultures that have made significant contributions to the development of our great country. I'm here today to speak about the contributions made specifically by the African Canadian community and to ask that they be recognized in the celebration of Canada's 150th birthday.

People of African descent have been in Canada almost as long as the British and French have been. When the British and French first arrived in Canada, they brought their African slaves. Some of those enslaved Africans went on to become important heroes and heroines of our country. It would be a crime not to include the contributions of African Canadians in the 150th birthday celebration.

People of African descent have been some of the first settlers in many regions, from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

Mathieu Da Costa was an interpreter for the French explorers to Canada in the early 1600s.

Rose Fortune came to Nova Scotia in 1783 and later became the first female police officer in Canada.

Richard Pierpoint was an African slave from Senegal who helped form the first all-black military unit that fought during the War of 1812 to protect Canadian soil. Richard Pierpoint was one of a group of Canadians who were some of the first settlers in southern Ontario.

Mary Ann Shadd was the first woman of African descent to publish a newspaper in North America and started the first integrated school in Canada in 1852.

In June 1858, Mifflin Gibbs arrived in the city of Victoria, on Vancouver Island. Gibbs opened a general store, and the business was the first challenger for the Hudson's Bay Company in Victoria. In 1866, Mifflin Gibbs was the first black representative elected to the Victoria city council and the first black politician in Canada.

Sir James Douglas was the first Governor of British Columbia and has been called, the father of British Columbia. Governor Douglas's mother was of African descent. In 1861, Sir James Douglas helped form an all-black regiment called the Victoria Rifles, the first military defence unit in British Columbia.

Elijah McCoy was born in Colchester, Ontario, in 1844. He became one of the most prolific inventors in North America, and it is from him that we get the expression, "the real McCoy". In 1872, McCoy created his greatest invention, the automatic lubricating cup for steam engines, which revolutionized railway transportation. Elijah McCoy was known throughout the world. His inventions were used on engines, on train locomotives, on Great Lakes steam ships, on ocean liners, and on machinery in factories. Today, his lubrication process is used in machinery such as cars, locomotives, ships, rockets, and many other types of machinery. McCoy is credited with having helped modernize the industrial world with his inventions.

With such a long, prestigious, and rich history, African Canadians' contributions to Canada and the world must not be overlooked in the 150th birthday celebration.

This is my recommendation: that the theme of the 150th birthday anniversary be "We are one".

One of the legacy projects for the 150th birthday of Canada could be the creation of a permanent national African Canadian museum. To limit costs, this museum could be created in an existing building, possibly in Toronto, Halifax, or Ottawa.

There are several strategies on how to develop this national museum. The Canadian War Museum could be used as a possible model.

Once the location of the museum has been selected, the Government of Canada could partner with local municipal and provincial governments to secure a venue or building for the museum. Provincial departments such as the ministry of tourism and culture and the ministry of education are possible provincial partners.

Private sector sponsorships and partnerships could be selected for the project. Banks, oil companies, and automobile companies could all be approached to help sponsor the museum.

Petro-Canada and Ford Canada may want to sponsor an Elijah McCoy exhibit in the museum because both of these companies have utilized his invention.

African Canadians have a long and rich history in the Canadian military. The Department of National Defence could possibly help sponsor this exhibit.

● (0855)

Black History Month is one of the biggest celebrations in schools. The national museum could offer educational tours for schools and students.

People of African descent have endured oppression because of slavery for over 200 years in this country. For hundreds of years they've been subjected to inhumane atrocities, to segregation, being barred from enlistment in the Canadian military by the federal government in the First World War and the Second World War, and being denied employment, which prevented them from pursuing their dreams and aspirations. The least the Canadian government could do on the 150th anniversary is to recognize the significant contributions of the African Canadian community by a legacy project creating a national museum.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sherwood, and thank you for those concrete recommendations. That's something we haven't got a ton of as yet. Those are certainly things we will be able to consider.

On to you, Ms. Sadlier.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier (President, Ontario Black History Society): Thank you very much.

Before I begin, I want to say that I almost don't have to do anything because of the wonderful presentation that we've already received from Anthony Sherwood.

I also should take a moment to just frame myself as being the descendant of people of African origin who arrived in this country in 1783 and of people who arrived in this country because of the first freedom movement of the Americas, the underground railroad.

I should also add further that most of the people who enlisted in Canada's armed forces from New Brunswick in the Number 2 Construction Battalion era were related to me. I mention this because I grew up not knowing this. And if this is who I am and if this is what my legacy is, how can people who do not have this as their personal experience come to know about these particular kinds of contributions?

Mr. Chairman and honourable members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, I'm honoured to have been included in this early phase of the study regarding preparations for the pending 150th birthday of Canada. I congratulate you on putting together such a timely committee, which should lead to some important discussions about what Canada is and what Canada will be in the future.

I believe I have been invited to represent the Ontario Black History Society, La Société d'histoire des Noirs de l'Ontario, and to share my opinions and the opinions I gleaned during my brief opportunity to consult others about aspects of commemoration and celebration as they connect to this pending anniversary. I am delighted to be able to do so.

I would like to briefly familiarize you with the OBHS.

Founded in 1978 by educators, the mission of the OBHS is to study, preserve, and promote black history and heritage. As the first such black historical organization in Canada, our reach has long extended past Ontario to encompass the entire country. Now, with social media, I am happy to report that we have clear and often daily global reach.

Among the first items of business for the newly formed OBHS was to petition the City of Toronto to have February proclaimed as Black History Month, which was successful, effective in 1979. Then Ontario also proclaimed it, not without a little help, and subsequent to that, the OBHS was successful in initiating the process, introducing it to the Honourable Jean Augustine, the first woman of African descent who was an MP. That resulted in the national declaration of February as Black History Month across Canada, passed in December 1995, effective in February 1996.

At the celebration to mark the first national observance of February as Black History Month in Canada, right here on Parliament Hill the Government of Canada announced the creation of the Mathieu Da Costa Challenge, a national essay and art competition geared to students, designed to honour the first-named Canadian of African origin who arrived on Canada's east coast about 1604, if not earlier. While highly successful, I have recently learned that this program has been suspended, and I am unclear about what national initiative will replace it.

However, the OBHS program continues to include our annual kick-off brunch to launch February as Black History Month, to which you are all invited. It will be on Sunday, January 29, in Toronto. OBHS offers our speaker series, the OBHS leaders of tomorrow conference, the youth engagement program, the official OBHS Black History Month poster, our newsletter, and the nomination of people, places, and events to be formally recognized.

We advocate on African Canadian history and heritage matters. We have an oral history and photographic collection. We conduct internships for university students interested in the study of black heritage. We have travelling exhibits and we have the most hit-upon African Canadian website in Canada, if not North America, www.blackhistorysociety.ca. We assist in the launching of the Canada Post Black History Month stamps. We have an annual black heritage site tour. We have a Facebook presence. And we have the newly created OBHS Black International Film Festival, BIFF, films that are by or about people of African origin in Canada or beyond.

- (0905)

For BIFF, the OBHS partnered with the National Film Board to share films from their collections with the general public, as well as films from the African diaspora. In October, among the many events that we created to observe the UN International Year for People of African Descent was the OBHS conference aimed at professionals, students, and the community, which featured our keynote speaker, internationally acclaimed Dr. Molefi Asante from Temple University.

The OBHS also initiated the formal commemoration of August 1 as Emancipation Day by the City of Toronto, Metro Toronto, the City of Ottawa, since 1997, and now, through Bill 111, throughout Ontario. While the commemoration of August 1 as Emancipation Day has gone to second reading federally, it remains unacknowledged across Canada to date. This is disappointing, since August 1 marks the beginning of freedom for peoples of African origin here. It both underscores the presence and contribution of people of African origin in Canada and the role of the British Empire, which included Canada at that time, to be the first global power to legislate against slavery.

Is it the way we might remember that needs to be queried? Certainly the way we remember needs to be more inclusive, if that is the future, if that is the legacy that is to be carried into the future as the vision of Canada. While Toronto is now home to half of all Canadians of African origin, it is also the home to a number of long-established communities of African descent who have made an immense contribution to the development and survival of Canada from its earliest beginnings.

African Canadians defended the crown during the American revolution in units such as the Black Pioneers and the Ethiopian Regiment, or served with other British land regiments. Following that war, they arrived in Canada as refugees along with the United Empire Loyalists, but remember Mathieu Da Costa had already been here as a free person and interpreter.

Several thousand black loyalists played a valuable role in the reshaping of British North America, the place that would become Canada, and in particular in Nova Scotia and Ontario, some also settling in Quebec.

While the security of this country was challenged in 1812, black units and other African Canadian volunteers helped greatly in the defence of Canada, particularly along the Niagara frontier. In fact, one of the first actions of the first Parliament of Ontario in 1793 was an act limiting slavery, which effectively slowed the slave trade in Ontario, making it one of the first jurisdictions in the world to do so. It was a necessary step on the long road to the abolition of slavery, finally experienced August 1, 1834. This, in turn, sparked the first freedom movement of the Americas, the underground railroad—the underground railroad, of course, being a loosely organized means of secreting enslaved Africans out of the United States and into Canada. Clearly, prior to Confederation, there was immense activity and significant development leading to the creation of communities with culture, arts, religion, trade and commerce, and the rule of law flourishing. The infrastructure of what would become Canada had been growing since the earliest times and was formalized by the Fathers of Confederation, effective in 1867.

If the 150th anniversary were to focus solely on the Fathers of Confederation and what they accomplished, or their stories and process, it would leave out all the developments, all the stepping stones, all of which went before to facilitate the rise and consolidation of Canada as a multicultural country from the very beginning, and a country that values freedom.

For example, George Brown, a Father of Confederation and founder of *The Globe and Mail* newspaper, may well have become prime minister, but George Brown was also involved in an incident in Toronto that changed him forever, when his life was saved by a black man. William Peyton Hubbard's act of heroism resulted in an ongoing friendship that saw Hubbard become Toronto's first acting mayor, the first person of African descent to do so.

●(0910)

It may serve to raise and answer the question of who and what a real Canadian is, along with their experiences and contributions to the building of this country. What is the national narrative that informs what stories are collected, preserved, and deemed necessary? What is Canada for those who are of African descent? What role does our interpretation of history have in reinforcing white privilege? What do we want Canada to become? And how do we see our teaching of history moving us in the appropriate direction and teaching in the formal and informal ways?

I have a quote from His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, which we all are familiar with, but what I emphasize is that he wants us to build “a smarter, more caring nation”.

Similarly, Minister James Moore sees the 150th as a time that will remind us of the important events, key battles, significant people, and major accomplishments that shaped our great country and our identity.

To begin this discussion, it is important that we are working from the same general black history background. Black history is as much a part of Canadian history as African history is to world history. The disciplines are connected and mutually reinforce each other.

To begin to discuss this, we might ask ourselves how it is that we have managed to further a part of a Canadian narrative that has excluded Canadians who were here from the earliest times. If we were including black history in a regular and routine way, why was there a need for the creation of an African Canadian historical organization, or even more currently, a need for an Afrocentric school?

African Canadians are unique due to the loss of their culture due to enslavement, and the loss not only of the ways of knowing their religions, their foods, but most significantly through the loss of their names. Researchers in the broader community are often challenged to consider that a veteran or a community icon or an inventor might be of African origin.

The celebration of Canada's 150th is a time to embrace the diversity that is Canada through underscoring and showcasing the long-term presence, achievements, and experiences of Canadians of African origin who define Canada's multicultural reality.

The OBHS has already developed a business plan for the creation of a centre for African Canadian history and heritage, to provide a space for Canadians to learn and share more about the long-term and contemporary accomplishments and challenges faced by this founding culture that has shaped and added to the wealth of Canada from the beginning. And we could go on. It will continue to shape and add to the wealth of Canada in the future.

History is about recognition. It reflects, reports, and influences our understanding of justice. It results in the fair development of communities based on an adequate understanding of their contributions and achievements. History raises awareness while creating our national story, and we channel that story to those we inform.

We do not celebrate that Canada is 150 years old. We celebrate that Canada has moved from one multicultural reality to another.

This is the right moment in time for Canadians to deal with their past as they prepare for their future.

For Canada's 150th, the dedication of a centre for African Canadian history and heritage, and/or the creation of a memorial, a monument to honour African Canadians, both for the benefit of the local and global communities, is vital to our survival as the Canada we say we are.

Thank you.

●(0915)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you both for your presentations.

Now we'll go into our rounds of questions. We try to keep the first round to seven minutes; that's seven minutes for the questioner and also for the response. Each member is responsible for their seven minutes. I've been a little lax in the past in letting it go over the time, but we're going to try to tighten things up now.

Mr. Brown, you're up first.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witnesses for coming today. Thank you for coming and talking to us about black history in Canada.

I had the opportunity a few years ago to go to a museum in Amherstburg, Ontario, which I know is a great opportunity for Canadians—and Americans who come to Canada as well—to learn about black history, the underground railroad, and the role it played in the development of Canada. Also, I was not aware that in fact the Thousand Islands area, where I'm from, was one of the routes of the underground railroad. So thank you for coming and talking to us about that.

One of the things I've talked about a number of times at this committee is the fact that only three out of ten provinces in Canada actually require a student to have a history course to graduate from high school. Obviously black history is a great part of Canadian history. So maybe you could talk just a little bit about what you think about that and what we can do with Canada 150, in an overall sense and in integrating black history and other history in Canada, to make that an important part of Canada 150.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I know that in the province of Nova Scotia there is an elective program—students can choose a history course as an elective course, whether it be black history or aboriginal history, to graduate. My company spends a great deal of time in producing educational material for the school systems. Black History Month is an extremely popular celebration in the educational system across Canada. In most of the large cities' inner city schools, a great deal of time and preparation is devoted to teaching black Canadian history. My company has produced several educational plays for schools, to help introduce kids to the rich black Canadian history.

History is history. It should not be defined by colour. People like Elijah McCoy, the great inventor, Mary Ann Shadd, and William Hall were Canadian heroes who belong to every Canadian and should be included in Canadian history books as Canadian heroes and heroines who contributed to this country. So I think the educational system has to take a serious look at incorporating these Canadian heroes. We know the reasons why it wasn't done in the first place years ago. Now that we have the opportunity to recognize them and now that Canadians have been informed of these wonderful Canadians, the educational system should really take a serious look at incorporating the contributions of these amazing heroes and heroines.

Rosemary.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: It's a very complicated question. I think we know that Black History Month is incredibly successful, and we are the organization of February's Black History Month in this country. That being said, we know black history is something that should be happening not just in the confines of one month. It's very hard to encourage educators and the media to consider expanding that opportunity.

With another hat I wear as a writer, I have written six books on African Canadian history, one of them having been adopted by the entire province of Nova Scotia, even though it's a very good general text, if I do say so myself—I'm not the only writer in the book on that one. There is a limited interest, unfortunately, in having a black history course, which I think would be very helpful, to make sure that some of this material gets out there. If there is no required black history course or component, then it increases the need for there to be something else. While Anthony has a wonderful company and I represent a wonderful non-profit operated by volunteers, there should be some additional capacity-building measures to make sure everyone is informed about all aspects of African Canadian history.

• (0920)

Mr. Gordon Brown: Thank you, Mr. Sherwood, for saying that black history really is Canadian history. Often some of our ethnocultural groups are not included—as you say, for reasons in the past. Today there is no reason why they should not be included.

How can we reach out to ethnocultural communities to integrate them even more into Canadian history and help teach that to Canadians, not just Canadian children but Canadians in general?

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I think it starts with the local provincial ministries of education taking an active part in changing the teaching of history. History is such an important subject to Canadians. You have to know where you come from to move on to the future.

Certainly in Nova Scotia they've recognized this, because Nova Scotia is the centre of the oldest African Canadian community. The provincial educational system there has taken a serious look at incorporating that.

It starts with the ministries of education. It starts with the local parent-teacher associations. It starts with educational groups and organizations in this country, such as the Canadian Teachers' Federation, based here in Ottawa. These are all organizations that should be approached in terms of redefining the teaching of history in this country.

As I said, it's wrong to classify history by colour. The way Black History Month is introduced in schools today, it's optional. It's the school's choice whether or not to celebrate it. Mind you, many schools do. Still, it's the school's choice whether to celebrate it or not.

What we're telling kids is that they are not required to know and will not be tested on the contributions of black Canadians. But the contributions of other Canadians they will have to know and they will be tested on that. What are we telling our students?

Mr. Gordon Brown: That's a good point.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I think that gets back to the idea of what we are telling Canadians. If our founding peoples are European, and somehow, magically, the aboriginal people have suddenly become in vogue again or recognized as having a history and a presence....

How can you look at somebody who came here in 1604, who was free, who facilitated the development of Canada by facilitating those trade connections between the aboriginal communities and the European communities, and somehow say that he doesn't count? Further, we aren't going to offer an essay contest or an art contest in his name. Yet we'll say that black history is important or that we're a multicultural country. How can you say on a global stage that it's global, but it's really European. I think that's another message that comes through.

We can go to the ministries. But it's a top-down approach. It's bottom up and top down. Bottom up has been very strong and has been working hard, with limited resources, for a long time. I think it requires that top-down approach also, where we say that we value this community, we recognize these contributions, and all Canadians need to know.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Go ahead, Mr. Benskin.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Thank you so much, both of you, for being here.

It's a battle, as Tony knows, that for a long time we shared.

The theatre company I ran for six years, prior to being elected, the Black Theatre Workshop, is Canada's oldest black theatre company. It's an anglophone company, in Quebec, that's survived 40 years, which in and of itself is a feat. The dedication to telling those stories is something that's really important.

One of the things that comes out in these explorations is the concept of inclusion. The aboriginal community contribution to this country and the black contribution to this country are not simply add-ons. It starts from the very beginning, with Mathieu Da Costa, and with the black loyalists. Not being taught in schools, it does send a very clear message that it is optional, in fact; it's not something we need to know about. That tells our young people that they are not important. That feeds that disenchantment. That feeds that disconnection with this society, which leads to crime and leads to trying to find something to give themselves value.

With the 150th anniversary, we have an opportunity to rectify that. Part of that is telling those stories. For example, sitting outside the Chateau Laurier, there are bronze busts of people who won the Victoria Cross in Canada. William Hall is not among them. Why is that? What is the message we're sending?

Mr. Sherwood, you put forward some concrete ideas as to how we could recognize that and open the door to all of Canada becoming connected with that history and how it was founded.

I will pose this to both of you. As far as education is concerned, what would be your recommendations as to how we make that an ongoing thing so that we do not need Black History Month? Black History Month would no longer be Black History Month; it would be Canadian Month. It would be Canadian Year. It would be about what everybody has contributed.

That's a hard question.

● (0925)

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: A number of years ago, I wrote a piece called "Why a Black History Month?", and I believe that the final line in that piece, which is probably somewhere on the Internet, said that when all of our contributions and achievements are recognized then there will not be a need for a Black History Month. But we are clearly not at that stage yet. We won't be at that stage until people of African origin are recognized as a founding people. Moreover, newcomers, newer Canadians, have a lot of difficulty with what they feel is the message of Black History Month, namely, that it's all about the underground railroad, particularly in Ontario. I think this provides a comfort zone for teachers. If they know anything about black history, that's where they're going to focus. But newcomers to Canada have different experiences, particularly newcomers of African origin coming from the Caribbean, where colonialism and neo-colonialism have affected and informed how they view the world. They want Canada to recognize both. They want the wonderful story of the underground railroad, but they also want

those other aspects of our early society to be recognized. There was slavery in this country, and they want us to deal with that in a meaningful way.

Those messages can't get out there unless we engage the educators. But it's not just the educators. Having gone to teacher's college myself, I can assure you that nothing was provided in the way of black history or black heritage at all, except what I brought to my class that year. I suspect it's that way for many schools and many teacher education programs.

It's a complicated question, but I think it requires educators to be involved. It requires a philosophical shift in how we view what it is that is Canada. If this takes place, then I hope we can move on from there.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I want to add, Tyrone, that it's changing our perspective. There has been considerable resistance to introducing black history into schools, from teachers and parents. It was all based on ignorance, because they weren't aware of the rich history and the contributions of African Canadians and their presence here for over 400 years. As Rosemary said, African Canadians are one of the founding cultures of this country.

That attitude has to change and teachers have to be more receptive and proactive in getting their local school boards and provincial ministries to change the teaching of history to include these African Canadians. So it requires a change of attitude, a change of our perspective on what Canada is.

A national museum would certainly help. When we introduce African Canadian projects into schools, we tell students to let these projects inspire them to go home and look into their own cultural backgrounds to discover their own cultural heroes. It's not only about us; it's about all of us. We are one.

● (0930)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Ms. Sadlier, you spoke about the eastern settling of Canada and the influx of black Canadians there. There's also a growing awareness of the settling of the west. We have the Estes Stark family, who settled in Salt Spring Island in British Columbia. We have the blacks that left what were then called Indian territories, before they became Oklahoma, to settle the northern part of Saskatchewan. Can you tell us a little more about the work that's being done to open up that awareness?

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Right now in the west there is an organization called the National Black Coalition, one extant chapter, and we do try to work with that person.

The Exodusters—that's a phenomenal story of people who accepted the offer to come into Canada to settle like anyone else, only to suddenly discover that there were special requirements that they had in order to get into the country, which they met because they were affluent and they were healthy. They were given all kinds of disincentives to settle, and in fact it was decided that they were deemed unsuitable for the climate of Canada because they were coming from the warmer areas of Oklahoma.

I think there are many stories. I had ten minutes so I thought what's the best way for me to approach this, to answer all of the questions or attempt to provide a general sense of why I think it's important that we look at Africans as founding people and that we create—as it turns out we share this—a centre for African Canadian history and culture. I think those are some of the stories that need to be reflected.

When the earlier questioner mentioned the Amherstburg museum...it's a wonderful museum. It tends to tell a story that's focused on Amherstburg, or maybe a little bit Essex-Kent.

What I hope that our proposal reflects clearly is that we want to tell all of those stories, because Toronto is home to half of all Canadians of African origin; Toronto is a significant tourism hub; and Toronto—until maybe recently, and maybe it still is—tends to be a centre for culture. It tends to have influence that extends beyond its borders. I think those are ways that we can do that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming. I have two lines of questioning. One has to do with the stories that you tell in the context of our own history that we all share. I like your suggestion about a theme, by the way. That was very good. As the chair pointed out, we haven't heard a lot of that so far, so it's good to hear that.

The second part is the dissemination of the story. I agree with my colleagues about the education aspect. I think Mr. Brown has an incredibly valid point about how we teach history and how much history we do teach.

Two things. I remember one of the best stories I've ever seen that was produced in this country was the vignette or small film about the underground railroad. I can tell you that when I first saw it, it was in the context of all this negativity that I had seen, all that was bad about race relations in the United States, and all the movies that were being produced at the time focused on just how bad it was. All of sudden out of nowhere this great story came out from Canada, and I felt it was my own story. I didn't know about that, and I was out of school then. That's the unfortunate part about it.

I think the message that was in it punched through all the negativity that surrounded race relations, not just in Canada but in North America. And the story that was there...it was such a powerful little piece of film.

Now, in the context of today and the stories you tell...the acting mayor of Toronto, great story; the construction unit out of New Brunswick, another fantastic story. These stories punch through, but

how do you punch at a level that penetrates and brings us the message that this country is worth celebrating 150 years.

The question then is—and I'd like both of you to weigh in on this, but, Mr. Sherwood, you're in the business—when we put these stories out there, what is the best vehicle that we have technically? We have the Canada Media Fund. We have the National Film Board. We have these little vignettes, the Historica things.

I believe in the classroom concept, but I certainly buy into, with all my heart and soul, the media that we have here and the talent that we have to produce it. And the stories we have to tell, matched with that, are not just going to be a gift to Canada, but I think they're going to be a gift to the world.

• (0935)

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: You're absolutely right. Film is a powerful medium with which to tell stories. That vignette you saw is just one of five that I produced for Citizenship and Immigration Canada. If you go on their website, you will see five different stories, very similar to the Historica. I sat on the board of directors for Historica for a number of years.

When you log on to the website and you see the five different stories, No. 2 Construction Battalion is one of them. William Hall is another one. I selected those because I felt that the underground railroad story was one a lot of Canadians knew about in terms of slaves escaping from the United States, but what happened to those African Canadians when they arrived here? They didn't just sit idle. They had dreams; they became heroes. I wanted to take that a step further. Using film to tell these stories is a wonderful idea. My company has been involved in that for many years, in producing documentaries and in producing promotional videos for the government and provincial agencies. But again, it's the same obstacle you run up against in my industry as you do in the educational system. There is a resistance to want to tell these stories. There's a resistance in terms of obtaining funding and moneys to tell these stories. That's the kind of resistance our community has been up against for decades, for hundreds of years.

Mr. Scott Simms: Is it just a question of money?

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: It's just money. Well, money operates to change everything.

Mr. Scott Simms: When you talk about priorities, you have to put it.... If you have a fund and you say you want every community group to tell their story...we just don't have enough money to hand to everybody. Is there something else here? Do we have too much in the way of disseminating these funds for media productions? Should we centralize it? I'm just looking for ideas here, especially when it comes to 150, because I think we should spend money in that particular vein to produce something, whether it's a documentary of 30 minutes or five minutes.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: It's a good point, Mr. Simms, but I prefer the national museum because it is permanent. A film is something that is hot for a few years and then it sits on a shelf and people forget about it. A museum is a lasting, standing monument that people can visit, that people can take pride in, that all Canadians can take pride in.

Across the United States, 75 museums are devoted to African American history. There's a huge African American museum being built in Washington at the cost of \$500 million. Are our heroes any less? Are the contributions that African Canadians made to this country any less? Sure, our numbers are smaller than the United States. But the oppression we underwent and survived, the contributions we made in building and developing this country are just as fantastic. That's why I would prefer to see a museum as opposed to a film, even though I'm in the film business, because of the longevity of the testament.

• (0940)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's been a pleasure.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: Likewise.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's been a pleasure, and you're a tremendous filmmaker and you're a tremendous writer, and your words are very good. I wish you all the best.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Thank you for your question, and just to finish the 10 seconds of your response here—

Mr. Scott Simms: God love you, thank you.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: God love us.

I appreciate your question, and I think money is a factor. To say that it isn't would be unfair and untrue.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Young, are you...?

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for coming today. It is very interesting to me.

I want to pursue what Mr. Simms was talking about a little bit. I remember in the fifties—I had four brothers—we used to want to stay home from church Sunday night, even though we lived on church property. My dad was a minister. We wanted to watch Walt Disney. Walt Disney was fascinating because they made history come alive. Here we were, little Canadian kids, sending away for Davy Crockett hats. There was stuff on Paul Bunyan. They romanticized it. They were very good at telling these stories and building them in many cases to things...exaggerating them, we should say, but romanticizing their history.

Thank you for bringing up the story of William Peyton Hubbard. I love the story. I grew up in Toronto. It's a story that cries out to be told. His father was an escaped refugee slave from Virginia. There's a story there. He met future Father of Confederation George Brown and pulled him out of the Don River, became his driver, and they became good friends. He was re-elected 13 times and became acting mayor. The only time he lost was because he introduced the Toronto Hydro Electric Commission. That's a story in itself. He lived in the thirties. In the thirties, the reporters used to come around and see him every year. His nickname was Old Cicero because he was such a brilliant speaker. This isn't just a movie; it's a TV series. It would make a great TV series. I would love to see it. It might not be suitable for your company, but it should be told in film.

I want to ask you—maybe I could start with Mr. Sherwood—what ideas you have for making Canadian history live and telling Canadian stories on the stage, in film, TV, and even in opera. There's an opera commissioned in 2000 called the *Iron Road*, which is about how the Canadian railroad was built and how the Chinese contributed and suffered. How can we tell these stories and make it interesting? Teenagers are cynical. You take them into a history class and say, "Today is politically correct history day", and they won't listen. But if you tell the story dynamically and tell the drama, they will listen, and even go to theatres and pay for it.

What ideas do you have for telling these stories leading up to 2017?

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: There are a number of ways...my company is involved in a number of ways. We produced a documentary film 10 years ago that was broadcast on CBC nationally called *Honour Before Glory*, which was the story of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, Canada's all-black unit. It has received a number of national and international awards, and that documentary was widely distributed across Canada, in Canadian schools, universities, libraries, and even in the United States. My company has been involved in terms of telling these stories for a while.

The 60-second and 30-second promotional videos I produce for Citizenship and Immigration Canada are online. The Canadian government has to take an active role in terms of advertising and promoting projects once they've committed to producing them. Nobody will know they exist online if you don't do an active advertising promotional campaign.

My company is also involved in terms of telling these African Canadian stories on stage and bringing them into the schools. We did a play about William Hall, the first Canadian sailor and the first black person to receive the Victoria Cross in 1859. That play was produced, distributed, and performed in schools across Toronto, in Halifax, and in Ottawa. We took the play to Ireland as well.

Last year, we did a play about Mary Ann Shadd, the first black woman to publish a newspaper in North America and the first teacher to open an integrated school in Canada. That play was performed in Toronto schools. This year we're doing a play for Black History Month that will be widely presented in schools across Canada on Richard Pierpoint and the Company of Coloured Men, which was formed during the War of 1812. This project is a special commemoration project for the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812.

Those are all of the things we are doing.

• (0945)

Mr. Terence Young: These are great projects. Am I right that you would conclude we should be doing more of that leading up to 2017, or more things like that?

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: Absolutely. How are Canadians going to know? When you read stories about William Hubbard, as a Canadian, regardless of where your background is, you are fascinated because you admire this person because of the obstacles they overcame. You admire the qualities of this individual.

Mr. Terence Young: Also, he was elected in the wealthiest part of Toronto, while in the United States they were preparing for a civil war. As well, he was able to become a baker, and he was an inventor. But he was allowed into the Toronto school system, whereas all across North America they were all segregated. That's a Canadian story, and really, a romantic Canadian story. Canadians can say, gee, I guess we were pretty good even way back then, or at least we weren't as bad as the others.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: You see, these are all the things that my company...but I am only one person. My company is only one company, and I can't do it all.

Mr. Terence Young: What roles should the National Film Board and CBC play heading up to 2017 in telling these stories? They are national institutions that receive federal money.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: Absolutely, it's an excellent point. They all have diversity programs to bring in new diversity filmmakers, but more needs to be done. They have to take an active stance in terms of reaching out to the African Canadian filmmaking community, and there's a very strong, active, and talented filmmaking community, certainly within Toronto and Halifax. Approach them about doing it. We have international award-winning directors who unfortunately have moved on to the United States for the bigger buck. But they're here in this country, and they have to take advantage of their talents.

Mr. Terence Young: We've been talking about history, which is going to be key, and we've heard from other witnesses that we should celebrate our history, but in 2017 we also want to look forward. I really like your idea about a theme: We are one. What should we be doing leading up to 2017 to tell the world about, or identify for ourselves, where Canada is heading? Have you got any thoughts on that?

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I'll let Rosemary answer that.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: My sense is that we're moving from a multicultural reality to a multicultural future. I think we have failed to recognize and underscore the reality that we had a multicultural beginning. I think we need to do that, or we can't move on to a multicultural future. That's in terms of how it's tangible and concrete, and also in terms of ideology.

That's it, multicultural past to a multicultural future.

Mr. Terence Young: We are one—that's a great idea for a theme. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

Please go ahead, Mr. Cash.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of you for being here today.

As someone who was born, raised, and spent my whole life in Toronto, I'm honoured to be listening to you today, Ms. Sadlier, because I've seen the evolution and the growth in the consciousness, not just among African Canadians in the city of Toronto but the entire city, to the history of African Canadians. You and all of your partners—artists, civil society, groups that have spent countless hours, and years in fact, and withstood the barrage of media criticism—should be commended as you have persevered. So thank you so much for that.

Campaign 2000 just released their 2011 report card. Campaign 2000 was a response to an initiative in Parliament in 1989 to end child poverty by the year 2000. I bring it up because we're talking about this museum. It's clear that poverty in Canada—and we can talk about Toronto maybe even more specifically—is racialized. We have a city where 50% of the residents of Toronto were not born in Toronto. I remember growing up in Scarborough, and I have to tell you, I remember the day the first African Canadian walked into my classroom. Today, if you take the Finch bus through Scarborough, through Etobicoke, just about every single person on that bus is from the multi-ethnic, multi-national, multi-faith African Canadian community. By and large, they are living in poverty.

If we're going to do some 2017, 150th birthday legacy project that does not address this essential core issue of the future—and we've got over 600,000 children living in poverty—then we've missed a huge opportunity. So I want both of you to speak to the issue of poverty among racialized communities, and the issue of the multi-ethnic African Canadian community. We have new African Canadians in our country now. We have a large Haitian community. We have a growing Ethiopian-Eritrean community in Toronto.

It's a twofold question. How would a museum connect to these new communities? But more importantly, in my view, how would a museum help to push the marker forward in the pursuit of eliminating poverty among children?

• (0950)

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I think, number one, we are not going to eradicate poverty. That is just not going to happen anytime soon, no matter what the initiatives are or whether they are towards 2017 or not.

But the point you make, which I think the museum speaks to—I love cannons—is that when you have, as you so rightly point out, a racialized level of poverty, that level of poverty is also reflexive and connected to how people view those people.

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Sadlier.

We have a point of order here.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Because they're doing the cannons out there, and everybody is going to want to be turning around, might we suspend for just a minute?

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Okay.

Is this going to go on for awhile?

Mr. Paul Calandra: It shouldn't be for very long. I think it's just a 21-gun salute. I have a sense that maybe somebody wants to take a look at the ceremony that's happening out there.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll suspend for one minute.

• (0950)

(Pause)

• (1000)

The Chair: Sorry about the interruption. As you can see, everyone was keen to see the flyover.

We were talking a lot about the public school system. It reminded me a bit of being in school at the moment, all the excitement around the planes.

Anyway, Mr. Cash, it was your round and you have about two minutes left.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Well, I'll hand it back to Ms. Sadlier.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: What were we talking about?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andrew Cash: You said you hadn't lost the question....

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Okay.

I think what I started out by saying is that no matter what this committee should opt to do, we're not going to be successful in ending poverty. That's just a given, unfortunately.

The other part of it is that there is poverty, in part, because there is racism. We have racism, in part, because we have a hegemonic knowledge of what and who people of African origin are supposed to be about. That's informed by what we think we know about them, which may or may not be correct.

If we have a centre for African Canadian history and heritage that helps to put out the real stories—I'm not talking about, necessarily, the Paul Bunyan stories, but real experiences, real incidents that have occurred, real accomplishments that have been made by people of African origin, not just in 1604, but yesterday—that helps to inform people who do the hiring, people who do the admissions, people who make the selections about who should get...because that is also where and how poverty develops and is extended.

It also does something in terms of the person of African origin. I mentioned at the outset that here I am, a person of African origin. My family has been in this country since 1783. I won't tell you at what age I found out that my family, people who look like me, had actually done things because everything around me told me that we had done nothing. And it applies to me, and I'm from this place.

So how does that help somebody who's new to this country, who doesn't have that kind of knowledge that their grandfather...? How do you get that foothold and that sense that there are people who've done things?

They have a negative opinion about people of African origin or people who look like themselves. People who are doing the hiring have a negative image, and that all feeds into not just a poverty of finances but a poverty of experience and understanding.

• (1005)

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I think the Department of Canadian Heritage has realized for a long time that systemic racism is a fact that causes social problems, as Tyrone mentioned, like a sense of worth that leads to youth violence and crime.

One of the things they created in the early 1990s was the March 21 campaign, which I was involved with. March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Why we started programs like the stop racism video competition for students across the country is because I think the Department of Canadian Heritage realized the importance of eliminating racism in Canadian society.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cash.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Perhaps I could just add one other thing. In 1967 I think one of the wonderful things that came about from that particular celebration was a greater sense of Quebec and issues around Quebec. I think this is an opportunity for us to add that other piece to the founding peoples, so that we have a fuller and more complete sense of who we are.

The Chair: Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you both for your submissions. This has been tremendously exciting. I want to congratulate you all for bringing some specific recommendations, because that's a framework we can build on as a committee to make recommendations to the department, coming out of this study.

I embrace the “We are one” theme. I think it's a great direction for Canada to take and something we should strongly consider. As far as the museum goes, I also think that's a tremendous project, something we definitely should consider strongly as part of our celebrations of Canada 150. We have to embrace our past if we're going to move forward. We must celebrate our victories and the good things about Canada's past, but also remember the mistakes we have made as a country.

I'm going to talk briefly about one of those mistakes, but I'm going to go back to something I talked about in the last committee meeting. The year 2017 is also the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, which I think was a pivotal moment in Canadian history. At Vimy Ridge, there's a tremendous story about an African Canadian named Jeremiah Jones, who is from my home town; this is like what my colleague talked about in relation to his area.

Jeremiah Jones was a soldier in the 106th battalion of the Nova Scotia Rifles. During the Battle of Vimy Ridge, he crossed the German lines, became separated from his platoon—we fought in platoon style at Vimy Ridge, which is probably the reason we won that battle—single-handedly captured a German machine gun nest, and, I'm sure you are aware of this story, brought the entire crew of Germans back with him, carrying their machine gun, and then presented the machine gun to his CO and asked, “Is this thing any good?”

There was great celebration in town, because the Jones family was very popular, and he was a high-profile community member before he entered the war—and a great friend of my grandfather, who also fought at Vimy Ridge. I am going to read you a quote from the Truro newspaper from the time:

Jerry Jones...captured a German machine gun, forced the crew to carry it back to our lines, and, depositing it at the feet of the C.O. said:-

“Is this thing any good?”

The report is that he has been recommended for a D.C.M. I hope it is true. [We] All [need to] honor...this man, who is ready for the front again [after recently being wounded].

May he live to return to Truro and [may he] receive the welcome and awards he deserves.

We are glad for these encouraging lines for the boys from a Military Camp in England and...what if “Jerry Jones” returns to Truro with a D.C.M., he'll be the lion of the hour.

Well, in one of the great tragedies of Canadian history, he didn't get the DCM. I was pleased to attend a ceremony two years ago at which that wrong was righted and he received the Distinguished

Service Medal posthumously from Peter MacKay and Mayann Francis, who is the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, his daughter, who had really worked hard celebrating history and who was a former teacher of mine, passed away the evening before he was to receive this medal.

That's the type of dedication and service the community has given to Canada. That's also the way that Canadians have treated some of this community in the past. Things like this, in a history museum all about black history, would be a tremendous thing for all Canadians to see—not just African Nova Scotians and African Canadians; I think it's something that all Canadians should see and experience, to know that we are one and that we are going to move forward together.

So I think the museum is a great idea.

The other answer is education. Education solves what Mr. Cash was talking about concerning poverty. We have talked about moving people around and about youth exchanges. But I think as part of Canada 150 we have to re-embrace a scholarship program for all students and all youth in poverty to support their going on to some sort of post-secondary training, because education is the great leveller. We talked a bit about that during our break.

So what are your comments on some sort of program we can put in place to support education to help relieve the problem of poverty in your community, and in fact the poverty of all Canadians?

• (1010)

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I wanted to comment that in my film *Honour Before Glory* about the No. 2 Construction Battalion, we went to Truro, and I interviewed Jerry Jones's daughter, whom you spoke of. I had the honour and pleasure of meeting her, and I was so crushed when I heard that she passed away the day before her father was recognized with this award.

I was telling Mr. Simms why I cited the War Museum of Canada as a possible model for this centre. Why was the War Museum created? The War Museum of Canada was created so that Canadians could understand the contributions and the sacrifices made by Canadians in the First World War and the Second World War, to feature the individual stories of heroism and intense human sacrifice that were made by Canadians, to instill a sense of pride in Canadians, and to educate people about the contributions we made to the world during those two huge encounters. That's why the War Museum was created. On the same philosophical lines, the African Canadian Museum should be created to give a sense of pride to all Canadians, and to give a lasting monument to the contributions that community has made. That in itself will be an education for Canadians.

I have to reiterate that this educational process stems right from the grassroots, from teachers groups, to school boards, to parents associations, to ministries, to the provincial ministries of education. We need to change the teaching of history in our schools, because Black History Month now is just optional. Sure, it's popular and a lot of large inner-city schools celebrate it, but there has to be a change in how we teach history in school. Certainly a museum would be a step in that direction. It would provide a lasting monument of pride and education as well as an opportunity for Canadians to come and learn about Canadian history.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: The need for a museum is well documented. But no matter what the model for a centre or museum of African Canadian history is, at the end of the day it would be a place where people can come, learning can take place, and a foundation of memory can be laid. Between now and 2017, we should be creating more materials. Those films, those vignettes, can all be part of what would be in the museum, as well as exhibits, as well as the artifacts that raised awareness might help to create. All of this is to say that the potential is there for finding a way to better reflect who we are as Canadians.

• (1015)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Nantel.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): First, when I hear you say that it would be good to have an African-Canadian museum for 2017, one thing concerns me. I wonder if we should not blend black history into existing museums. The same reasoning applies to Black History Month. There should be no need for it to exist, we should have blended black history in everywhere, just like we should perhaps try to blend black history into our existing museums for 2017. But I am not knowledgeable enough about the subject to have a well-informed opinion on it.

But I have one question for you. When the plan is for a title “We are one”, aren't you really interested in a program with the title “To be one”? The 150th anniversary could be very embarrassing if we still have the problem of African-Canadians being excluded from our history. If we want to be really ready for the celebrations without feeling bitter about them, I feel that doling out buckets with the maple leaf emblem on them so that the people of Attawapiskat can have drinking water is not the way to go about it.

We were talking about crime-related issues just now. I also don't think that passing Bill C-10 is going to help kids proudly drape themselves in a Canadian identity.

Don't you think that we should establish a list of priorities, attainable goals, so that everyone can feel comfortable about the 150th anniversary?

[English]

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I understood you correctly; I think the priorities would include....

First, let me go back to say that black is not a colour; it's an ideology. And I think that black is synonymous with African Canadians. So do people see themselves as African Canadian or black? I don't know.

Next year, 2012, marks the 50th anniversary of Jamaica. What a resurgence of pride there is now for people who are of Jamaican ancestry.

It's also the 50th anniversary of Trinidad and Tobago. What a resurgence of pride there is in that particular anniversary.

So do those people see themselves as African Canadian first, Canadian first, black first, or do they see themselves as Jamaican first, or whatever? I suspect they see themselves as Jamaican first, or what have you.

The reason for that is that we, as a country, have not affirmed our community of African Canadians. Why would I come to Canada? And I'm taking a lot of impressions and putting them together, so please excuse me. But why come to Canada and identify yourselves, and feel a connection to these people here when you come from another place where you are known to have made a contribution, as opposed to this place where you are invisible and, if anything, you are poor, uneducated, and many other things that are just assumed to be true?

It is a challenge we work on in terms of trying to help people feel a sense of pride in being African Canadian, and part of that would be in having them acknowledged as being founding peoples. Part of that would be in the process, because it can't happen at once; it's a process. Having the materials, a series of films, a series of vignettes, a series of exhibits, having more written, more research done, more photographs brought to the forefront, and having those artifacts collected would be one of the ways of drawing attention to what we have, who we are, and what we can become.

• (1020)

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I think you also asked about the priorities of, say, a different series of events leading up to 2017. Again, I think it's already an ongoing process. Certainly my company is just one of the companies that is continually doing projects for the Government of Canada to raise awareness of the contributions of African Canadians.

Certainly the Ontario Black History Society is always in the process of informing Canadians about the contributions of our community.

It would be great to collect all this work for the purpose of creating a centre or museum of African Canadians in 2017. I think this would be ideal. As Rosemary mentioned, all these pieces of artifacts and films and information would be accessible in this centre or this museum, to be run very similarly to the Canadian War Museum, where people can go in and access.... When you go to the War Museum you can access information, history, articles, and photos. It can be a source of education, of pride, of culture, of tourism—all these things. It could even be a source of substantial revenue to whoever decides to operate and own it.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: But just like the bronze in front of the Chateau Laurier that's missing, don't you think that all that you've described, which is so enlightening, should be encrypted at large in all museums in Canada, instead of having a separate museum for this?

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Of course, it should be, but it hasn't. If you continue to do the same thing over and over again, you're going to get the same thing. What is that expression?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Procrastination?

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: It hasn't happened. Is it going to happen? It's unlikely, so that's part of the reason for the advocacy, and the interest is still there because if we don't make that claim and make sure it happens, it isn't going to happen. It hasn't happened in 400 years.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

Mr. Hillyer.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is about genealogy. You talked about not knowing until you were an adult about your ancestry.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I wasn't adopted.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: The *Roots* movie and the *Roots* books are a pretty famous story about Alex Haley researching his roots and finding out he has a pretty sweet history, and I think every person will be able to find some pretty inspiring things.

My question is how can we help people—I would say for this context especially African Canadians or black people—to care about genealogy or family history? Secondly, how can we help them find out their history?

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I think that black people do care about their genealogy. I think they do care about their history.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: There must be some who haven't thought about it yet.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I think it's easier for some people to be able to trace their ancestry than it is for others. I have encountered people coming from different parts of the world, and they don't even know what their exact birth date is. Clearly they are challenged further in just trying to identify other aspects of their own story.

My story was removed from me in part because I didn't know to ask. I didn't know that it was there. My father had left New Brunswick early in his life and didn't really go back for a very long time. So it wasn't until I made contact with relatives in that area that I was inspired by some of that information. The Canadian government has also published some material on the No. 2 Construction Battalion and veterans, which includes material that I can identify. A black senator, Calvin Ruck, did a phenomenal job of creating a book on the No. 2 Construction Battalion. Once I had some of the clues about my own family tree to go through, without having to do a whole lot of more research, I could verify that 60% of all the people from New Brunswick were related to me, and that was really mind-blowing.

There is just one other point I should make. While I was very lucky to have that opportunity for myself, not everybody has that opportunity. I think that where there are those opportunities to trace it, it's wonderful and it's inspiring to know and to affirm that there

are roots in this country. But black history isn't just about saying, "Hey, my ancestors were a part of the No. 2 Construction Battalion in a significant way", or that the Carty brothers, who are related to me, could have been wiped out had something tragic happened during World War II. All of them, the whole family, a whole generation, could have been wiped out, but they all managed to come back. That isn't the story. That is part of the story. I think to hyper-focus on a family is one part, but the other part is the bigger story: that we have been here; that we have contributed; that we have brought wealth; that we have defended this country; and that we will continue to do so. That is a really big part of the story.

• (1025)

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: I have a similar story.

I wasn't aware of my relatives in Nova Scotia and what they accomplished. I refer to the No. 2 Construction Battalion, and the book that Rosemary talks about, written by Calvin Ruck, who helped bring me into the world. I was born in Halifax, and Calvin Ruck was a good friend of my mom. I was born at home, and they helped to deliver me, bring me into the world. I grew up knowing about the No. 2 Construction Battalion, but I had no idea that the chaplain for the battalion was my great-uncle. I didn't know that he had left a diary. When I read his diary, which had been given to me by his son, my cousin, it blew me away, because there was no other handwritten account of what happened to those black soldiers when they were serving in France. This was the only existing account of what happened. He wrote everything he saw and everything that happened to these soldiers. So when I read the diary, it just blew me away, and it was the inspiration for me to do the film.

Reverend William White, who was the chaplain of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, was the only commissioned black officer in the entire British armed forces during the First World War. His daughter, Portia White, became Canada's first international black opera star.

So I was amazed with my own family history. I didn't realize it until I started investigating the story of the book written by Calvin Ruck.

One of the things that the centre could do—and we see all these ads about ancestry.com and ancestry.ca.—is offer a section, asking "What is your story?" This is where you should go. "What have you done? What have your ancestors done?"

One of the things we do when we go to schools for Black History Month is inspire kids to look into their own family history, to discover their history.

A few years ago, I did a series for OMNI Television. About 18 different ethnic communities in Canada have made contributions to Canada: Portuguese, Italian, Chinese.... It was an eye-opener for me hosting and producing this show, because I was never aware of the contributions. I didn't know that the Italians were part of building the railroad for this country. Of course, we all know about the Chinese sacrifices, but I didn't know the Italians were involved, and all the other community ethnic groups.

It's important to know the contributions that your own particular cultural group has made to this country. So possibly the museum could offer a little section, asking "What is your story? Where do you come from?"

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hillyer.

Madam Boutin-Sweet.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Good morning, and thank you for being here.

Ms. Sadlier, earlier, you mentioned that a program called the "Mathieu Da Costa Challenge" had been abolished. I suppose that you would be in favour of bringing programs like that back, even, as Mr. Armstrong suggested, as part of a scholarship program, which might be interesting.

Would you have any ideas for updating programs like that? Maybe kids would be more interested in making animations or videos than writing. How could you or your people support a program like that?

• (1030)

[*English*]

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: The Mathieu Da Costa challenge was a national essay and art contest. It relied on traditional media for students to prepare a tight hard-copy document and/or actual artwork that would be submitted.

With the advent of social media, and it being easy to work with, with desktop publishing, and just the ability.... With the digital cameras that may be available in most schools, or may even be in the personal possession of many students, it's certainly possible that it could be.... Well, they ended it. But it's something that could have continued, but perhaps using more contemporary media in order to produce a result.

It remains important to affirm Mathieu Da Costa, because he's the earliest named African we know about in Canada. That doesn't mean he's the first African in Canada or the first black person in the west.

I'm not sure if the name needed to be changed. Maybe it's the format, the media, and the nature of the technology that could have been adjusted.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Let me repeat the second part of my question. How could you or your people be part of a program like that?

[*English*]

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: How did we participate?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: How could you be part of it?

[*English*]

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Do you mean now or in the past?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: In the future.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: In the future, okay.

Well, right now we already use social media to let people know about a number of things. It's a way of providing information or promoting things, such as a scholarship we're offering in cooperation with a corporate sponsor. Again, social media could be that way of saying, "Hey, this is something we could do, this is something you can do, this is something you can participate in", and it would reach a number of people.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: So, more promotion?

[*English*]

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: Yes, that would be the way to advertise, because otherwise there's a cost.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: My second question is about women. As you can see, we are in the minority here.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: As usual.

Voices: Ha, ha!

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: You are right, there is a lack of knowledge about African-Canadian history. There are also mistakes in the history. Let's not kid ourselves: history is all about interpretation, meaning that it comes from one particular point of view.

Let me give you a very specific example. In the days of New France, Marie-Josèphe Angélique was accused of setting fire to the city of Montreal. She confessed to doing so, but only after being tortured for several days. Then she was put to death. But recently, books have been written in an attempt to provide other information, perhaps bringing in facts that put her story in a better light.

Both of you have groups that do research. You produce educational material, promotional videos. What role could your groups play in the kind of project that would shine a better light on people's stories?

[*English*]

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: If I'm understanding you correctly, we help promote particular personalities in a number of ways.

First of all, we have a website, which has a series of themes to work with information and photographs that are already posted on our website.

We also use Facebook; I'm the webmaster for our Facebook page. If there is something that comes up in terms of any subject, not just particularly about women, although that's a particular interest of mine..... My books have been about women: I've written about Mary Ann Shadd and Harriet Tubman, and I wrote a book called *Leading the Way: Black Women in Canada*. Black women, of course, are very close to my heart—perhaps the diametric opposite of who and what the Fathers of Confederation were. There are ways of posting that information.

We've also created some travelling exhibits in the past, which have helped focus not just on the contributions and achievements of women, but on those of other African Canadians as well. I think those are some of the things that can continue.

The OBHS also created the first African Canadian film, which was called *A Proud Past, A Promising Future*. While it's dated, perhaps it's time for it to be updated. Maybe there will be support through the recommendations of this particular committee to see more educational film and more alternative media produced.

• (1035)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Sherwood.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: The story of Marie-Joseph Angélique was popularized recently by the book by Afua Cooper. It is a remarkable story about how this young black slave was accused of setting fire to Montreal and was tortured. This all stemmed from the *Code Noir*, which was a rule imposed by the French in 1709 in Quebec that gave the French permission to own and sell slaves.

These are all stories that could be promoted, as the OBHS has done through their website, through films, short films, that have been done about Marie-Joseph Angélique, and there are some.

There is a rich history in terms of black history in Quebec. The Quebec Board of Black Educators introduced a curriculum of education to the ministère de l'Éducation du Québec called "Some Missing Pages". This was years ago. I don't know if the school boards use that anymore, but it was introduced many years ago.

I produced a film a few years ago about the Union United Church of Montreal, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2007. One of the groups that formed that church was the Coloured Women's Club of Montreal. The Coloured Women's Club of Montreal is the oldest women's organization in Canada. A lot of people don't know that. There is a rich African Canadian history in Montreal and in Quebec.

Certainly the OBHS has been instrumental in promoting that history, and my company has taken an active involvement in terms of producing those stories and films.

There are so many stories throughout the country. Some of the first inhabitants in Victoria and Salt Spring Island in British Columbia and in the Athabasca valley in Alberta were black. Some of the earliest settlers in southern Ontario, and certainly in Nova Scotia, were of African descent. There are many regions. And Quebec should not be excluded in terms of telling these stories, because it has a rich history.

The Chair: *Merci.*

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the two witnesses. You have been going at it for a couple of hours now. I appreciate that. I'll ask you a couple of questions and that's it.

Ms. Sadlier, I want to know how we can bring organizations such as yours, from across Canada, together. Is there cooperation between them? Are there resources we can put forward in the lead-up to 2017 to do some of the things you're talking about, working not in isolation but perhaps together?

You also said in your remarks that African Canadians are unique due to the loss of culture. I'm wondering how, in the context of 150 and in the lead-up to 150, we can reverse that in communities themselves, and not just for a museum.

When you talk about museums.... I'm from the Italian community. We can't agree on where our museum should be. We can't agree on what should be in the museum. We can't agree on anything. It has become more a divisive thing than a unifying thing. Different parts of the community will no longer talk to each other. They have become complete enemies over what was supposed to be a unifying thing.

In the context of Canada's 150th, how do we avoid that?

• (1040)

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: I would hope there might be support for not necessarily standing committee meetings, but other opportunities for African Canadian heritage workers to gather to maybe share some of this information and possibly work out some of the material that you have outlined.

Of course, my own bias in terms of a location is clear. Given that Confederation was sort of determined, numbers of votes were cast and so forth, based on numbers of people, if we want to play with that particular template, then Toronto would be the place where such a centre for African Canadian history and culture might be erected. Certainly there have been some recent things that have happened, with the mayor outlining in the newspaper recently where a development has come about that will end up being mutually beneficial to the developer and to the city of Toronto. There might be some kind of special arrangement that could be created, not necessarily in the super tallest building that's about to be created in the city of Toronto—my own bias—but there might be some other opportunity.

The number of organizations that are working on African Canadian history are limited. The Black Cultural Centre is doing very well the way things are currently. They've just remodeled and revamped what they have. That came about through an interesting process, but it's sort of settled now. Maybe it is Toronto's turn to have the opportunity to have that kind of a structure. It's been pointed out by myself and by other people here that the black community is not a thing. It is many things. It is multicultural in and of itself. I think that having that space in that place, where it is so diverse, would make the most sense.

That can inform the rest of the country. Why is there a museum for civilization in Hull? Why do we have a museum for human rights out west? Decisions have been made, and I think that might be one decision that would be appropriate for Toronto.

Mr. Anthony Sherwood: Rosemary and I were part of a consultative committee formed by Parks Canada to erect an underground railroad exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum, and I think the same template could be applied in terms of forming a creative consultative committee in the formation of this museum that would involve the participation of people out east, the Black Cultural Centre in Nova Scotia, the Chatham-Kent region of Buxton, Amherst, and out west.

I think it's important to have the museum because the country needs it. I understand and sympathize completely with the Italian community because we have the same problems in the black community as well.

One certainty is that all the black Canadian communities and organizations around the country realize there is a need for a national museum. The formulation of what is to be there, what it is going to contain, and what is the structure can all be decided and hashed out, but we're all in agreement that one needs to be created.

I don't think it's realistic to understand that the Canadian government is going to put down \$100 million to build a building from scratch. There are all kinds of buildings—abandoned churches, abandoned cinema houses, companies vacating buildings—that could be either donated by companies or by religious groups that could be used. All across the country, there are buildings popping up vacant.

Ms. Rosemary Sadlier: If I can just add, at the point when we created our business plan, it was around the time that a black church

might have been available for us to have used, but processes were such that it wasn't possible.

I also want to mention that it isn't just the black community that thinks there ought to be an African Canadian museum. The consultant we used had never had such overwhelmingly positive support for any project they had worked on to date.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for taking the time to field a lot of questions. Your input is very much valued as we begin our study on Canada's 150th birthday. We thank you also for some concrete suggestions and your openness to dialogue with us in the future.

Oh, Mr. Benskin.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: I don't know whether you want to dismiss the witnesses first. I have a question in regard to the budget and the appearance of the minister.

The Chair: The meeting is over. We're a minute over now. It's 10:46.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: It was a concern about the date of appearance. I want to make sure it's not too late.

The Chair: Do you have the date of the appearance of the minister?

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: We have the date, but I'm concerned that it's going to be too late. We're hearing that the deadline is the 30th.

The Chair: It hasn't been confirmed yet, and I have to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>