

# 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Grey County Black History Event

## Community, Roots & Culture

### Karin Noble

The eighth annual Black History Event was held Saturday April 25, 2009 at a new location, Grey Roots Museum & Archives. It was also spearheaded by a new organizing committee, under the auspices of the Emancipation Celebration Festival.

For the first time, a full-day Educators' Forum also preceded the Event on Friday April 24. Both days featured engaging and informative presentations. After being welcomed by Dennis Scott, Chair of the Emancipation Festival, special greetings were brought from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP, Bill Murdoch; Grey County Warden, Kevin Eccles and Owen Sound and Grey County Councillor, Arlene Wright. Norma Blacke Bourdeau also sang in spiritual style as a part of the opening proceedings.



*Dennis Scott*



*Audience members at the Educator's Forum*

Terri Jackson, in addition to being Project Manager, acted as MC for the two day Event. The Educators' Forum featured presenters involved in education, but from a number of unique and interesting angles. Lisa S. J. Scott

spoke about her experiences making special presentations on black history and culture (especially those for children) and as a member of the Board of Directors for the Owen Sound Emancipation Festival.



*Norma Blacke Bourdeau*

The day featured a series of presenters whose experiences give them insightful perspectives into education. Taborah (Tabby) Johnson is both an entertainer and educator, and uses her skills to do both at once via music, acting and hosting, appearing in productions for both children and adults such as “Polka Dot Door”, “Big Comfy Couch”, “Hair” and “Noddy”. She has also performed with Oscar Peterson, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and Rick James.



*Tabby Johnson*

Jane Gibson has experiences as an educator, editor and Publisher, and aims to provide resources which can incorporate Black history material into school curriculum in addition to having worked on the primary materials themselves. Norma Blacke Bourdeau presented based on her expertise as a university professor in Maryland, in addition to her many experiences working with Black and minority community organizations, and as an Episcopalian minister. Natasha Henry is the founder of Fundi Educational Resources, developing support resources focusing on African Canadian history as well as being a public and private school educator and workshop facilitator.

Saturday’s Black History Event focused on the themes of genealogy, history and education with the overriding ideals of “community, roots and culture”. Following greetings from Dennis Scott, attendees were pepped and motivated by Gregory C. N. Smith, Certified Human Behaviour Specialist, author and success coach. Smith was followed by Lisa B. Lee, “The Gene Queen”, a certified genealogist, who shared numerous genealogical tips, as well as her own genealogical journey. Check out her website [gotgenealogy.com](http://gotgenealogy.com) which features a monthly newsletter and lots of links and tips if you missed her talk.



*Janie Cooper- Wilson*

Robert Leverty, Executive Director of the Ontario Historical Society, briefly addressed the audience on the topic of Bill 149, *The Inactive Cemeteries Act*, and urged everyone to sign a petition in its support. A presentation by Janie Cooper-Wilson, historian, artist and genealogical researcher started out the afternoon. Cooper-Wilson, who is Executive Director of the Silver Shoe Historical Society in Simcoe County and also on the Board of Directors of the Emancipation Celebration Festival, at publication, had recently moved to the Chatham-Kent area to become Executive Director of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society. She hopes to help young and old alike to catch what she calls “historyitis”.

Karin Noble, who is Archivist at Grey Roots Museum & Archives and one of the editors of *Northern Terminus: The African Canadian History Journal*, spoke briefly about the mandate of the Journal and encouraged submissions for the upcoming volume.

The day was rounded out with an interactive panel discussion on the theme of “Multiculturalism, Diversity Education and Development” moderated by Tabby Johnson featuring panelists Lisa S. J. Scott, Lisa B. Lee, Janie Cooper-Wilson and Les MacKinnon. Les has been involved extensively with the Old Durham Road Pioneer Cemetery (a Black cemetery located in the former Artemesia Township, now part of the Municipality of Grey Highlands), as well as the Black History Event and the Emancipation Celebration Festival. Tabby Johnson closed up the panel discussion by leading the group in singing *O’Canada*.



*Janie Cooper-Wilson presents Norma Blacke Bourdeau with painting*

Both days included a delicious catered lunch of barbecued pork and beef, baked potatoes, salad and squares. Tasty! Attendees enjoyed eating their lunch in the Grey Roots Multi-Purpose Room, chatting with others and looking out at a view of the Grey Roots Heritage Village, Moreston.



Both days also featured a marketplace where participants could browse upon arrival, during breaks and at lunch. Vendors included craftspeople, booksellers, the Bruce and Grey Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, the Ontario Historical Society, and there was a table of resources organized by the Grey Roots Gift Shop.

*Visitor enjoying the vendor marketplace at the Educator’s Forum*