

# 2014 Black History Event and Journal Launch

Naomi Norquay



I think everyone in attendance at this year's Black History Event<sup>1</sup> was relieved that it was being held in April and not February! While April is not the designated "Black History Month", holding the BHE in April sends a message that every month is Black History Month!

Attendees were greeted by the friendly folks at the registration table in the large welcoming space of the Grey Roots atrium. Coffee, tea and muffins were available, and there were vendor and information tables to visit.

We began the day with "opening remarks and housekeeping" by Terri Jackson, the event's MC. She introduced the attending dignitaries: Owen Sound Councillor, Arlene Wright brought greetings from Mayor Haswell; Georgian Bluffs Mayor, Alan Barfoot welcomed everyone; and Brian Milne, Grey County's Warden, recounted some important points of the County's Black history. Blaine Courtney, Chair of the Emancipation Committee, then thanked Terri for her hard work, along with Grey Roots, where the event has had its home since 2009. He presented Karin Noble, Grey Roots Archivist, with a Certificate of Appreciation for Grey Roots, to acknowledge their important partnership.

---

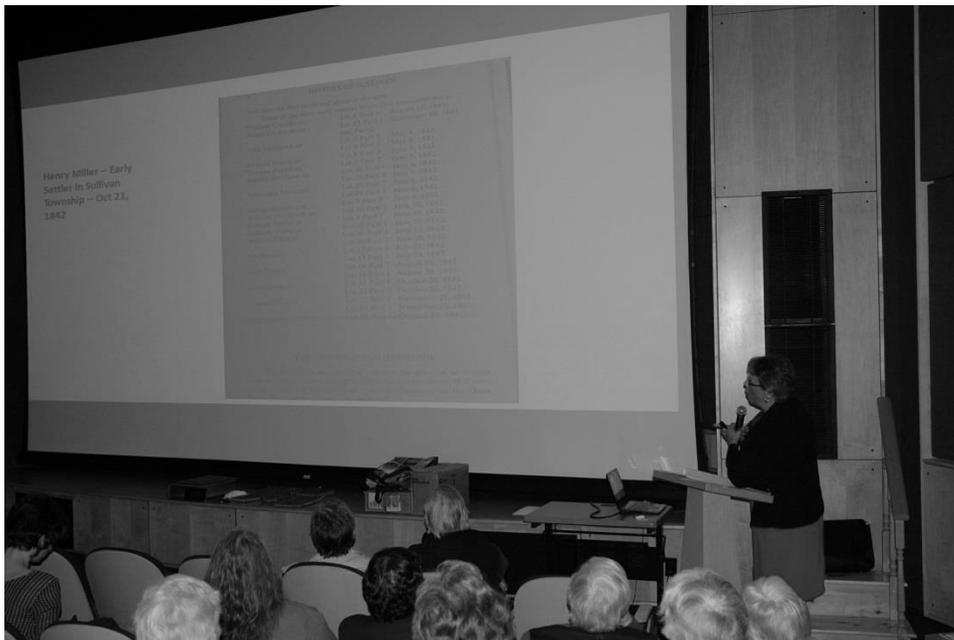
<sup>1</sup> The event was first held in April 2002 in the Town of Durham.



**Lisa McAllister and Terri Jackson**

The first speaker was Lisa McAllister, who spoke about her family, the Molocks. She started with a memory of her grandmother, Frances Harding, née Molock. “Grandma was very secretive”, she told us, and thus launched into a fascinating story, told through slides of family photos, letters and postcards, and mementos. Overall, she covered about 180 years of family history, from 1833 to the present. Lisa read excerpts from many of the letters and cards, and because these

were on slides, the audience could read along. Whenever Lisa came across an illegible word, audience members would offer suggestions. This “audience participation” was further enhanced by several people making connections between Lisa’s family and other people and events in the wider Owen Sound community. Lisa asked for the audience’s help in identifying people whose names appeared in the letters. It was an amazing experience! There was an intimacy about it, as Lisa shared the letters and stories about her family. It was highly-interactive and I got a very keen sense that collective expertise was at work throughout her presentation.



**Nancy Lee presents**

The next speaker was Nancy M. Lee, who spoke about Father Thomas Henry Miller and what she called “the Chuckee / Chokey / Chickee connection”. Her interest in the Chuckee family and

their connection to the well-known British Methodist Episcopal preacher was the focus of her research. Nancy traced her journey, telling an enlightening and entertaining tale of the process of uncovering new information about Isaiah Chuckee and his descendants. And, as is so often the case in presentations at the BHE, Lisa McAllister had found records of the Chuckee family in her own family documents about the BME church! The audience enjoyed Nancy's musings about her discoveries and the serendipitous connection to Lisa's family papers.

I look forward to future presentations from them both!



**Dr. Kym Snarr and Mitch Harrow**

After a tasty lunch, Dr. Kym Snarr and Mitch Harrow discussed their research on Negro Creek Road. Their joint paper appeared in this year's *Northern Terminus*. Dr. Snarr began by having us think about the meaning of the term, 'race'. She drew on her background in anthropology to discuss the idea that race is a social construct. She explained that the joint paper resulted from a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Anthropology course she had taught the previous year at Laurentian University's satellite campus in Barrie, Ontario. Mitch was a student in that class and had participated in a class research project about Negro Creek Road. He told the story of the research journey and what they discovered

about the area's history. The journey took them from Priceville to the Negro Creek settlement to Grey Roots Museum & Archives. Mitch is a born story-teller! Like Lisa McAllister and Nancy Lee, he was able to weave humour and intrigue into his story and keep his audience on the edge of their seats.

In the course of the research, Dr. Snarr and her students were offered the papers of the late Anna Scott, a resident on Negro Creek Road, who done extensive research on the community in order to help the fight to save its name. They suggested to Anna's husband, Paul, that he donate these papers to the Grey Roots Archives. Paul Scott was on hand to deliver the precious documents to Karin Noble.

The day ended with the official launch of the journal – Volume 11 – and a promise from the event's organizers that the 2015 BHE would be held in April.