

Presentation to the APPELE Consultation

The Quebec Board of Black Educators (QBBE), founded in 1969. I was a social response by young Black immigrant educators from the Caribbean. Some were graduates from Mc Gill, Sir George Williams, U of M Universities; Loyola, Montreal Teachers College, or residents and graduates resident and working in Montreal. Besides the bold, radical and extensive nature of this enterprise; one needs to understand that the success of the venture was due in large measure to the fact that the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal existed as an Community based and controlled Institution and that its leadership considered itself to be responsible for the Education of children in Montreal whose parents and or guardians wished them to receive an education in English. The surprising fact to these Caribbean scholars and residents was the high dropout rate of youths Blacks born here of established long term Black residents ; and the *surprising realization of the Black Educators graduating from McGill, Sir George Williams, Loyola and U of M in the sixties and seventies of the under-representation of indigenous Blacks at the four Montreal universities. This lead Black scholars at these Universities to move to investigate the causes of the virtual absence of Montreal and Canadian born Blacks fro the Universities. To their shock and amazement, they discovered in the elementary and high schools a system of "benevolent neglect" and racial biases exited that were responsible for the exclusion of the indigenous English speaking Black Community from the benefits of the Quebec education system. To put it simply, the social and economic development needs of Blacks were not being met by the formal education system in Montreal. The QBBE emerged as the body committed to addressing these inequities. In addition, there were a range of barriers and demotivating factors that exacerbated the situation: racial discrimination, and the pervasive nature of a "colour line" in the labour market and the community in general; educational streaming, psychological testing ; low expectations of Black Youth accompanied by discouraging guidance counselling; and problems relating to inadequate immigrant adaptation and integration.*

The principal negotiators were Dr. Clarence Bayne, Dr. Leo Bertley, Mr. Oswald Downes, Mr. Garvin Jeffers and Mr. Ashton Lewis Mr Williams and Knights; Rosie Douglas. Dr Leo Bertley was the leader of the group.

The group took the position that it was the responsibility of the existing school system, which had the resources, to take direct responsibility for the education of the children. They sought, therefore, to establish efficient and effective mechanisms within that system. Through its activism, a special committee of the QBBE, set up to study the problems of Black students, developed a document which outlined a series of strategies to deal with the various educational issues. The PSSBGM in response created a joint community committee, Parity Committee Report to study the problems affecting students, in particular, Black students in its system. The Report of

the parity committee comprised of 17 recommendations out of which flow the innovative energy and activities of the QBBE, The report was presented to the PSBGM on November 29, 1970. After much discussion and negotiation, the document, which posed an immediate challenge to the education system, was approved by the PSBGM on April 27, 1971. (Brathwaite, 1986)

Part of this negotiated arrangement resulted in the creation of The DaCosta-Hall Summer Program. It was created to remediate and enrich the educational performance of high school students, to facilitate admission to the new college system(CGEPS), and to Concordia and McGill Universities; and to ensure the success of those students who chose to study at any of the above mentioned universities.

Even though this "school" program was set up to function until problems were corrected, or until the formal school system had changed, this was not to be so finite a process. It is now, not only a permanent summer program of the QBBE, but it is a bonafide, fully accredited summer school in which students can attain credits accepted by the PSBGM, Students can also write the Quebec Ministry of Education(MEQ) supplementary exams and obtain their credits. There is keen interest and excellent attendance by participants in the Black history session, which are offered within the cultural component of the program as a non-credit course.

The goals of the program were and still are:

- 1. to provide students at the Grade 11 level with sufficient academic credits to be admitted to university.**
- 2. to instill a sense of Black pride and identity in the students as a motivating facto for their success through life.**
- 3. to begin the enrichment of Black students from Grade 8 to 10 so that they could be removed from the practical classes.**

High school students from Grade 8 to 11 are the target group because they were the potential dropouts just moving through the system. Due to the urgency of their situation,

Its uniqueness derives from the fact that the personal development of the individual was one of the main focuses of the program. The concern, caring and warmth of the teachers created a closeness between them and the students. Teachers talk with, and listen to the students". Today students and observers of QBBE express the desire to have this summer school type of mentoring all year round

**Partnerships and
Resources**

The Program would not have been possible without a responsive community oriented School Board and the sensitization of the officers to the need to correct the errors of the past.

Funding for the first Bana project in 1972 came from the PSBGM, Vanier College, and the QBBE. The present program is presently conducted and financed almost entirely by the QBBE, with small grants from the PSBGM, which includes rental costs for space provided; and a grant from the Ministry of Education.

**PSBGM THE PARITY
COMMIYTEE
REPORT**

The 17 recommendations are:

1. The Board (PSBGM) appoint an experienced Black teacher to act as a liaison officer
between the Black community and the elementary schools;
An experienced Black social worker be appointed to the Social Work Department;
3. The services of a Black psychiatrist or psychologist be obtained to do the testing to Black students who are being considered for placement in special classes;
4. The Board make every effort to recruit a greater number of qualified Black teachers at the elementary level;
5. The curriculum Council be requested to establish a committee to prepare a Black Studies programme. Upon the approval of the Department of Education, this programme would

IMMIGRANTS

III A DYNAMIC PERIOD OF GROWTH (1975 – 1984)

6. Wherever possible, Black studies programs be handled by Black teachers;
7. In schools where there is no Black Studies Program, Black literature and Black History be incorporated with the regular school curriculum;
8. A Black Studies Program be offered in the evening schools, if and when Black studies are offered, as credit courses,
9. Textbooks and records with racial bias (especially at the elementary level), if they exist, be replaced;
10. More books written by Black people be made available in school libraries (elementary and high);
11. A bibliography of Black studies be made available to all schools;
12. Black guidance teachers to be made available to guide Black students in the high schools and that those counselors be placed in given schools and be made available to Black students at large,
13. These guidance teachers be responsible for recommending the initial placement of Black high school students from within the system, and a table of equivalence be worked out between West Indies, British, and Canadian systems, with particular regard to grade level;
14. Remedial and adjustment services for Black students be made available where required and that Black teachers be appointed to operate these services where possible;
15. Black students be given the opportunity to opt out of the present standardized tests of mental ability, if their parents so request;
16. An ad hoc committee consisting of the liaison officer (proposed in recommendation No. 1), the principal and the district superintendent be established whenever there is a conflict regarding placement or some other problem. Further, that the parents of the child involved be automatically invited to attend the meetings of the committee;
17. The committee be given a mandate to continue in operation until an ad hoc committee be established in conformity with recommendation No. 16.

Recommendations 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 of this Agreement were adopted and implemented immediately where possible.

1977 and Gill 101

The financial situation and operations of the QBBE come upon hard times in the eighties and 90s. This was exacerbated by the fact of Quebec nationalism and the changes in the Provincial Government educational policy under Bill 101 shifted the administrative and funding criteria from an emphasis on religious school systems to a linguistic school systems; followed by restrictions to the

enrollment in the English school system. The impact on the school system of demographic change, apart from the aging of the Quebec population; the exodus of English speaking populations, increasing cultural diversification of the school population as a direct result of immigration, and regional shifts in the location of ethnic and cultural populations; all these factors combined to cause a progressive reduction in the school age populations and quicken the pace of school closings. Economic depression in the early to mid-nineties and the consequent Government cut backs in education, and school closings decreased the demand for teachers. As a direct consequence the interest in teaching as a career decreased. This has had a debilitating effect on the supply of new Black leadership to the QBBE. The effect of this reduction in trained Black educators has had a negative effect on some programs, such as the learning institute, and the literacy program. Moreover, decentralization of the power in the school system to put governance of the school into the hands of parents in the school districts made it more difficult and costly to manage a coordinated community strategy of the education agenda of any cultural community. In the traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic system, QBBE concentrated its lobbying on the top-leadership in the English school system. A break-through at that level meant that significant ripple effects could be created in the entire system. In the current more decentralized system, an organization like QBBE must lobby not only at the school board level, but at the level of the individual governing boards of the schools in each district. This calls for a vastly increased volunteer base, or a large budget to hire and sustain a significant staff to carry out the mission of the organization. In the short run this has put QBBE and the Black community at a disadvantage.

The Multi-racial Multicultural Policy of the PSBGM/EMSB.

This incorporated the 17 points negotiated by QBBE with the PSBGM and diversified it to include other school populations.

Some Major Accomplishments

The accomplishments of the QBBE have been numerous, over the thirty-three (50) years of existence of the organization. It has managed to cause, an increase in the hiring of teachers, and in the placement, of principals and vice principals. Black history made its way onto the list of accredited courses, as a Grade 10 two -credit course, at several high schools. The organization has played a major role in the restructuring which led to the formation of the MCIMR Department at the PSBGM, and in the appointment of Carlos Keizer as the first Black psychologist with the PSBGM. It has influenced the election of Black commissioners, and hiring of Black and other liaison officers. It forced the relaxation of the seniority ruling when there was to be a major retrenchment. There is not a single Black principal or vice-principal who has been appointed or promoted in the last seventeen years, who does not owe his or her position or retention in that position to the initiatives and lobbying or

ground work of the QBBE. In addition, the QBBE has also successfully negotiated with the PSBGM for positions for Blacks as janitors, and as other support staff.

As in earlier years, enthusiasm, persistence and consistency mark the organization continued influence at the level of the PSBGM/Black Community Liaison Committee. Though many other community organizations were added to this committee, their attendance was sporadic, their contributions limited, and they finally slid into the background at this level, choosing to show a greater presence in the front-line services within the schools.

It is doubtful that this would have happened and the education acquisition problem of English speaking Black youth upgraded to the point of being virtually being eliminated, were the policies of the proposed Bill 40 in place at that time. Bill 101 undid most of these support services and has put Black English speaking immigrants at a disadvantage in the French school system. (Marie McAndrew). This is even more so the case for Black females (James McIntosh). Bill 40 threatens to remove the community support entirely. It ignores a system of support that we have built over the last fifty years, by removing the community engagement and care from the motivation of the Black youth.