

From the President's Desk

During the month of October, Vincentians around the world celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the independence of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Here in Toronto, we celebrated two milestones; the 50th Anniversary of the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto, Inc. and the Independence Anniversary of SVG. Our celebrations and tributes to the founders of our nation and our organization gave us the chance to reflect and give thanks for the founding members of the association who had the foresight, determination and made the sacrifice necessary for us to build on. We are thankful for being able to share and benefit from our predecessors' knowledge. For the independence of our homeland, we recognize that our 40th Anniversary is a milestone on our march for prosperity. It has been a year for Vincentians near and far to show our pride and true identity. An identity that is steeped in nation-building from statehood to Independence. It is hard to believe that it has been 40 years already since Independence but yes, it is.

Vincentians in Toronto held several events to commemorate the two momentous occasions. On Friday, October 25th, the Consulate General of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in Toronto hosted the flag raising ceremony held at Toronto City Hall. Consul General, Mr. Fitzgerald Huggins brought greetings from the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The annual Thanksgiving Church Service took place on October 27th at the Wesley Chapel Free Methodist Church in Scarborough. Sonya Sutton and her accompanying band delivered a most riveting praise and worship followed by Pastor Trudy White's inspiring sermon. The service ended with a very entertaining musical rendition by Gemini Pan Grove. Thanks to everyone for making this a very joyful celebration.

The gala which we dubbed "Two Celebrations in One" took place on Saturday, November 2nd at Estate Banquet and Event Centre in Scarborough. Her Excellency Lou-Anne Gilchrist, Ambassador of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the United States of America and non-resident High Commissioner to Canada gave the keynote address. A number of awards were handed out to persons in our community by the Board of the SVGAT as well as by the Consulate. The Association also presented bursaries to two students, Hawah Roforce and Vanessa Baptiste. For more detailed information on visit this event, please our website. www.vincytoronto.com where you will find a copy of the souvenir booklet.

We wrapped up our series of events with a Youth Forum, held on Sunday, November 3rd at the Scarborough Civic Centre, Council Chambers. Melba DaSilva was the moderator for this event and had a panel of three individuals.

What a wonderful pleasure it was to have you in our midst as we celebrated. We invite you to join with us and add your own reasons to celebrate.

Jim Lewis

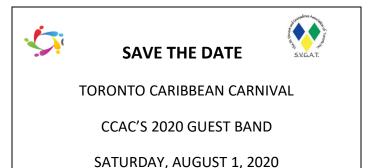
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The Board of Directors sincerely apologizes for the late issue of this issue of Insight due to circumstances beyond its control. Many thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

The duration of office for board members are:

Dennis Bucchan – Up to January 2020 Kenneth Farrell – Up to January 2020 Erline Granderson – Up to January 2020 Anthony Lavia – Up to January 2022 Jim Lewis – Up to January 2021 Cornetta Mason – Up to January 2020 Prudence Morton – Up to January 2020 Petra Ryan-Phillips – Up to January 2020 Cordel Telfer – Up to January 2021





Contact Us for Information

Reps on Committees of the Association

Evening Boat Cruise – Dennis Bucchan, Gideon Exeter, Erline Granderson, Prudence Morton

<u>**50th Anniversary</u>** – Raymond England, Geoff Edwards, Fred Williams, Cheyenne Samuel</u>

<u>SVG Unity Picnic</u> – Jim Lewis, Andy Lavia, Gideon Exeter

<u>Walk-a-Thon & Local Picnic</u> – Petra Ryan-Phillips (Coordinator)

<u>Christmas Hamper</u> – Cornetta Mason, Petra Ryan-Phillips, Gideon Exeter, Kenneth Farrell

<u>Children's Christmas Party</u> – Prudence Morton, Cheyenne Samuel

<u>Disaster Preparedness (Cari-On</u>) – Prudence Morton, Sandra Bobb, Gideon Exeter

<u>Independence Planning</u> – Sandra Bobb, Jim Lewis, Prudence Morton, Dennis Bucchan

Scholarship - Cornetta Mason (Chair)

<u>Council of Caribbean Associations – Canada</u> – Cordel Telfer, Petra Ryan-Phillips, Gideon Exeter



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COMMEMORATIVE COFFEE MUGS

With co-sponsorship from Metelsky Professional Law, the Association produced a number of coffee mugs to coincide with the 39th anniversary of the independence of St. Vincent and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto. A number of these commemorative mugs are available for purchase from the Association for \$5.00 each. They can make a good gift for the Christmas Season. Please contact any member of these mugs.



the warmth of the islands

Vincentians In Toronto Launch Disaster Preparedness Group



The CARI-ON team, from left to right: Andrea Jones; Hayden Jones, Chair; Stuart Brereton; Melba DaSilva, Vice-Chair; Andrea DeSilva, Communications Director; Consul General Fitzgerald Huggins; Hassan Perreira, Gideon Exeter; Sandra Sutherland



Following months of preparation and discussions, a group of SVG nationals in the Toronto Region launched CARI-ON, the acronym for Conducting Active Relief Impacting Our Nation, a committee to allow Vincentians here to prepare the community to respond to any disaster that may strike and affect St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The launch took place at Windies Restaurant, a popular Caribbean owned and managed facility in Scarborough on Sunday, September 22. This committee is the third of its kind launched in the Caribbean community here in Toronto and is part of an umbrella organization called Canadian Caribbean Disaster Relief Action (CCaDiRA) which is to coordinate disaster preparedness, relief, emergency and response activities between the Caribbean Diaspora in Canada and the Caribbean Region.

A group of just over 50 persons attended the launch which heard and heard a number of addresses. Mr. Rahul Singh of Global Medic spoke about his organization's work in reaching to countries affected by disasters within a short period of time. Mr. Singh noted that Global Medic is a registered Canadian charity, and its mandate is to save lives by providing short-term, rapid response in the wake of disasters and crisis, both at home and abroad.

"The key word is rapid, as you might expect from an agency that was founded by paramedics. Global Medic is often the first team, and many times the only one, to get critical interventions to people in life-threatening situations following a disaster. This is what we are known for in the world of humanitarian disaster response".

Global Medic achieves this through a welldeveloped Emergency Program and its internationally deployable Rapid Response Team (RRT).

Consul General for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in Toronto, Mr. Fitzgerald Huggins was the featured speaker who addressed the effect that climate change is having on the world today. Mrs. Shelley John, Director of Sales for SVG Tourism provided an outline of her division of government in promoting St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a tourist destination in good times and even during when disasters affect the country. Mr. Hayden Jones, chairman of CARI-ON outlined the functions and purpose of his organization which currently has 9 active members but is hoping that others will see the benefit of becoming members. Also addressing the occasion was Gideon Exeter. Interim Chair of the Canadian Caribbean Disaster Relief Action Committee (CCaDiRA). Exeter explained how his umbrella organization is intended to represent the Caribbean Community here in Canada to coordinate with all partners in disaster preparedness and relief in the Caribbean and here in Canada.

The attendees were treated to a free meal but were encouraged to make donations to help offset the cost of the event and to contribute to the appeal to assist the people of the Bahamas who are trying to deal with the devastation caused by hurricane Dorian.

For more information on CARI-ON: visit the website, www.carionsvg.org, email at carion.org@gmail.com, through Facebook at https://facebook.com/carionsvg/ or IG @carionsvg. Hayden Jones, Chair

IMMIGRATION MATTERS: A REFLECTION ON COMUNAL SETTLEMENT IN THE 60's & 70's

Contributed by: Sandra Sutherland, RCIC

This year (2019) the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto (SVGAT) has been celebrating 50 years of community service. The theme for the 50th anniversary celebratory events *"Much has been accomplished ... Much more to achieve"* is quite fitting. I spoke to Grace (Toney) Stephens and also interviewed Edna Hunte, who served as the first recording secretary of the Vincentian Association, as it was called in 1969, in order to find out how they and other Vincentians fared with immigration and settlement issues in Toronto. My findings revealed that there was a very strong sense of community in the sixties and seventies (when the immigration "gates" were opened to West Indians to come to Canada) which helped Vincentians and other West Indians to overcome settlement issues.

Both Edna and Grace expressed that there was a natural kind of bond and responsibility amongst Vincentians in the sixties and seventies. Most Vincentians who were already here in Toronto opened their doors and hearts to other fellow Vincentians who came or were planning to come to Toronto. Edna expressed that herself and other members of the then Vincentian Association and community such as Eddie DeFreitas, Shirley Sutherland, Jethro Tim, Glendon Carmichael, Vincent Beache, Fred Phillips, Reuben Jeffers, Lawrence Collymore, Ewan Lewis, Rufus Jarvis, Chester John, and Vince Cato - to name a few, went out of their way to see that their fellow Vincentians were not alienated or neglected.

Members of the Vincentian Association made it their duty to go to the airport to receive persons, provide them with accommodations in their own homes or the homes of other fellow Vincentians, and assist them in getting settled until they were able to "stand on their own feet". If someone's work place had a job opening or they heard of other job openings elsewhere those who were looking for jobs were referred or quickly informed. Back in those days Manpower (an employment agency) was a good resource for employment opportunities. Some persons who were planning to come to Toronto were even given contact information of fellow Vincentians in Toronto whom they may call on for support when they arrive.

Domestic workers who were already settled in Toronto were no strangers to the homes of The Association members. Most domestics worked weekdays and had to find a place to stay on weekends. Members of The Association as well as other Vincentians housed many of them on weekends. Edna joyfully reflected on those days and expressed that on weekends they would have "cookups, go downtown, hang out, go to church, etc." She mentioned that the Vincentian community frequently got together at gatherings at other's homes. They would go out to movies or parties and just have good old-fashioned fun. Come Monday morning it was back to their domestic jobs (for the domestics). There was a lot of warmth and camaraderie in those days.

Looking back, we recognize that "Much has been accomplished" over the years not only regarding immigration and settlement matters but with having a positive and communal impact on our nation and nationals (in SVG and the diasporas). Now the SVGAT strive forward with a view that there is "Much more to achieve" but we can only achieve by coming together as a vibrant community that holds each other's hands and lift each other up.

The old adage that "it takes community" or "it takes a village" should live on as our Vincentian community grows. Let's search our hearts and ask and honestly answer these questions: 1) could we be more accommodating, 2) would we, and 3) Why/why not?

Sandra Sutherland is an authorized immigration representative and counsel. She specializes strictly in immigration and is licensed with the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC) as a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC). She can be reached at (416) 431-2829 via e-mail or at View ssutherland@suthernimmigration.com. her advertisement under Suthern Immigration & Paralegal Services Inc. in this publication for more information.

Merry Christmas

The Board of Directors of the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto wishes all members, friends and supporters all the best for the Christmas and Holiday Season.



So, You Are About to Graduate

By Samantha Lewis

(This article is the first in a series of commentaries that hopefully will help students prepare for life after high school)

After almost 4 years of long nights, early mornings and lots of homework you are about to move to the next stage of your life... more school.

Many people think that preparation for graduation starts in the Spring, but it doesn't; it actually starts in September. There are many scenarios that students graduating high school and students graduating from post-secondary institutions should be looking at.

Let us first look at post-secondary fairs and how you can prepare for them. If you are about to graduate high school, then congratulations! Everyone has been working hard to prepare you to graduate from this major phase of your life. Your setting up post-secondary fairs; Your parents and perhaps other relatives may have been talking to about what college or university, you will be attending. This pre-research can be crucial to helping you prepare for what comes next. Hopefully you would have attended a post-secondary fair in Grade 11, as this is the best time to explore all of the options that college and/or university has to offer you. If you did not attend a post-secondary fair in grade 11 and you are now attending your first one, fear not, the following pieces of information will help you succeed.

What to do before a post-secondary fair

- 1. Do some preliminary research: This research is not about what programs you would like to study; instead, it is about imagining what an ideal in school looks like. When you are imagining your ideal school day, are you walking to school? Are you taking the bus? Perhaps you are driving to school? Are you living on campus, at home or near the campus?
- 2. *Think about what you like doing for fun:* Many people think you shouldn't study what you like in school, but I disagree. You should study what you enjoy doing, because if you do you will be more inclined to study and learn and therefore do better. Often, students do not realize that grades sometimes matter more than what you study. So, make sure that you are taking a program that you enjoy, and you should receive good grades.
- 3. *Think about what subjects you are good at in school:* This is important. If you have no idea what you want to study, it is best to start with what subjects you liked and did best at in high school. Careers are changing, job titles are changing, and no job or career has only one path to get you to your ultimate goal. Keep that in mind when you are doing your research.
- 4. Bring a notebook and a bag to carry all the material you will receive at the fair. It is also a good idea to bring a support person who will assist you and be a good companion as you wander around.

You are now at the fair ... what do you do?

- 1. *Walk around and just collect information*: Listen to everyone and everything. You may think that this program or that school is not what you are looking for; but speaking to several recruiters will teach you a lot about the various options that are available to you and the type of questions you may need to ask.
- 2. *Take a break:* Some fairs are three hours long, so you need to re-charge. Grab some water but also start reading the materials of the schools or programs that piqued your interest. Doing this helps with thinking about what sort of questions to ask to get the information you need about a program. For example, looking at a view book can tell you a bit about whether a particular program has co-op or research opportunities. Asking questions of a recruiter will elicit the information you want.
- 3. *Revisit the schools and programs that first piqued your interest:* This is the time to get a 'one on one' with a recruiter. And, this is the time to ask all your questions to get the information you need. You should also get contact information for the people you will need to reach out to if you need more assistance.

What sort of questions should I ask?

Funding:

There are four types of funding: Scholarships are academic merit-based funding; bursaries are granted based on financial need; grants are money you do not have to pay back; loans are funding that you will need to pay back. For graduate students it is very important you ask the school about all potential funding opportunities. You do not always have to pay for your graduate school education. Many students have a portion if not all of their graduate school funded. Make sure that you are aware of the ways you can do that too. What funding opportunities are available to students outside of student loans? This is the chance to ask about scholarships, grants, government funding etc. Many schools will tout their entrance scholarships, be careful of these. Many scholarships are offered

to students on very strict conditions and may not be renewable

Atmosphere at Schools You are Interested in:

You should always visit the school before you decide to attend it. However, it is good to know about the school's atmosphere and student life ahead of time. What sort of academic and social supports do they have for incoming students; Is the school located near public transit? What is the town like, etc.? All of this will make a difference to your school experience and enjoyment.

Research, Career, Co-op Opportunities

Working experience is going to become a valuable commodity once you enter the real world. This is something you might as well stock up on while you are in school. Co-op is one of the most popular ways to get this experience but not the only one. Look for summer jobs or internships in your field. You will want to ask recruiters if they will help you find a job or help you make connections in the industry. Research opportunities are especially useful for those of you who are considering more school down the line. Research will allow you the chance to get an idea of what a master's or PhD calls for and put you in conversations with other scholars.

The Board of Directors of the SVGAT encourages all interested persons to contribute to its **Scholarship Program** and the **Adopt-A-Child Program** to assist our young people with their educational pursuits.

Please contact any Board member listed above.

Community News

Toronto is arguably the most diverse city in the world. Despite this, its Black and other racialized citizens continue to live quite challenging lives. A recently released report article in the Metcalf Foundation stated that although visible minorities make up just 46 percent of the Toronto region's workforce, they account for 63 percent of the working poor. There are many other reports to support this finding and as such all stakeholders must work together to eradicate these inequalities. A number of organizations in the Black community, the City of Toronto and the Faculty of Education at York University are doing their part to confront anti-Black racism in Toronto at all stages. On November 12, 2019, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations in partnership with Black Legal Action Centre, Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit at the City of Toronto, TAIBU Community Health Centre and Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators presented a panel discussion, Black Community Conversation on Education, "Confronting Anti-Black Racism in the Education System." The panelists consisted of

- Fareeda Adam, Lawyer (Black Legal Acton Centre)
- Anthony Morgan, Lawyer and Training and Development Consultant (Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit at City of Toronto)
- Cheryl Woolnough, Teacher and Interim Mental Health and Wellness Commission Chair (Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators)
- Alexis Dawson, Governance Commission Chair (Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators)

The majority of the conversation focussed on four areas. Namely, what are the issues/challenges impacting Black students and their families in the public-school system. Were there successful models or programs or interventions that worked that need to be brought back or strengthen. What policies, programs and activities that need to be done to address those challenges or meet those needs. If we are to form a broad coalition to have a two-year mandate to make public education work for Black students and their families, who (individuals and organizations) needs to be engaged or included in the process?

The panellists used the occasion to inform the community members present about the ways in which each of the organizations represented can be of assistance. For instance, the Black Legal Action Centre can advocate for students and parents whenever they encounter difficult situations with the school system; particularly with dealing with suspensions and expulsions. Their mission is to educate, advocate and litigate to combat individual and systemic anti-Black racism in Ontario.

Representatives from the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators spoke on parental engagement. They noted several resources that parents should familiarize themselves with when engaging with teachers and administrators. York University Faculty of Education has a series of information sheets - *The Engaged Parent: Navigating the School System for Black Student Success*. The sheets are designed to support parents to be partners in their children's education, from JK through to high school. These resources will help parents effectively and confidently engage with the school system to support the academic success and wellbeing of Black children.

The City of Toronto recognizes that the legacy of anti-Black racism lies in the current social, economic. and political marginalization of Torontonians of African descent. It is experienced through but not limited to lack of opportunity, poor health, poor education outcomes, higher rates of unemployment, significant poverty, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is therefore committed to addressing five key areas:

- 1. Children & Youth Development
- 2. Health & Community Services
- 3. Job Opportunities & Income Support
- 4. Policing & the Justice System
- 5. Community Engagement & Black Leadership

Mayor John Tory acknowledges that Anti-Black racism exists in Toronto. He believes that eradicating anti-Black racism must be the goal in Toronto, because it stands as an obstacle to building a truly fair and just city. He is aware that doing so won't be easy or instantaneous. He pledges to lead, to work within government and in partnership with Toronto's Black communities to forge a city where our values and goals are matched by reality.



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SVG TORONTO CONSULATE OFFICE

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Mr. Fitzgerald Huggins Consul General Tel: (416) 398-4277 Fax (416) 398-4199 Email: consulategeneral@rogers.com

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ALL THOSE WHO IN ONE WAY OR THE OTHER SUPPORTED THE ACTIVITIES DURING THE PAST YEAR.



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For further information, please visit any of the websites listed below, or contact Gideon Exeter (416) 992-4253 or by email <u>gexeter@arbormemorial.com</u> for more details.



The St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto invites you to attend the 2020 Annual General Meeting of Members. Please join the SVGAT Board of Directors and members at this meeting where we present reports on all of our activities of 2019 and where you can begin to help us plan for the year ahead.

Membership in the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc. (SVGAT)

All persons wishing to become members of or to renew their membership in the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto are required to complete an application form that can be found on the back of this publication. Please forward completed form with the required fee to the Secretary.



The Board of Directors and Members of the St. Vincent and Grenadines of Toronto Inc. herewith offer sincere condolences to all those members of our community who have recently lost their loved ones. We wish you God's blessings during your period of grief.

May the souls of the departed Rest in Peace.

ST. VINCENT AND GRENADINES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO INC. TENTATIVE CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2019

Sunday, December 15 Monday, December 23 Sunday, January 26 Children's Christmas Party Christmas Hamper Distribution Annual General Meeting Grandravine Community Centre (See Page 8) Across the GTA Venue to be Determined

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