

VOL 1, NO. 1

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025

OVERBROOK • FORBES • CUMMINGS • CASTLE HEIGHTS • VANIER SOUTH



OPUS

NEWSMAGAZINE

GRATIS



THE NEW CANADIANS

A DEEP DIVE INTO WHO WE HAVE BECOME





OPUS newsmagazine is a non-profit community publication produced by PhoenixMedia.

It is available online, aimed at approximately 30,000 homes, businesses, and organizations in the Eastern Ottawa communities of Overbrook, Castle Heights, Forbes, Cummings and Vanier South.

OPUS newsmagazine is produced digitally six times a year, for the periods of December/January, February/March, April/May, June/July, August/September, and October/November.

OPUS newsmagazine will occasionally publish print editions that are distributed at special events throughout the year, within its general distribution area.

In addition, the news and current events section of the publication are regularly updated.

OPUS newsmagazine

is produced and financed entirely by **Phoenix Media**

This issue contains photographs by **Hind Aliliche**

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OPUS newsmagazine is dedicated to disseminating quality news, current events, and feature writing with a goal to promote communication and understanding between people of different cultural traditions, languages, faiths and ideologies who reside in the communities of Overbrook, Castle Heights, Cummings, Forbes and Vanier South.

THE EDITOR

David FERGUSON
Editor@Opus-Online.ca



girls and guys to their designated pick-up stop. Or they may be shovelling snow in the winter or tending their gardens in the summer.

Between picking up poop and pulling my dog away from his constant sniffing, I have unintentionally been studying my neighbour's responses to my habitual greetings.



At the risk of coming across as nerdy, I have always enjoyed some good statistics. Of course, I don't lie in bed at night studying ordinal, nominal, discrete, and continuous data, but I will take time to read stats that have a direct impact on my life.

My Inadvertent, Non-Scientific Study

Generally, of the people with whom I share a smile and a greeting, about 70 percent will enthusiastically reply in a like manner. Of those, at least 70 percent are women and of those, about 90 percent are women of Caribbean descent, and of those, about 99 percent are likely 50 years old or more. Of the people who somewhat reluctantly return my smile and "Hello", 98 percent spoke with an accent other, including French; were so called "visible minorities" (including women who were wearing a burqa), and were evenly divided between visible male and female individuals. Of those individuals who look up, then said nothing, 80 percent were men and 90 percent of those were Caucasian. Of the individuals who completely ignore me, 100 percent were young people wearing ear buds.

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About four years ago, I moved to Overbrook, not a predominantly Caucasian, protestant and anglophone area of Greater Ottawa, and I have never been happier

No matter what the weather, my favourite time of day is spent walking Buddy, my beautiful Border Collie. I love the look of joy and pride on his face as we walk, but mostly, I love our four-times daily walks because it is my chance to say "Hello" to all the neighbours whose paths I cross.

I understand that I catch many of them off their guard, and they will only stare at me with curiosity, since greeting strangers is not entirely a thing in Ottawa.

But I don't care.

I genuinely would like to see everyone take up this practice because it almost always puts a smile on my neighbours' determined, or sometimes dour faces, as they begin their trek to work, all bundled up, to the nearest OC Transpo stop, or as they guide their gaggle of



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DEADLINE FOR THE APRIL/MAY 2025 ISSUE

Copy : MARCH 21 • Advertising : MARCH 28

Thankfully not a single individual has responded negatively, except for the guy in a vehicle full of passengers that was stopped in the middle of the road, and who scowled at me for asking if he needed help. About 15 minutes later, on the final leg of Buddy and my walk, he pulled up beside me and apologized, explaining that he had misread my intentions. I am unsure what he thought I said.

I did say that this *wasn't* a scientific study, but it does say something about the local demographic and how my “New Canadian” neighbours are more likely to embrace familiar salutations.

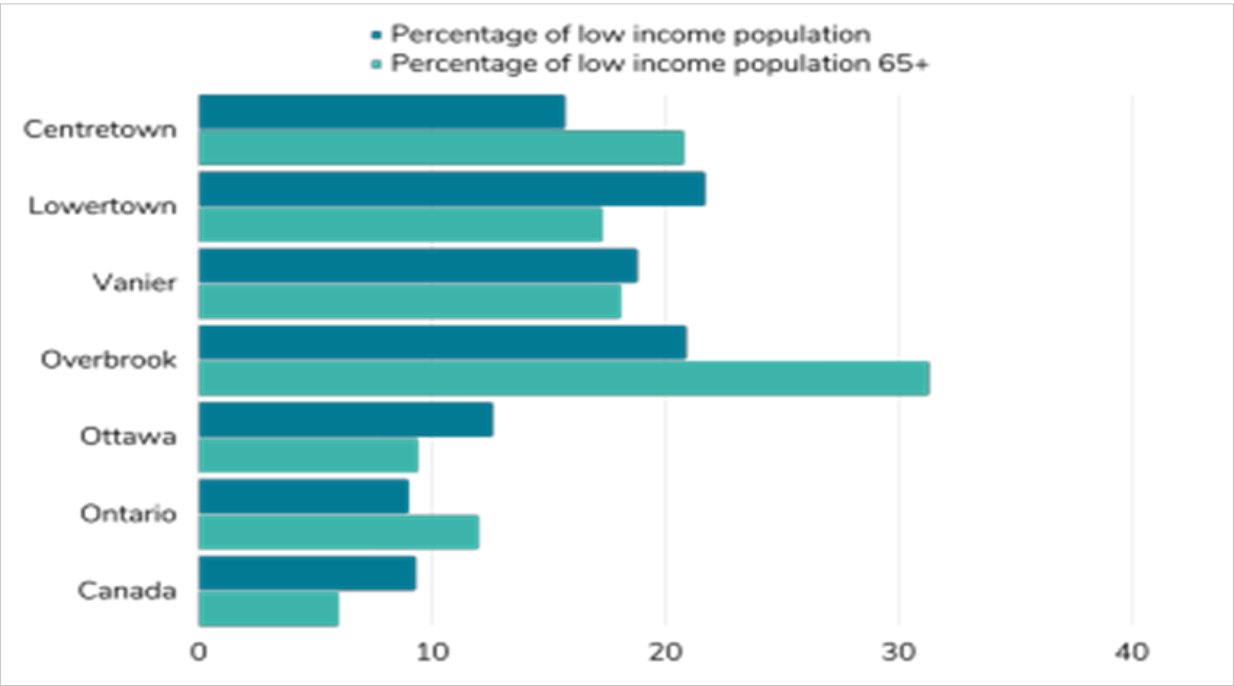
Real Statistics

After the 2022 convoy occupation of Ottawa-Gatineau, a group calling itself the *Ottawa People's Commission* was formed as a program of the Centretown Community Health Centre. The group's ambitious goal is to present a grassroots effort to promote healing and justice in our communities.

Then, in 2023, they produced a paper of which Part II was entitled “After the Occupation: Change”. In it, they highlight population statistics that show the clear disparity between residents “of means” versus the rest of us (of which I proudly fall within at least three categories).

The document had me rapt, comparing Ottawa neighbourhoods in terms of cultural and racial backgrounds, age groups, physical abilities and

Median household income in the studied neighbourhoods is lower than average. In Overbrook, for example, there is a higher percentage of households that are low income, and it has a higher percentage of people who are 65 years old or older. In Overbrook, Vanier and Lowertown, the proportion of low-income households is twice the



national and provincial average. For low-income seniors, the rate varies from three times higher (in Lowertown), to five times higher in Overbrook.

The percentage of “visible minorities” is higher in Overbrook (41 percent) compared to nationally (22.3 percent), provincially (29.3percent) and city-wide (32.5 percent). Lowertown, Overbrook, and Vanier are home to a much larger Black population (15.6 percent, 19.3 percent, and 15.4 percent, respec-

tively), compared to Canada (3.5percent), Ontario (5.5 percent).

You can read the entire publication [here](#).

EPILOGUE: *In case anyone was wondering, I am a Caucasian, born protestant and anglophone.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We are looking forward to receiving your emails with your comments, thoughts, ideas, suggestions, critiques, or recommendations — positive or negative — we welcome them all.

We welcome new contributors who have a story to tell, particularly those who share in our mis-

sion to promote communication and understanding between people of different cultural traditions, languages, faiths and ideologies. Everyone is welcome! Please take a moment to email us at

Editor@Opus-Online.ca.

Recherche de bénévoles

Volunteers Needed

Préparateur bénévole de déclarations d'impôts

Période de formation : Février 2025
Date de début : 3 mars 2025
Date de fin : 30 avril 2025

Pour en savoir plus et poser votre candidature, consultez notre site web.
www.crcrr.org/fr/individualsupport

Volunteer Income Tax Preparer

Training Period: February 2025
Start Date: March 3rd, 2025
End Date: April 30th, 2025

Learn more and apply on our website.
www.crcrr.org/individualsupport

Centre de ressources communautaires
RIDEAU-ROCKCLIFFE
Community Resource Centre

Overbrook • Forbes • Carson Grove • Manor Park
Lindenlea • Rockcliffe • New Edinburgh

Our heritage is that which we have inherited from the past to value and enjoy in the present, and to preserve and pass on to future generations.

COMMUNITY NEWS & CURRENT EVENTS



OC Transpo Announces Expanded Services for the O-Train

The O-Train Lines Number 1 and Number 4 will expand to six days a week with the inclusion of Saturdays, beginning on Saturday, January 25.

While the commute on these lines will remain the same, the Saturday service will be an added convenience for weekend commuters.

In addition, O-Train Line Number 2 and Number 4 will operate from 6:00 to 24:00, from Monday to Friday, and from 6:30 to 24:00 on Saturdays.

Bus service will continue to run parallel to Line Number 2 and Line Number 4.

This parallel bus service, which includes B2 buses, Route 97 and Route 99, will be in service everyday.

Travel Planner and *Transit App* have been updated to help customers plan their trips.



OC Transpo staff will continue to be at key stations during peak hours to provide support on the new lines.

More info: octranspo.com/transition

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In Canada, Black History Month is a month-long celebration of the history and achievements of Black people.

Every February, people from across the country participate in events and festivities that honour the legacy of Black people in Canada, and their communities.

This year's theme is "Black Excellence: A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build".

This theme honours the rich past and present contributions and accomplishments of Black Canadians, while aspiring to embrace new opportunities for the future.

The theme aligns with the 10th anniversary of the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), and aims to recognize the world's Black population as a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.

Black History Month offers all Canadians from all over the world, an opportunity to learn more about the many communities of Black Canadians, and how they have, and will continue to help shape our country.

Black Canadians and their communities have been a part of shaping Canada's heritage and identity since the early 1600's, with the arrival of Mathieu Da Costa, a navigator and interpreter.

For many years, the role of Black Canadians has largely been ignored as a key part of Canada's history.

There is little mention that some of the Loyalists who arrived after the American Revolution and settled in the Maritime provinces, were black.

Although we can't be sure of the exact number, many people of African descent sacrificed their lives as soldiers fighting for Canada in the War of 1812, World War I and World War II.

Few Canadians know that Black Africans were once enslaved in the Canadian part of British North America, or of how those who fought enslavement helped to lay the foundation of Canada's diverse and inclusive society.

In 1978, the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) was established. Its founders presented a petition to the City of Toronto to have February formally proclaimed as Black History Month and the following year, the first Canadian proclamation was issued by Toronto.

In 1988, the first Black History Month was held in Nova Scotia, and in 1996 was renamed *African Heritage Month*.

In 1993, the OBHS successfully filed a petition in Ontario to proclaim February as Black History Month. Following their success, they introduced the idea of having Black History Month recognized across Canada.



Ottawa Public Library Contest for Budding Writers

Until February 28, young writers from across Ottawa can enter the **2025 Awesome Authors** contest, organized by the Ottawa Public Library (OPL).

The worthy wordsmiths must be between nine years old and 18 years old to be eligible.

Entries may include one of the following categories:

- short story
- poetry
- comic-book style

For the past several years, the OPL has included the "book cover" category, which gives young people free rein to illustrate the cover of the anthology of winning entries.

For anyone who are passionate about drawing and illustration, the "book cover" category is an opportunity to showcase their talent.

As in previous years, the contest judges—Catherine Austen, Apollo the Child, Amelinda Bérubé, Pierre-Luc Bélanger and Éric Péladeau—will host writing workshops where participants can gain valuable insights into the fundamentals of writing, and explore literary genres.

Workshops will be held online and at Ottawa Public Library branches citywide.

For more information, criteria and details about the Awesome Authors contest, please visit the webpage at [Awesome Authors Youth Writing Contest](#).

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Overbrook • Castle Heights • Forbes • Cummings • Vanier South



February is Black History Month
Legacies worth preserving, creating and celebrating.



The Honourable Jean Augustine, the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, introduced a motion in December 1995, and on March 4, 2008, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada.

Black History Month is a time for all Canadians of all backgrounds to learn more about these important stories, as well as the many other important contributions that Black Canadians and their communities have contributed to enhance the rich history and the continued growth of this country.

Many more details on page 7.



OVERDOSE PREVENTION

Ottawa Public Health and Ottawa’s *Overdose Prevention and Response Task Force* are working to advance Ottawa’s *Overdose Response Strategy*.

Anyone interested can register to receive email alerts from the *Stop Overdose Ottawa Alert System*, or sign up by visiting StopOverdoseOttawa.ca, click “Subscribe to Drug Alerts” and fill out the form. A confirmation email will be sent to ensure that any future alerts sent out through the new system are received.

Stop Overdose Ottawa alerts are issued when Ottawa’s Overdose Prevention and Response Task Force becomes aware of issues related to toxic drugs circulating in the community, including increased risk of overdose; new drug toxicity risk and contaminants; new or noteworthy drug trends presenting in the local unregulated drug supply.

Ottawa Begins Recruitment Process for its Committees and Boards

The city of Ottawa is recruiting residents to become public members on one of its many committees and boards.

Public participation is an important component of these ongoing commissions, and community involvement can make a huge difference in how a committee affects a community.

The volunteer positions are:

- Ottawa Board of Health (1 position)
- Committee of Adjustment (reserves)
- Rogers Centre Ottawa – Board of Directors (1 position and reserves)
- Accessibility Advisory Committee (1 position and reserves)
- Community Safety and Well-being Advisory Committee (2 positions)
- French Language Services Advisory Committee (2 positions, and reserves)
- Planning Advisory Committee (Landscape Architect position)

Each position is an opportunity for qualified residents to provide their expertise, knowledge and lived experience to influence the city’s work.

Applications must be submitted by **Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 4:30 pm.**

For more information, or to submit an application, join a committee or board page.

As part of this mid-term recruitment drive, a virtual “question and answer” session will be held on **Thursday, February 6, at 6 pm.**

A recording of the information session will be available on YouTube after February 6.

It will include an overview of the recruitment process, and the steps required to apply.

It will also include questions from participants with answers by recruitment staff.

Email committees@ottawa.ca or call 613-580-2424, ext. 28136, for more information.





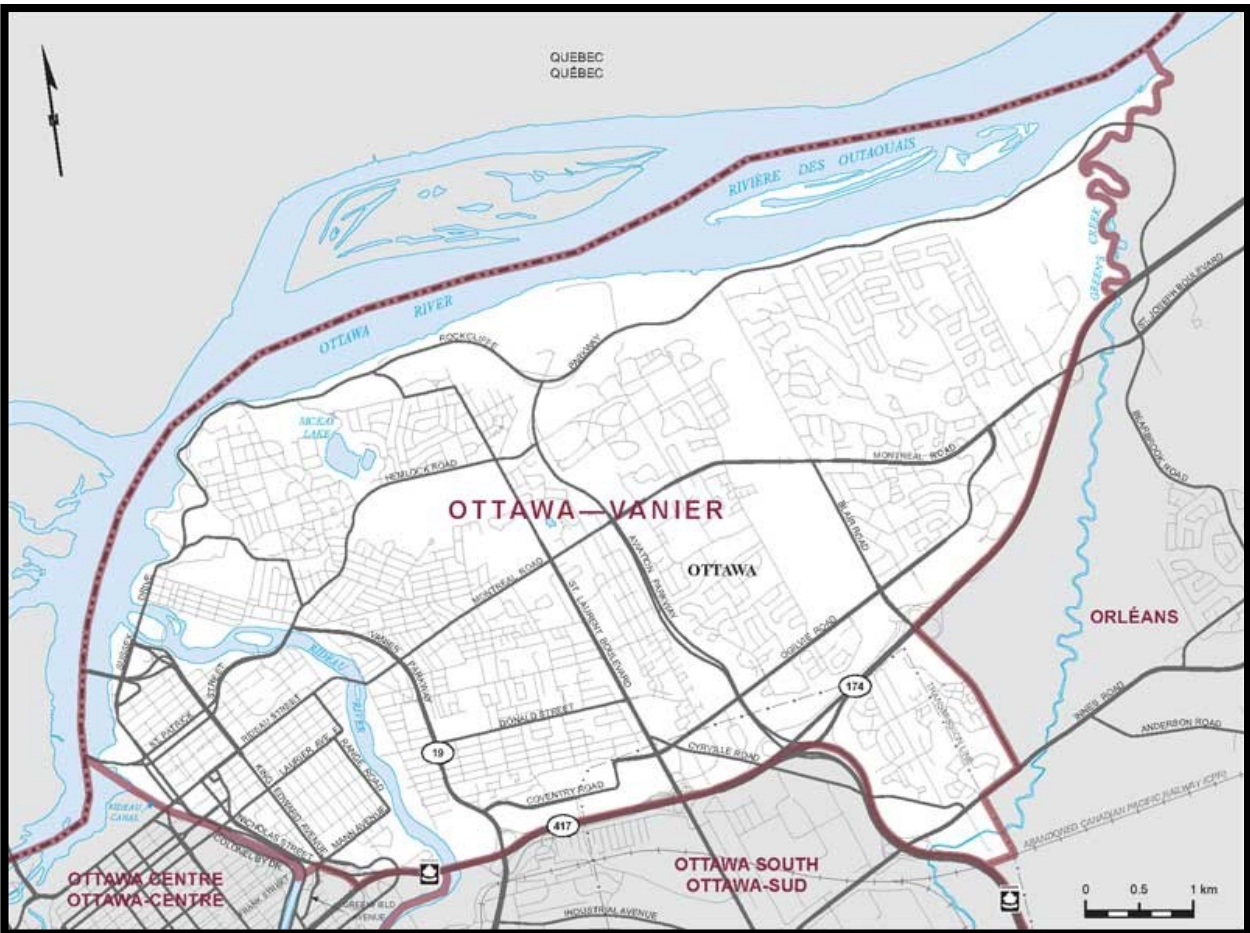
WE WANT TO BE YOUR VOICE

If you have a story to tell, we want to hear it.

Tell us about your **locally-based business**, your **favourite local restaurant**, or **comment** on something you have read here.

If you have an **event to promote**, an **idea to pitch**, or **you need to vent**, this is the place to do it.

Get in touch:
[**Editor@OPUS-online.ca**](mailto:Editor@OPUS-online.ca)



WINTERLUDE 2025 IS HERE



Until February 17, Canada's Capital Region celebrates Winterlude 2025, the highlight of Ottawa's winter season.

Among this year's featured events is a new Winterlude urban sugar shack.

Throughout this year's event, the Winterlude Sno-Bus is available for free to all Winterlude events.

The Ottawa-Vanier Riding

Ottawa-Vanier is the city's second-smallest geographical riding.

About 118,806 people reside here, all within an area of 45 square kilometres.

Elections Canada describes its boundaries as (jump to the next paragraph if you feel overwhelmed):

Consisting of that part of the City of Ottawa described as follows: commencing at the intersection of the interprovincial boundary between Ontario and Quebec with a line running N45°00'W from the mouth of the Rideau Canal; thence S45°00'E along said line to the mouth of the Rideau Canal; thence generally southeasterly along said canal to the northeasterly production of Frank Street; thence northeasterly along said production to the intersection of Greenfield Avenue with Nicholas Street; thence southeasterly along Nicholas Street to Highway No. 417; thence generally easterly along said highway to the

abandoned Canadian Pacific Railway; thence easterly along said railway for approximately 300 metres to the electric power transmission line situated easterly of Cyrville Road; thence northwesterly along said transmission line to Innes Road; thence northeasterly along said road to Blair Road; thence northwesterly along said road to Regional Road No. 174; thence northeasterly along said regional road to Green's Creek; thence generally northerly along said creek to the south shore of the Ottawa River; thence northwesterly in a straight line to the interprovincial boundary between Ontario and Quebec; thence generally westerly along said boundary to the point of commencement.

More simply, the riding's boundaries include the Ottawa River to the North, the Queensway to the South, the Rideau Canal to the West and Blair Road and the Queensway to the East.

It includes Lowertown, the ByWard Market, part of the downtown core, Sandy Hill, Rideau, Vanier, Overbrook, Forbes, Cummings, Castle Heights, Manor Park,

Rockcliffe Park, Rothwell Heights, Gloucester and Cyrville.

At the time of publication, all provincial parties have confirmed candidates.

The riding is held by Liberal **Lucille Collard**, a former lawyer who was elected in 2020.

Prior to her election as MPP in 2010, elected as a school trustee for Rideau-Vanier, then re-elected in 2014 and 2018.

Born and raised in Ottawa, **Christian Proulx** is a proud Franco-Ontarian, father and grandfather, and the Green Party of Ontario candidate for Ottawa Vanier.

He works as a construction supervisor and foreman **Christian Proulx** of the Green Party.

His educational background includes architectural technology and business administration. He also has certificates as a plumbing and steam and gas fitter.

He previously ran as the

Green candidate in the 2021 federal and 2022 provincial elections in Ottawa-Vanier.

Proulx is dedicated to building a more sustainable, inclusive and affordable society and communities, and is committed to "bringing honesty, integrity and collaboration back to government"

Marilissa Gosselin, who was previously the unsuccessful candidate for the Progressive Conservative Party in the Glengarry-Prescott-Russell riding, was named as the PC Party candidate for Ottawa -Vanier.

She is originally from Hearst, Ontario.

Coreen Corcoran was elected to the position of Deputy Leader on October 24th, 2021.

She ran as the Libertarian Party of Canada candidate for Ottawa-Vanier in 2015, and for Ottawa-Centre in 2019

She was the Ontario Lib-

ertarian Party candidate for Nepean-Carleton during the Ontario Election in 2014 and is currently the president of the OLP Ottawa-Vanier constituency association.

She believes that "handouts and tax breaks for families don't apply (anymore)" and what we need "in order to get out of debt and back on track is less government regulation and interference in our everyday lives."

The Ottawa Vanier NDP provincial riding has chosen Francophone and minority rights advocate **Myriam Djilane** to run for the party in the upcoming byelection in Ottawa-Vanier.

As the NDP candidate for Ottawa-Vanier, Djilane is running on a platform to "end the hallway medicine crisis", rebuild school infrastructure and the city's "crumbling" school buildings, and investing in education, fighting climate change and to make housing the affordable for everyone, as well as advocating for Franco-Ontarians.



Ontario Liberal Party incumbent
Lucille Collard



Green Party of Ontario candidate
Christian Proulx



Ontario PC Party candidate
Marilissa Gosselin



Ontario Libertarian Party candidate
Coreen Corcoran



Ontario NDP Party candidate
Myriam Djilane



BLACK HISTORY OTTAWA PRESENTS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Opening Ceremony

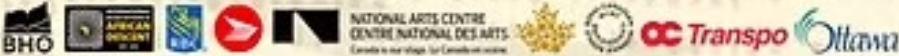
SATURDAY
FEBRUARY
1ST
2:00 PM

FREE ENTRY
(DONATIONS ACCEPTED)

NATIONAL ARTS CENTER (NAC)
1 ELGIN ST, OTTAWA, ON (AZRIELI STUDIO)

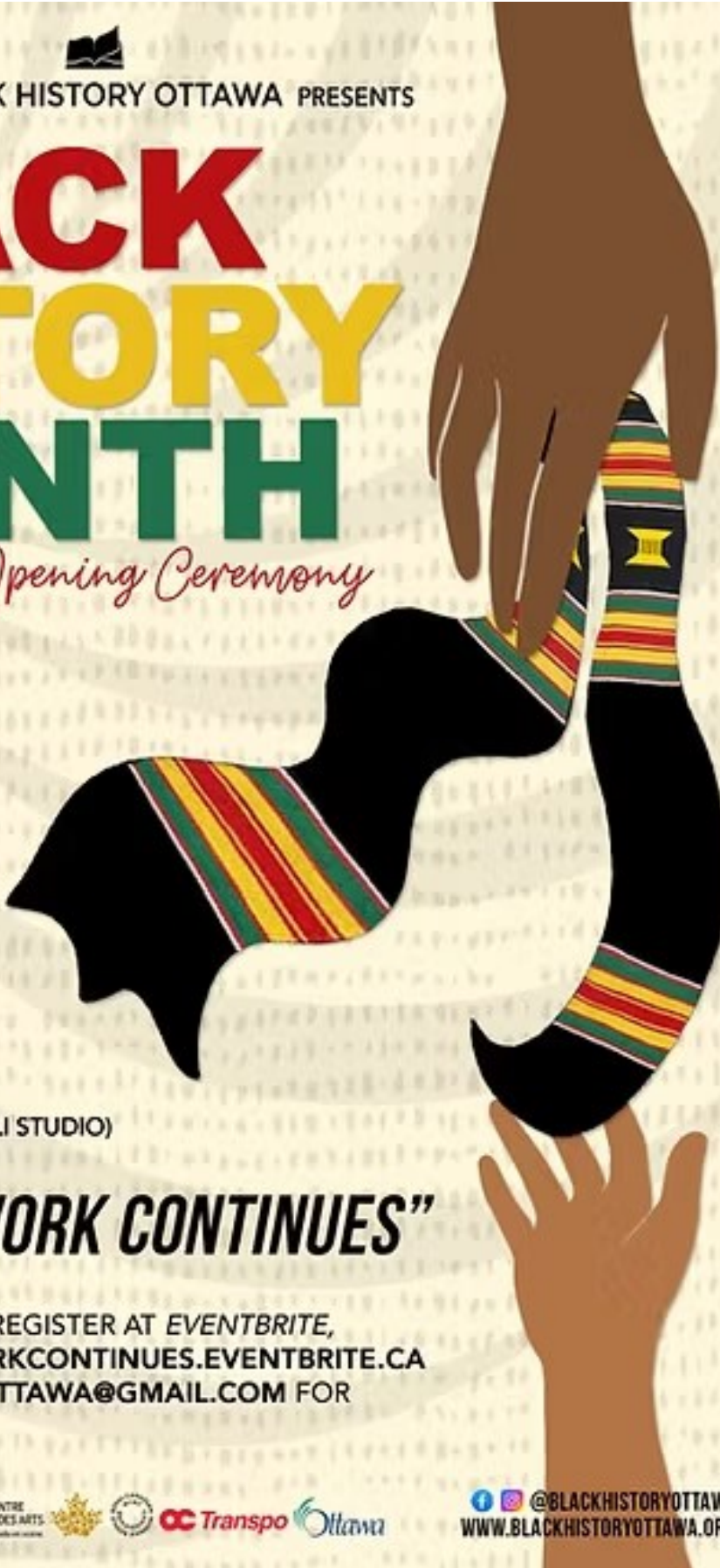
"THE WORK CONTINUES"

TO RESERVE YOUR TICKETS REGISTER AT [EVENTBRITE](https://BHM2025-THEWORKCONTINUES.EVENTBRITE.CA),
[HTTPS://BHM2025-THEWORKCONTINUES.EVENTBRITE.CA](https://BHM2025-THEWORKCONTINUES.EVENTBRITE.CA)
OR EMAIL BLACKHISTORYOTTAWA@GMAIL.COM FOR
FURTHER INFORMATION.

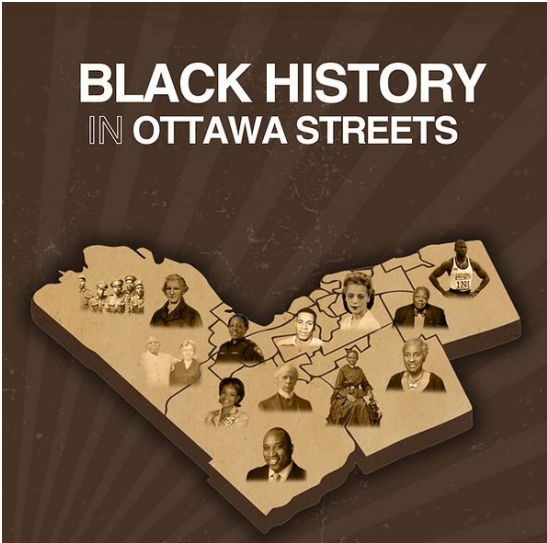




@BLACKHISTORYOTTAWA
WWW.BLACKHISTORYOTTAWA.ORG



Black History in Ottawa Streets Evening Speaker Series



Black History Ottawa always presents a fascinating presentation about the Black community in Ottawa and its impact and outstanding contributions to our city.

This year is no exception as Black History Ottawa’s Vice President Jean-Marie Guerrier presents the evening’s series on Zoom.

Everyone should take the time to explore the narratives of resilience, creativity, and leadership that have defined Ottawa.

The speaker series offers an unforgettable opportunity to celebrate and honour the diverse voices that have helped shape this city.

The Speaker’s Series event takes place on February 12 at 7 pm.

For details and to register, please visit www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca.

OTTAWA-VANIER MP TO HOST BHM EVENT

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH
The Honourable Mona Fortier

Thursday, February 13
from 2 pm to 4 pm
815 boul. St. Laurent Blvd.
Vanier

In honour of Black History Month, Ottawa-Vanier MP Mona Fortier is hosting a special roundtable discussion in collaboration with **Burundi We Want** on February 13, from 2 PM to 4 pm, at The Rideau Community Hub, 815 St. Laurent Boulevard.

The discussion aims to foster meaningful dialogue, and share insights into the rich history and invaluable contributions of Black people in Canada.

Everyone from every Black community in Ottawa-Vanier is invited.

The roundtable event will offer the diverse Black community from Canada, the US, the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere a chance to come together, celebrate, and engage in important conversations about a shared history and future.



“ We thought we were so tired from white people not understanding racism. Turns out them understanding racism is just as tiring. I never knew I could be this tired. ”

Quinta Brunson



recent A History of Canadian Culture

by David FERGUSON
OPUS Editor

You can pinpoint, almost to the day, when the Dominion of Canada’s collective consciousness began to shift from that of a British overseas colony, into a wholly independent entity known only as Canada.

On February 11, 1967, the Red Ensign, Canada’s flag since the early 1700s was retired, and in its place, the red Maple Leaf was raised and flew on Parliament Hill for the first time.

But although our status had changed on paper, many Canadians, even a surprising number of Quebecois, remained fiercely connected to the monarchy, and to the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Most steadfastly vowed to always be “Subjects of the British Empire”. The majority, however, were anxious to define “Citizens of Canada”, one of the many platforms that helped sweep the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau into power in 1968.

That election launched Canada into *Trudeaumania*, and for the next 10 years we would witness the greatest number of changes to the



On February 5, 1965, the Red Ensign flew on Parliament Hill for the last time, effectively changing the soul of our Nation.

social fabric within the shortest period that this, and possibly any other country in the world, had ever seen.

The young, ebullient (and childless) Trudeau was brimming with new, exciting ideas about our country, hypnotising the population, and leaving the stuffy, unflinching Progressive Conservative Party in his dust.

From 1968 to 1979, then again from 1980 to 1984, his work towards social justice and sexual freedoms produced some of the most controversial, yet fundamental changes to Canadian society, and planted a seed in the minds of the people we are today.

Under the new *Official Languages Act* of 1969, English and French became Canada’s two *official* languages.

Although the *Canada Health Act* did not pass until 1984, his last year in office, Trudeau had always championed universal health care. Access to health care based on need rather than ability to pay was the founding principle of the Canadian health-care system. Born in Saskatchewan in 1947, Medicare quickly spread across the country until it was harmonised through standards in federal law.

Introducing his omnibus Bill C-150 in February 1969, Trudeau famously decried “Canada has no place in the bedrooms of the nation”, as he catapulted human rights to the forefront of our collective consciousness.

This brand-new country that was as young, ebullient and full of hope as the new Prime Minister, was making waves around the world.

At the time, Canada was predominantly a country of white people, governed by white men and the occasional woman.

It was rare, but not unusual to encounter an individual of the First Nations (known then as “Indians” or “Eskimos”, Asians (mostly from China and Japan) and Blacks, most of whom hailed from the U.S. via Nova Scotia or the British Caribbean.

Of course, Canada has always had some form of immigration and aside from the English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh who were once the face of our country, we attracted large populations seeking a better life from the economic, social and political struggles in the post-war Europe, the Ukraine, Italy and Greece, among others.

In a darker period of our history, workers from China and Japan, the people that literally built the trans-

Canada railroad, were allowed limited immigration privileges, but were forced or strongly encouraged to return to their respective countries. Of those who stayed, there were no opportunities to integrate into Canadian society, a fact that is plainly evident in the highly organized “Chinatowns” across Canada.

DECLINING BIRTH RATES

Throughout the 1970’s the face of Canada was changed. A result of easier and more effective birth control methods, around the world, populations were in decline.

The government recognized that the existing population growth projections for Canada were nowhere near where they needed to be to ensure a sustained growth and future prosperity.

The only way forward was through immigration reforms, because at the time, policies favoured immigrants from the United Kingdom and Great Britain.

At the end of the Vietnam War in 1968, Canada



accepted about 7,000 refugees, known as “The Boat People” because of the broadcasted images of hungry, tired and terrified men, women and children crowded into jerry-rigged boats, images that horrified Canadians. By the start of the 1990’s, more than 200,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos made their home in Canada after fleeing persecution and difficult living conditions in their homeland.

“I was only seven years old, yet I was keenly aware of how different we appeared to the Canadian-born population,” said Nancy Bean, a doctor at the Ottawa Hospital.

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Elected first in 1972, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau changed the fabric of Canadian society.

With her mother and infant brother (her father died in the war) Bean, who was then known as Diem-Loc Phang, was told by authorities that she could change her name. The young girl jumped at the chance, choosing the name “Nancy”, after the main character in her favourite collection of books, given to her by the American Red Cross.



REFUGEE TIDAL WAVE

In August 1972, the maniacal Ugandan dictator Idi Amin ordered the country's entire South Asian population to be expelled, accusing them of sabotaging the economy.

Facing threats of violence, 50,000 people were given just 90 days to leave their homes, friends, pets and lives forever. Nearly 7,000 Ismaili Muslims fled and were brought to Canada, forcing a review of immigration policies, and the *Immigration Act of 1976* was modernized, recognizing refugees as a distinct class of immigrants. New policies allowed Canadian citizens to privately sponsor refugees, streamlining the process.

A trickle of immigrants leaving Haiti for Quebec began in 1963, made up mostly of a small, affluent group fleeing the oppressive and corrupt regime of President “Papa Doc” Duvalier, then later his son “Baby Doc” Duvalier.

But throughout the 1970’s, the trickle became a tidal wave, and the Haitian population in Canada, most of whom chose to settle in Montreal and Ottawa-Gatineau (or Ottawa-Hull as it was then known), swelled by more than 40 percent.

Reacting to the increasing strength of NATO in Europe, beginning in 19XX, the Soviet Union set its sights on a competing *Soviet Block* and invaded its neighbouring independent nations of Poland, Hunga-

“This brand-new country that was as young, ebullient and full of hope as the new Prime Minister, was making waves around the world.”

that is largely responsible for among other things, overturning *Roe vs Wade*, the US reproductive freedom law.

For a while native-born Canadians were confused about who they were in this unfamiliar diaspora. It was easy to define “culture” for places like Great Britain, Italy, Greece or almost anywhere in Africa and Asia, but Canada’s history could not be compared.

We were different, and at a mere 100 years old, had not developed a culture without Britannia guiding us. We were not a “melting pot” like the United States had described itself; a place where immigrants were expected to erase their past and embrace their Americanness.

In 1982, Trudeau fulfilled his long-time goal of introducing the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and patriating Canada's Constitution. Arguably his most profound act as prime minster was bringing home our constitution. The British North America Act of 1867 governed our country since it was first established. The new Canadian Constitution helped to rocket Canada into the 21st Century and beyond.

Armed with the ability to chart our own path, the Constitution fundamentally changed us into the country that we are perceived as today: a sensitive, inclusive and friendly powerhouse.

Trudeau suggested we were creating a mosaic with pieces of different colours, textures, shades and tints. Each piece enhanced the one next to it, and it was beautiful, and with that, the government developed a multiculturalism policy in the Multiculturalism Act of 1999.

It wasn’t long before Canadians’ cultural insecurity began to dissipate, as that initial “smattering” of colour would evolve into a brilliant rainbow from sea to shining sea.

When statistics for the arts, culture and heritage sectors of the Canadian economy began to be collected in around 19XX, it was found that the diversity within the Canadian cultural profile contributed greatly to job creation and cultural spending.

By 2023, these sectors were generating nearly \$57 billion, and are directly responsible for creating more than 3000 permanent jobs in 67 associated sectors, like manufacturing, broadcasting and technology.

Canada’s film and video, broadcasting, music, publishing, archives, performing arts, heritage institutions, festivals and celebrations were thriving, and Canadians of all backgrounds were thirsty consumers.

CHANGES FOR A NEW GENERATION

In 2022, Prime Minister *Justin* Trudeau’s government proposed changes to the *Official Languages Act*, and later, in 2024, a study reported that new Canadians account for 200 different languages being spoken across the country, but English and French continue to be the majority, spoken by 98 percent of the population.

In a statement, Trudeau said “Canada’s official languages are the

Pictures clockwise:

- 1. Appalling living conditions for the “Boat People” of Vietnam.
- 2. Uganda’s Idi Amin Dada.
- 3. Haitian President from 1957 to 1971, François “Papa Doc” Duvalier
- 4. Haitian President from 1971 to 1986, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier.

ry, Czechoslovakia¹, Yugoslavia², Romania, installing communist governments in each, and sparking another wave of immigrants fleeing oppression.

A second wave occurred after the break-up, and subsequent wars in the former Yugoslavia in 1990.

Flashback to Trudeaumania and many Canadians were becoming weary of this fast-moving population evolution, and a few opportunistic politicians seized that opportunity to spread fear that we were “losing” our country. These immigration policies needed to be reigned in, they reasoned, or we would lose the core of who we are, our *Canadian* heritage.

To that, Trudeau posited: Who’s heritage? Thus began the debate and discussion of that which constitutes Canadian heritage today.

In the United States, the word has taken on a negative, even profane connotation, often equated with the far-right *American Heritage Foundation*, a group

“I remember feeling profound sadness when leaving behind those books that were weighing us down, but once I realized that all the girls in Canada looked like Nancy Drew, I felt so much better”, she recounted.

Her love of mysteries evolved into a passion for medicine, and she eventually graduated from McGill University, and shortly thereafter married fellow student Earl Bean, a fourth generation Canadian.

“Today, people don’t bat an eyelash at our mixed-culture family, but at the time, just going through a grocery store together, seeing the stares and hearing the whispers all around was uncomfortable”.

“People weren’t rude, just curious because they had rarely seen a mixed-race couple, so I understand, but that didn’t make it any less comfortable.”



CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

languages of our shared citizenship, of national public discourse and of federal institutions.”

“Both English and French are international languages, and it is important to ensure that they remain the catalysts that bring Canada’s population together.”

Among the reasons cited for “modernizing” the law are:

- The internet and social media that have changed how we communicate with each other and with the outside world.
- Access to cultural products and to consumer goods and services have dramatically changed how we function.
- The public is becoming more fluent at accessing documents and services online, and this has greatly impacted the

government’s work.

- Work in official languages has become more diverse.

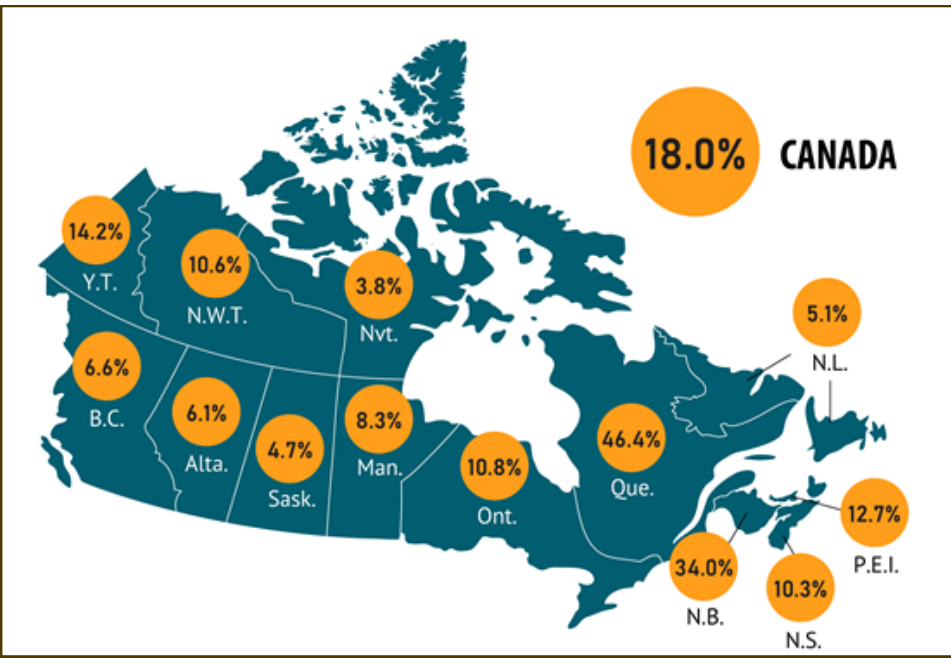
That same study concluded that, at about two million strong, the number of Canadians who speak both official languages is decreasing.

Canadians who are eager to differentiate themselves from the U.S. way of life need look no further than the fundamental principle on which each country was founded, and operates.

The Canadian government has always been guided by Queen Victoria’s decreed principles of “Peace, Order and Good Government”, while the motto of the United States of America is “In God We Trust”, essentially passing the buck to one group’s deity.

In the United States, the word has taken on a negative, even profane connotation, often equated with the far-right *American Heritage Foundation*, a group that is largely responsible for among other things, overturning *Roe vs Wade*, the US reproductive freedom law.

For a while native



Percentage of the population that could conduct a conversation in both English and French. Source: Census 2021



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, with Elizabeth II repatriating the Canadian Constitution.

-born Canadians were confused about who they were in this unfamiliar diaspora. It was easy to define “culture” for places like Great Britain, Italy, Greece or almost anywhere in Africa and Asia, but Canada’s history could not be compared.

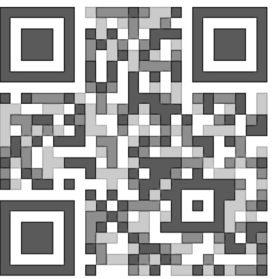
We were different, and at a mere 100 years old, had not developed a culture without Britannia guiding us. We were not a “melting pot” like the United States had described itself; a place where immigrants were expected to erase their past and embrace their Americanness.

A CONSTITUTION OF OUR VERY OWN
Arguably Trudeau’s most profound act as prime minister was bringing home our constitution when the British North America Act of 18XX became the Canadian Constitution and rocketed Canada into the 21st Century and beyond.

Armed with the ability to chart our own path, the Constitution fundamentally changed us into the sensitive, inclusive and friendly powerhouse that we are becoming.

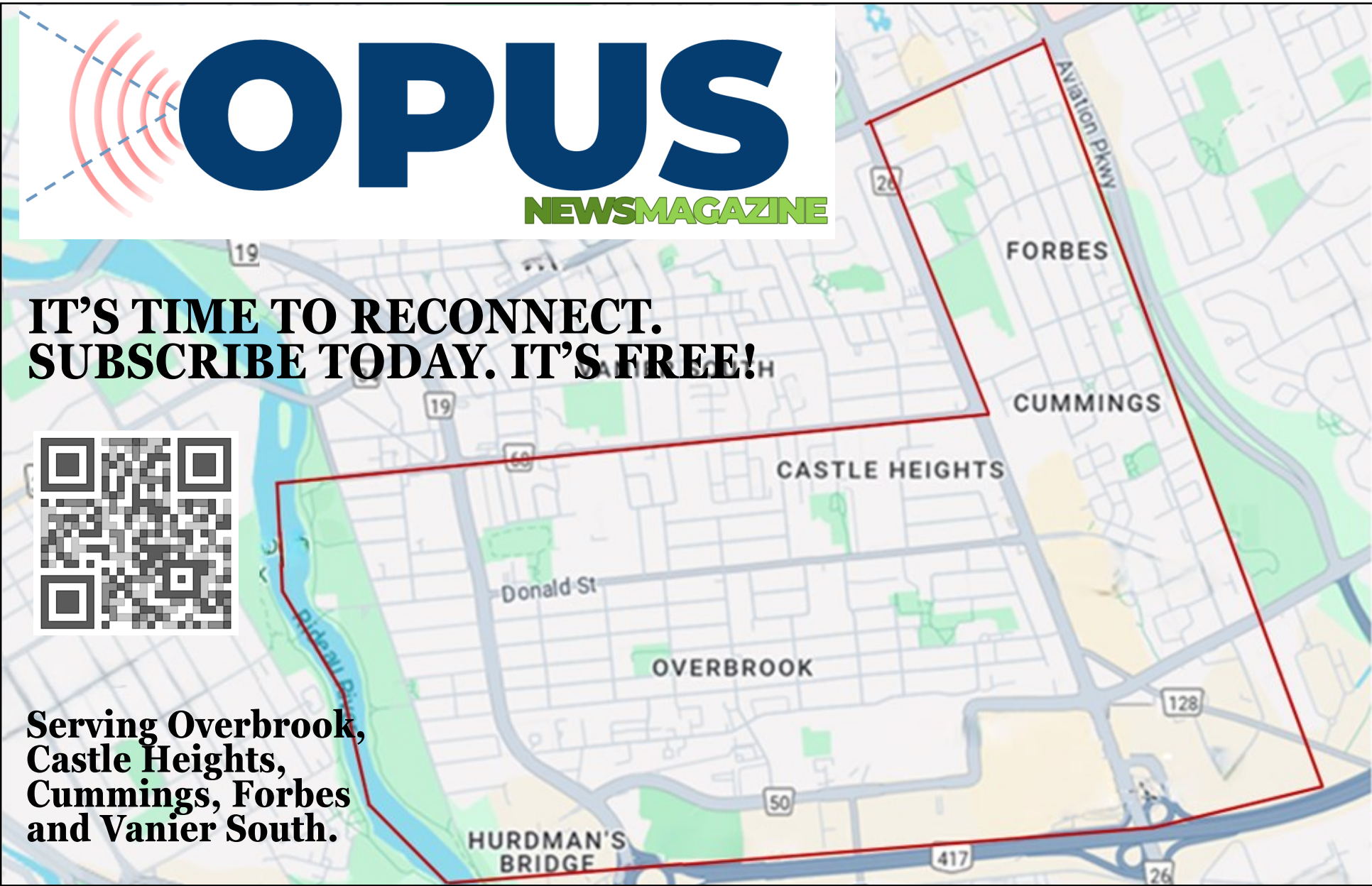


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STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

Trudeau suggested we were creating a mosaic with pieces of different colours, textures, shades and tints. Each piece enhanced the one next to it, and it was beautiful, and with that, the government developed a multiculturalism policy in the Multiculturalism Act of 1999.

When statistics for the arts, culture and heritage sectors of the Canadian economy began to be collected in around 19XX, it was found that the diversity within the Canadian cultural profile contributed greatly to job creation and cultural spending.

By 2023, these sectors were generating nearly \$57 billion, and are directly responsible for creating more than 3000 permanent jobs in 67 associated sectors, like manufacturing, broadcasting and technology.

Canada’s film and video, broadcasting, music, publishing, archives, performing arts, heritage institutions, festivals and celebrations were thriving, and Canadians of all backgrounds were thirsty consumers.

In 2022, Prime Minister *Justin* Trudeau’s government proposed changes to the *Official Languages Act*, and later, in 2024, a study reported that new Canadians account for 200 different languages being spoken across the

the country, but English and French continue to be the majority, spoken by 98 per cent of the population.

In a statement, Trudeau said “Canada’s official languages are the languages of our shared citizenship, of national public discourse and of federal institutions.”

“Both English and French are international languages, and it is important to ensure that they remain the catalysts that bring Canada’s population together.”

Canada

CANADA

A Nation of Diversity

Did You Know

More than **7 million** people in Canada are **FOREIGN BORN**. That's approximately 22% of the total Canadian population.

More than **200 languages** other than English and French, Canada's official languages, are spoken in Canada.

The most common of these are:

- Chinese
- Spanish
- Arabic
- Punjabi
- Italian
- Portuguese
- German
- Polish
- Tagalog
- Urdu

Canada will celebrate its **150th birthday** as a nation in 2017.

In Canada, **1.4 million** (4.3 percent) people are **Aboriginal**.

In 1988, Canada was the first country to pass a **NATIONAL multiculturalism law**. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act reaffirms multiculturalism as a fundamental value in Canadian society.

Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 2015-2016

Among the reasons cited for the “modernizing” the law are:

- The internet and social media that have changed how we communicate with each other and with the outside world.
- Access to cultural products and to consumer goods and services have dramatically changed how we function.
- The public is becoming more fluent at accessing documents and services online, and this has greatly impacted the government’s work.
- Work in official languages has become more diverse.

Thee same study concluded that at about two million strong, statistics indicate that the number of Canadians who speak both official languages is decreasing.

FOOTNOTES

1. In what was termed a “friendly divorce” in 1990, Czechoslovakia split becoming the nations of Czechia and Slovakia.
2. With the death of strongman Josip Tito in 19XX and a series of religious and territorial wars, Yugoslavia broke up into its disparate parts known as Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosova.



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FUN WITH STATISTICS

From the OTTAWA PEOPLE’S COMMISSION report April 2023. The full document is available [here](#).

(Graph right) The total population of the affected neighbourhoods was 105,573 in 2021.

(Graph below) More than two-thirds of residents are renters. The affected neighbourhoods have more than twice the percentage of renters compared to national, provincial and Ottawa levels.

Neighbourhood	Population	Percentage
Centretown	31,188	29.7%
Vanier	32,093	30.2%
Lowertown	32,034	30.2%
Overbrook	10,258	9.8%

Area	Percentage of renters
Centretown	~75%
Lowertown	~75%
Vanier	~65%
Overbrook	~65%
Ottawa	~35%
Ontario	~35%
Canada	~35%

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A Breakdown of Overbrook’s Languages

Just the stats ma’am

The latest Canadian census was in 2021, but unfortunately, it is not useful for this report as it only provides data for the city of Ottawa and does not break down the data into Ottawa’s neighbourhoods. The best numbers we have that count Canada’s two official languages, go back more than nine years to the 2016 Census, which reported that English is the primary language in Overbrook, with 47 percent of residents reporting English as their first language and only six percent reporting their first language as French.

Several factors on these older numbers come into play here. When referring to the immigrant population, Overbrook is a transient community where once people who first settle here become more comfortable with their new home, they will often move on to other areas of the city, or new cities, that are closer to work, friends or family.

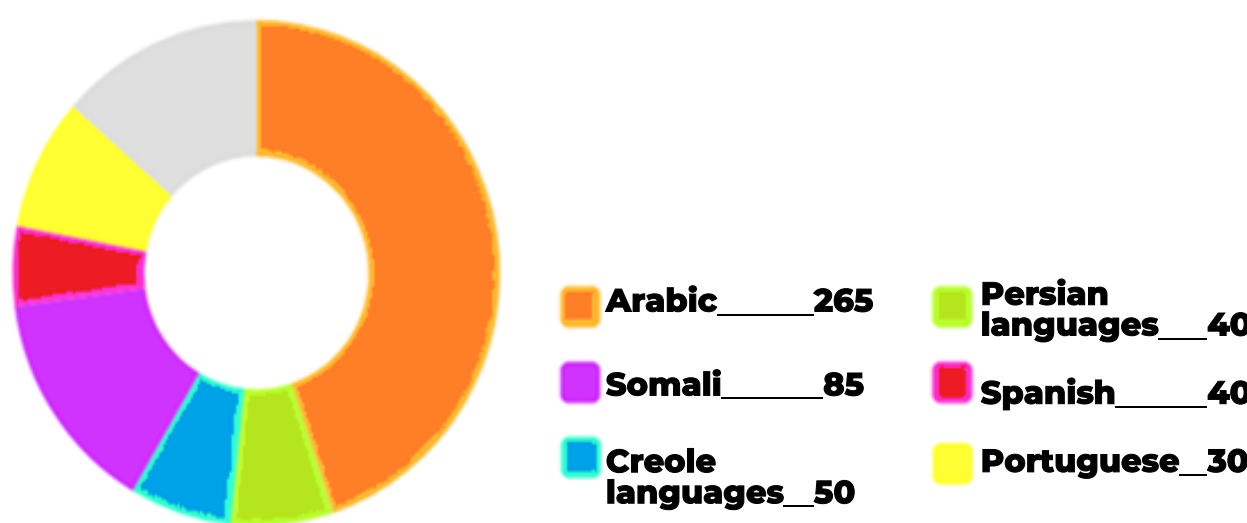
It is important to differentiate between immigrants and refugees since many immigrants will take the time to decide that Canada will be their new home because, for example, they have family here, their career can thrive here, or they are simply seeking a better life. Refugees, on the other hand, rarely have that luxury of time because leaving their homeland is often a matter of life and death. They are living through war, social injustice or extreme economic situations.

Within our ethno-culturally diverse community, 33 percent reported their first language as

something other than English or French. That number is higher than the provincial average of 27 percent. The 2016 census data indicated that of those who speak the official languages of Canada, 47 percent of the Overbrook population speaking English only, and 47% speaking both English and French. Only six percent speak French only, or neither English nor French. In Ontario, the share of the population who use an official language as their mother or native tongue has declined.

In 2016, 9.1 million Ontarians reported English as their mother tongue, an increase of three percent from 2011. However, that share declined to 68.2 percent from 69.3 percent in 2011. There were 527,690 people reporting French as their mother tongue in Ontario in 2016, almost unchanged from 2011. They represented four percent of the population in 2016, a modest change from 4.1 percent in 2011. In 2016, 3.7 million Ontarians were “allophones” (people with a mother tongue other than English or French), up from 3.4 million in 2011. The share of this group increased to 27.9 percent from 26.6 percent in 2011.

PLEASE NOTE: The following chart provides quick **visual reference only**, and does not add to the total count of non official language speakers in Overbrook.



Above: Excluding English and French, the graph shows the languages most often spoken at home in Overbrook.

MERHABA

Becoming a Proud Canadian Without Foresaking My Heritage

by Anonymous

Editor’s Note: Although he is not a resident of Overbrook, I worked with the writer this summer on another OCA project. The stories that he recounted as a new Canadian inspired this series. They were so compelling that I asked him to contribute to this edition. Unfortunately, fear for the safety of his family has made it necessary to remain anonymous. Let’s hope that changes soon.

I am a first-generation Kurd, but since the age of six, I have lived in this beautiful country of Canada, in the clean and tidy former municipality of Kanata. Identity has been something that has given me much pause in my life. For as long as I could remember, I could not determine where I belonged: Am I a Kurd because of my family’s heritage? Am I a citizen of my native country because I was born there? Am I a Canadian because I have lived here for so many years? These questions nagged at me at an impressionable part of my life, and working on the Overbrook Community Association’s project, where I was tasked with engaging new Canadians in Overbrook, reminded me of the feelings that I harboured as a child.

I remember feeling disconnected from this land, and in turn, from its people. I have remarkably strong memories as a preschooler. I remember feeling puzzled because, my uncooked brain reasoned, if I was not legally a Canadian (I obtained Canadian citizenship in 2022), then why should I be obligated to volunteer and use *my* time to help the community? I remember thinking, “I am nothing like them, and they are nothing like me”. This idea was further reinforced because I was the only Kurd in my school classes and, in fact, in my community. I am a Turkish Kurd, my young mind reasoned, so why should I get involved in my community when I don’t fit?” I was unable to rationalize why I should volunteer, and quite possibly, make a difference. When I started elementary school, those feelings changed quickly and dramatically, as this was the first time I was away from the comfort and safety of home. I was now in the big city, Ottawa, and I was terrified. Until then, I was a shy, quiet child who kept to himself and was mostly a loner. This sudden disruption in my life intensified my feelings of loneliness because I was certain I would still feel different from the people around me.

All of that changed from the moment I walked into the office (classroom?) and read the words “Merhaba” -- “Hello” in my native language. – written on the blackboard. “Merhaba” is a word that is frequently used in my family. It is a simple word and displaying it on the blackboard was a simple gesture. But it changed my perspective, and I immediately felt accepted and understood. Even at that young age, this new feeling moved me enough to make it my goal to ensure that whenever I volunteer, I would, in some way, include my family’s culture in the hope that I might give a “fuzzy heart” to someone who felt as I once did. will make a huge difference, I am certain that it will touch the hearts of everyone who sees it.

CON’T
NEXT
PAGE

POLITICALLY
SPEAKING

will return after the National elections.

Language is a window to another culture, and when people see their language in places like a local community centre, they may be more inclined to join in because they see a part of themselves.

In Overbrook, Arabic is the third largest language group, and it is always a good idea to translate some of the information used in any community-building project with the goal of engaging as many people as possible.

While this small detail is not scientifically proven, speaking from personal experience, I believe many new Canadians feel as I once did. They may still feel disconnected from this country, and a reluctance to volunteer is one symptom of this feeling.

Of course, everyone’s experiences are different, but there are some simple ways to begin a dialogue that may make volunteering more attractive.

Because of that simple gesture back in elementary school, I soon felt comfortable and confident enough to volunteer for the first time.

I signed up for the school’s first “International Night”, an event where we “New Canadians” would make a booth and discuss our culture with anyone who asked.

It is a simple greeting, but the word “merhaba” is familiar to me; it is the language that I speak. Greeting me with that one word made me feel welcome. I belonged here. At the time, I described the feeling as “a fuzzy heart”.

For me, one difficult issue was ensuring the accuracy of some cultural nuances, There are many things that our Middle Eastern cultures share, including ensuring the well-being of our neighbours.

With this in mind, I translated the document paying careful attention to ensure that I wasn’t omitting anything important, but you can only go so far with that notion.

I also struggled with the idea of how long it takes for some cultures to ultimately become comfortable in a new community. Unfortunately, sometimes it never happens.

To my knowledge, during the event that we held at the Overbrook Community Centre, there was no one from the Middle East in attendance.

By the time this project ends, I believe there will continue to be a lack of engagement by “New Canadians”. But I also believe that with persistence on the part of groups like the OCA, and small gestures like incorporating familiar languages into their publications, in due time they will come around.

They will see themselves reflected in the community when they see references from their cultures, subsequently enticing them to give back to the community in which they live.

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A DIASPORA?

The term diaspora pronounced “die-ass-pora” was coined and here adds the entomology of the word.



It attempts to describe a group of people born in one part of the world who permanently relocate to a completely different part of the world, then

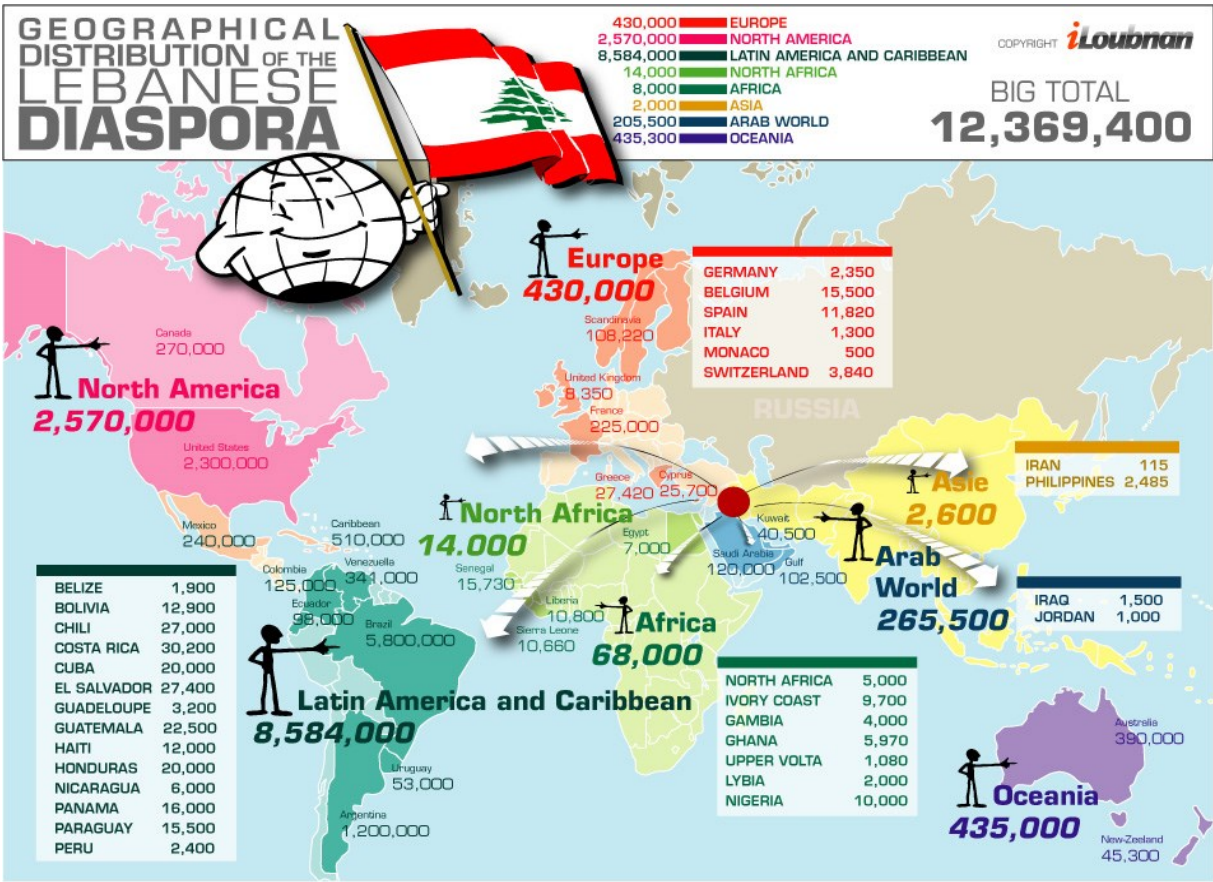
spread their population all over that new part.

In fact, diaspora perfectly describes the Canadian experience as one of the first, but

growing number of countries that are seeing dramatic cultural and linguistic shifts in their population, a result of immigration and refugee policies that were first adopted by Canada.

New Canadians consist of a variety of cultures, religious beliefs and languages, who have come to settle in this vast country. Most choose to remain in larger cities that have the infrastructure to introduce them to their new life, but others have like medical professionals and technology experts have scattered across the country where their professions are needed.

Perhaps over-simplifying, the word is used in reference to people who identify with a specific geographic location, but who reside elsewhere.



(ABOVE) An example of one nationality, the Lebanese, after a major exodus from ongoing wars and skirmishes.

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EVERY SECOND & FOURTH
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251 rue Donald St.
Tuesday 12 PM - 2 PM | Jeudi 12H00 - 13H00

710 chemin Carson's Road
Maison communautaire Carson Community House
Wednesday 9:45 AM - 10:15 AM | Mercredi 9H45 - 10H15

815 boul. St. Laurent Blvd
Wednesday 2 PM - 3:15 PM | Mercredi 14H00 - 15H15

1300 ave Père Charlebois Ave
1st & 3rd Fridays 12:45 PM - 1:15 PM
1er et 3e vendredis 12H45 - 13H15

725 rue Bernard St
2nd & 4th Fridays 12:45 PM - 1:15 PM
2e et 4e vendredis 12H45 - 13H15

Holidays and Observances in February and March

Groundhog Day is a tradition observed in the U.S. and Canada on February 2. It derives from the superstition that if a groundhog emerges from its burrow and sees its shadow, we can expect six more weeks of winter. If it does not see its shadow, spring will arrive early.

Tu B'Shvat is a Jewish holiday on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. Tu B'Shvat begins at sunset and ends in the evening of the following day. It is also called *Rosh HaShanah La'Ilanot*, literally "*New Year of the Trees*". In contemporary Israel, the day is celebrated as an ecological awareness day, and trees are planted in celebration.

Valentine's Day, also called *Saint Valentine's Day*, is celebrated on February 14, in honor of a Christian martyr. Folk traditions have made it a cultural, religious, and commercial celebration of romance and love around the world.

National Flag of Canada Day. At noon on February 15, 1965, the Maple Leaf was raised for the first time on Parliament Hill and Flag Day, is celebrated on that day.

Family Day. In most provinces, the third Monday in February is observed as a regional statutory holiday, and in Ontario, it is known as Family Day.

Ramadan. The Islamic Calendar follows the phases of the moon, or lunar cycle therefore the Holy month of Ramadan falls approximately 10 days earlier each year in the Gregorian calendar. The Ramadan start date for 2025 is expected to fall around February 28 (with a possible variation of a few days) following the sighting of the moon over Mecca. Lasting for 29 or 30 days, Ramadan ends around March 30, concluding with the celebratory days of Eid al-Fitr.

Ash Wednesday is held 40 days before the beginning of Easter and this year will be celebrated on Wednesday, March 5th.

Daylight Savings Time starts on Sunday, March 9. At 2 am clocks spring forward to 3 am.

Commonwealth Day is a celebration of the *Commonwealth of Nations*, held on the second Monday in March.

Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jews from annihilation at the hands of an official of the Achaemenid Empire named Haman, as it is recounted in the Book of Esther.

St. Patrick's Day, or the *Feast of Saint Patrick*, is a religious and cultural holiday held on March 17, the traditional death date of Saint Patrick, the foremost patron saint of Ireland.

March Equinox, or northward equinox, is when the subsolar point appears to leave the Southern Hemisphere and crosses the celestial equator, heading northward as seen from Earth.

Laylatul Qadr, or the *Night of Power*, is the holiest night in the Islamic calendar. It commemorates when the first verses of the Holy Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the Angel Jibril. It falls during the last 10 nights of Ramadan, but the exact night is not known and often thought to be on the 27th night of Ramadan.

Eid ul Fitr (*tentative date*) marks the end of a significant event in Islam, the holy month of Ramadan. It recognizes Allah's bestowal of iman (faith) and endurance. Eid ul-Fitr is usually held on the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is a celebration of the end of the month-long fast and is a time of thanksgiving, forgiveness, and giving to those in need. The date may vary according to moon sightings in different parts of the world.

A decorative Islamic geometric pattern featuring a central circular medallion with Arabic calligraphy in green and gold. The calligraphy is surrounded by a complex, multi-layered star-like border in gold and brown. The entire design is set against a white background with a faint grid.



The Ottawa Public Library Bookmobile visits the Overbrook Community Centre from 2 pm to 3 pm on Thursdays



No appointment is needed to return items or pick up holds at the Bookmobile.

The Bookmobile will offer browsing of a small collection at all stops. For a list of our current schedule and stops, please read below.

The Bookmobile service includes two vehicles, each with its own unique collection. Bookmobile items are not-Holdable in order to ensure that all our bookmobile communities have equitable access to new and exciting materials.

To see whether an item you want is available to be picked up at a particular stop, please call 613-580-2424 x32629 or email

Bookmobile@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca

Invite the library (and the Bookmobile!) to an event:

[Special event attendance request form](#)

<https://bibliottawalibrary.ca/en/>

Hurdman Bridge 150th Anniversary Legacy Project

Rideau River Kiosk Project Fundraiser

This Overbrook Community Association legacy project involves the funding and installation of an information kiosk and bicycle parking rack all set in a small landscaped area near the Adawe Crossing on the east side of the river in Overbrook.

The six kiosk panels will present bilingual information on the Rideau River and Overbrook with a focus on Indigenous and Overbrook history and heritage, the natural environment of the river, and planning and protection of the waterway.

by the NCC who, aside from their sage advice, has waived the substantial application fee, NAK Design Strategies, who provided the landscape plan preparation for free, Ben Barcosi, MLA whose beautiful renderings captures the natural beauty of the area.

Contributors also include the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, who also provided invaluable advice, and the use of existing nature illustrations.

Natalie Belovic of Urban Ottawa made a cash donation of \$500, and City Councillor Rawlson King donated \$1,000.

The City of Ottawa, through both heritage and environment programs, have granted \$6,000 and

\$5,800, respectively. As well, The City has made a donation of bicycle racks that are to be used at the site.

The 150th Anniversary Legacy Project has received several private donations, as well.

The project's total costs are estimated to be about \$47,000, of which approximately one half has been raised.

To make a donation to the project fund, you can scan the QR code below that will link you to our GoFundMe page at Fundraiser by Overbrook Community Association : Support the Rideau River River Kiosk Project (go fund me.com) .

To learn more, please click

on the logo below, or go to: <https://www.overbrook.ca/centennial-kiosk>.



The above rendering illustrates the project site, looking east. The rendering was created by Ben Barocsi (ben.barocsi@gmail.com)

In 2025 Ottawa will celebrate the 150th anniversary (1875) of the construction of Hurdman's Bridge, the first bridge link to Overbrook.

The kiosk will be located along the National Capital Commission's (NCC) multi-use pathway just south of the Adawe Crossing (west end of Donald Street) near the small falls.

To date, funding and assistance has been provided



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Jobs I Had From Which I Learned Much More Than I Thought ... 1961-2017

A Memoir

By Diane Schmolka-Stevenson

McGill lectures and exams finished by the end of April.

I was still teaching two weekday group lessons for children who had no pianos in their homes to practice, and I was still teaching on Saturdays until 2 pm at home.

My Mother, still the 'boss' of my life, tightly grasped the money I needed to continue at university in September. I had to look for a summer job as quickly as possible.

Some of my classmates were camp counselors. I tried for that job but I was considered too "low class" to fit in. I would have enjoyed being a camp counsellor. I had the experience from being a Canadian-Girl-In-Training (GIT) camper for two consecutive summers.

However, a two -week rest for me was not in my mother's best interest. I tried to look for a waitress job, and other types of service jobs not far from home.

I was so tired of having to leave so early from home in the rush hour to arrive at McGill, and then have to do the same in reverse, that I told her that it would have to be a job within Ville St.-Laurent, where we lived. She grudgingly agreed.

Finally, a week or so later, she found a job posting for a dry cleaner in the Montreal Star. The dry-cleaner was in the south end of the neighbourhood, in a small commercial block. I would have to take a bus, both ways, but it was doable. She would continue to make my lunch.

I knew nothing about dry-cleaning, but was determined to learn by doing. My role was the intake and 'pick up', cash register at the front, and sorting and labelling clothes at the back.

Mr. Genest was the owner of several drycleaning businesses. He was born and raised "Swiss French" His wife was my 'teacher' for a few days, then another front counter clerk took over. She was a Scottish young woman. We got along well from the first time I met her.

The other workers were French and English. The team worked well and both Mr. and Mrs. Genest dropped in several times a week.

The Francophone speakers spoke mainly 'joul' and let me know that my "protestant school French" had no place in the 'workplace'.

Each time I tried to tell them about writers like Victor Hugo, they told me to 'shut up' because they had no time to listen to someone who thinks she is 'smarter' than they are, just because 'she goes to university'.

I did not tell them that my father was a maintenance machinist for a lithographing

company; that my mother was a stenographer, and that I had a brother and a sister.

Like my mother and father, they, and their parents left high school at fourteen, no matter what grade they were in. My father left schooling at the age of fourteen, but he was only in the eighth grade, and not a great reader. He had weak eyes and generally had trouble concentrating.

I did my tasks well. My co-worker liked the fact that I really appreciated Scottish people, their poetry and their music.

I sometimes sang softly when it was a quiet weekend, while doing my several tasks and when we were working together.

She liked songs that she knew.

Saturday was a day-off for the laundress and the fellow who ironed. I earned \$35.00 per week which I had to give to my mother. She would not let me have my own bank account, even though many of my colleagues had their

own bank account. They even bought their own clothes, even if they had to get them second hand.

I began to figure out how my co-worker managed to survive. She rented a room in a three -bedroom house. In that way she could afford to live. It was 'room and board.' She went by bus all the time. I never knew where she lived, or if she

had a boyfriend.

She was born and raised in Stirling, Scotland. She went to secondary school, but she never told me what courses she took. I never asked her.

One day on a very hot afternoon in the shop, the A/C broke down, and it was not the first time. Everyone in the shop was sweating so much that the laundress, (who was actually the 'floor boss', let us go next door to have a cold drink and sit outside for up to one hour. It was mid -afternoon and the temperature was near 100 degrees F inside the shop. The laundress phoned Mr. Genest many times, but he simply replied that the mechanics who specialized in A/C were all out repairing or replacing air conditioners. We were sent home early with a sign the floor boss put in the window saying why it was closed but would open the next day.

Two days later, I had another experience I will never forget.

I was in the back, sorting out the many items that had to be cleaned. One of the tasks was to take out everything that might be in a pocket.

Before my eyes I spotted a very dark striped suit. I began with the jacket, which was empty, then the pants. In both pockets there were big bills: twenties, fifties, and hundreds. I was shocked. I looked at the ticket and saw the "ID" and contact information.

I wrote all the information down, removed the

several bills and hid them in a used envelope in the back of shelf under the counter . I hoped that he would return in a couple of days. I was so glad when he did!

He walked to the counter. His suit was ready. I went quickly to where his suit hung, made a very quick run to the back counter, found the packet of bills, put the envelope the suit in the left inside pocket. I told him quietly that I found those bills. He was so grateful. He wanted to give me money. I refused. He offered again, and again I refused. I told him that I don't accept money because I found money. For me, that is unethical.

My coworker was right beside me. I knew she wanted that money, but I knew that I was responsible for his suit and his money. She was so tense and so silent, but she kept looking at him. I kept looking at both of them . I asked him if he had his own business. He replied: "Yes, I have my own small stationary company in NDG" .

I knew what it is like being a student with no financial anchor, so I told him that I have an idea of what it is like to have your own business. I said: " It is great being your own boss, but there is no 'safety net'.

"You must keep all that money", I said. "You never know when you will have to have it and your family comes first".

"The other reason", I added, "is that just because you forgot you had bills in your suit pocket, it does not mean that I should have that money." "It is yours., and your family and your business needs it."

My co-worker left the front counter. My coworker never discussed the event after that day.

You might be asking me why I believe I learned much that day. If I have refused money I really needed insisted refusal, then what could have possibly achieved?

First, because Mr. Genest was very impressed when someone told him about the experience, I began to be accepted on a deeper level.

When I was in my fourth year of university and looking for work, and finding it even more difficult, I thought I would not be able to return for my last year, but my mother got a call from Mr. Genest asking for me.. and was I free to come to work for for him in the same branch I was in three years ago!

There were no other workers there, just me. It was a totally different experience, but I learned how to work alone. One of the advantages was that I could sing any song I wanted to. The shop had become a 'storage space' for people who had not picked up their clothes for over six months. My last two months of work were almost a 'vacation'.

I've had many types of jobs and roles in those years in my life.

Working at so many 'paying jobs', volunteer jobs, and more... has really enabled me to become a writer.

Yes, I still love learning from books, but having those many different roles and responsibilities encouraged me and has inspired me and helped me to become a more empathetic person.

END



Ottawa Police Service
MAKE THE RIGHT CALL
ONLINE + BY PHONE



**ONLINE
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Don't wait on the phone, save time and use our online reporting service for non-emergency reports such as:

- Theft (excluding theft of passports)
- Theft from Vehicle
- Traffic Complaints
- Mischief/ Damage to Property
- Drug Complaints
- Fraud Complaints



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613-236-1222 ext. 7300

TTY 613-760-8100 

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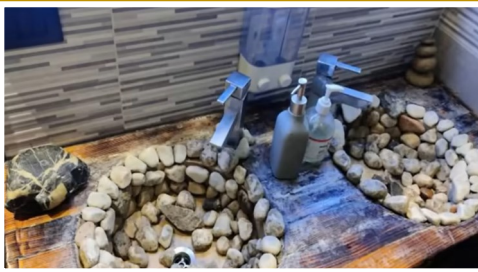
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Nice, but
who's
going to
clean it?

**CLASSIC
INTERIOR
DESIGN**



A "stoned" double sink



A superb cat tree



A fabric draped staircase.



A majestic 22,000-piece chandelier



A fashionable pink, fur-clad bathroom



Glass flowered ceiling



A stylish Chewbacca sofa.



Brush off those winter blues! Create a sandy beach in your living room!



Surely, everyone wants a felt-covered Volkswagen Beetle?



A raised pattern backsplash just waiting for your first pot of spaghetti!