



SASKATCHEWAN
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Black History Month
February 2013

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) is pleased to add its voice to those celebrating black culture, history, and heritage in our country. Since the Government of Canada officially designated February as Black History Month in 1995, events have been held throughout Saskatchewan that recognize the contributions of black individuals and organizations.

The Communauté des Africains Francophones de Saskatchewan (CAFS), for example, has chosen as its focus for 2013 black figures in Canadian history. From Mathieu Da Costa, thought to be the first black person in Canada in 1605, to the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Canada's first black Governor General in 2005, the CAFS celebrates an extraordinary history.

Black History Month is also an opportunity to showcase the leaders and innovators who have demonstrated, and who continue to demonstrate, that we have a responsibility to protect and promote human rights. As has been demonstrated, this responsibility often takes individual courage. The reward for this courage, however, is a benefit not only to us, but also to our fellow citizens, our children, and the generations to come.

This attention to the past while being mindful of the future resonates strongly with the work of the SHRC. The themes of opportunity, oppression of individuals and groups, and access to livelihoods and land are deeply rooted in black history. At the same time, the linguistic, cultural, and social forces that underlie this unique and complex history inform our understanding of what it means to be a Canadian citizen today.

The SHRC is grateful for this opportunity “to promote and protect the individual dignity, freedoms and equal rights of Saskatchewan citizens.”

David M. Arnot
Chief Commissioner
Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission