

You are here: [Home](#) » Sheridan Students Showcase Public History Posters during Black History Month

SHERIDAN STUDENTS SHOWCASE PUBLIC HISTORY POSTERS DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By Christian Knudsen

On February 5th, Sheridan students taking the general education elective HIST19936G, Canada in the Making: Exploring Canadian History, showcased public history posters they designed as part of their course work at the opening night of the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton (CCAH)'s kickoff celebration to Black History Month. The CCAH event was a tremendous success and included performances by the Association of African Canadian Artists, and an exhibit by the Oakville Museum; the event was attended by approximately 150 people from the community including representatives from both the municipal and provincial governments. Many of the students whose posters were featured also attended the event. The community feedback on their work has been nothing short of tremendous. In fact, the Oakville Museum has offered to display some of the posters over the next year, and several others will be showcased in a joint exhibit at the Trafalgar campus library in support of Sheridan Reads during the month of March.



Photo: Christian Knudsen

The design of these posters was embedded in the curriculum of the sections of HIST19936G taught by myself, Dustin Galor, Stephen Bunn and Evgeny Efremkin. The purpose of the assignment was to research and produce a poster contribution to public history – in this instance, an important person or event in Black Canadian History. Public history performs an important social role and extends beyond academia, engages with communities, and aims to raise historical consciousness among the general public.

The students designed the poster in groups of four and also gave a short presentation on their topic in class. Since the assignment was to do public history, the students were not engaged in original research *per se*; however, this does not in any way diminish the value of their work.

Public history is at its heart an avenue for communication, a means by which current academic research may be disseminated to the general public. As such, the goal was to create works of educational value. As part of their assignment, the students had to synthesize existing research and media on their topic and then repurpose this research as a poster – interestingly, the fact that the students had not studied history before turned out to be an advantage. Being new to the subject, they were in a unique position to view their work through the eyes of an audience who might also be encountering the subject for the first time.

This new initiative partnering Sheridan with the CCAH highlights the value of linking curriculum to real-world community needs. While applied research and partnerships with industry have always been important hallmarks of a Sheridan education, these goals are frequently more difficult to achieve within the traditional humanities. In electives such as history, we may only have students for a single introductory course in our discipline – which is obviously not enough time to develop the skills required for the complex projects that capstone courses in other faculties are renowned for. Nevertheless, creative curriculum development can still provide some opportunities for even

first year students in general education humanities electives to engage in work which can positively affect the community at large.



Image courtesy of Mar/Comm