
Sector News Digest - February 9, 2021

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This week: the sector celebrates Black History Month; the case for better Holocaust education; setbacks for advocates of guaranteed basic income; and developments in the campaign for a home in government for sector representatives.

Celebrating Black History Month 2021

It's Black History Month in Canada. Here are some of the ways charities, non-profits, and the philanthropic sector are celebrating the achievements and contributions of Black Canadians.

The [Ontario Black History Society](#) is hosting a speaker series throughout the month featuring Black artists and leaders, including author Lawrence Hill and filmmaker and writer Cheryl Foggo.

The [Broadbent Institute is hosting a series of posts](#) by Black thinkers, activists, policy-makers, and academics on issues affecting Black communities. Authors include the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council's Melana Roberts, on food insecurity, and Dalhousie's Ingrid Waldron, on environmental racism in Black communities.

The Future of Good [is hosting a half-day summit](#) (paid event) on February 25 to celebrate the achievements of Black leaders in social impact and discuss the need to build an anti-racist social impact sector. Speakers include author and former MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes and the Foundation for Black Communities' Djaka Blais-Amare and Rebecca Darwent.

And at Ryerson University, the [Generous Futures event](#) on February 24 will feature CFL general manager and philanthropist Michael "Pinball" Clemons; Aurora James, founder of the 15 Percent Pledge; and Wes Hall, executive chairman and founder of Kingsdale Advisors, on the

role of Black leadership in the future of charitable giving.

These are just a few of the many ways the sector is marking Black History Month. Share other events and resources with us by email or on [Twitter](#).

No diversity without investment

While organizations and individuals celebrate the contributions and achievements of Black Canadians, the question of how the philanthropic sector and the government invest in Black non-profits and communities continues to simmer.

On January 15, the [Toronto Star reported](#) that Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) had rejected the applications of 400 non-profits to a fund for Black community organizations because the organizations either weren't led by enough Black people or didn't prove that they were.

The *Star* reports that Velma Morgan, chair of Operation Black Vote Canada, an organization with a 100% Black board, received a letter from the ministry telling her that her application had not successfully demonstrated that her organization was sufficiently Black-led. Hamilton NDP MP Matthew Green, a member of the Parliamentary Black Caucus in Ottawa, spoke critically of the government's efforts and approach to funding, citing a systemic lack of cultural competency.

The ESDC bungle comes on the heels of the [Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy](#) report, released in December. It found that only 30 cents of every \$100 of grant funds dispensed by 15 of the leading foundations in Canada go to Black community organizations.

Meanwhile, *Ricochet* reports that under-investment also affects Muslim organizations. In the story, [Sanaa Ali-Mohammed writes](#) that the [Department of Canadian Heritage's Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives program](#) – which launched in 2018 to support communities to confront racism, promote multiculturalism, and research how discrimination affects racialized communities – has allocated just 3.7% of \$21 million in funding to Muslim-led and -serving organizations.

No diversity without inclusion and representation

A new report from the Broadbent Institute, [Addressing Economic Racism in Canada's Pandemic Response and Recovery](#), examines the many ways BIPOC Canadians and BIPOC-led and -serving organizations have been excluded from COVID-19 economic recovery planning, and how to remedy the situation.

And a [new report on board diversity](#) published by the David and Sharon Johnston Centre for Corporate Governance Innovation makes the case that efforts to diversify boards will fail without a matched commitment to inclusion. In *Not-For-Profit Board Diversity & Inclusion: Is It Essentially Window-Dressing?* authors Matt Fullbrook and Robin Cardozo (former CEO of the Ontario Trillium Foundation) identify six themes that emerged in conversations with 26 non-profit leaders across Canada. Among them: the commitment to diversity must be led by the chair, onboarding needs to be reimagined, and board recruitment efforts must recognize the

importance of lived experience, not just credentials.

On Holocaust Memorial Day, questioning how we teach the Holocaust

B'nai Brith's 2020 anti-Semitism audit found that reported [anti-Semitic incidents increased by 8% in 2019](#), with the highest numbers recorded in Quebec and Ontario. Shocking anti-Semitic messages posted in Canada during the Capitol Hill riot on January 6 further illustrates B'nai Brith's warning that anti-Jewish sentiment is alive and well north of the border.

In a CBC op-ed, Jody Spiegel, director of the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program at the Azrieli Foundation, and Naomi Azrieli, chair of the Azrieli Foundation, argue that [one way to tackle rising anti-Semitism](#) is by changing the way schools teach the Holocaust and its lessons. They make the case for presenting the Holocaust as an event that's "understood within political, geographical and sociological contexts," instead of focusing only on the lessons the genocide can teach us.

"The Holocaust," they write, "isn't a metaphor or cautionary tale that can be used to warn young people of the dangers of bullying or of society failing its citizens. It was the destruction and attempted eradication of thousands of years of European Jewish life. It was the denial of the inalienable human rights of people simply for being born Jewish. While we would like to draw moral conclusions from this – in the classroom and in the world – we first must learn about it and understand how the Holocaust was even possible."

[Public historian Daniel Panneton added to the conversation in *The Globe and Mail*](#), arguing that Holocaust education must prepare today's youth to face the threat of anti-Semitism by anchoring survivor stories in a narrative about the Holocaust as a failure of democracy. "Holocaust education must undergo a transition. By blending the emotional and interpersonal power of survivor memory with a purposeful, civic-minded approach that grapples with the threat to democracy that fascism presents, we just might be able to keep the survivors' torch lit and the path forward illuminated."

Thirty years of International Development Week

Canadian civil society organizations are marking the 30th anniversary of [International Development Week](#) by celebrating the impact and successes of organizations and individuals working to help people and communities in developing countries facing poverty, conflict, or natural disasters. As in past years, the theme is "Go for the Goals," a nod to the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The anniversary comes at a time when many in the sector are sounding the alarm about the crisis and setbacks COVID-19 is causing in quality education, gender equality, and health and well-being around the globe, and the need for increased investment by governments in international aid to prevent further setbacks.

On February 10, Children Believe and the Graça Machel Trust will host the [Canada-Africa Panel on Overcoming Barriers to Education for Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa in a COVID-19 World](#), featuring civil society and government leaders. On February 11, [Right To Play Canada](#) will hold a cross-country virtual rally in support of girls' education, hosted by TSN's Kayla Grey, part of a broader campaign to raise support for girls' education. On February 12, [Cooperation Canada](#)

[hosts a policy conversation](#), dubbed an “unDebate,” with Conservative, NDP, and Green Party international development critics. Also on February 12, [Aga Khan Foundation Canada will host a virtual conversation](#) on the history of public engagement in Canada.

Fighting income inequality

Oxfam’s annual wealth-inequality report, this year called [The Inequality Virus](#), finds that the fortunes of Canada’s 44 billionaires have increased by almost \$63.5 billion since March 2020. The report shows that COVID-19 could create unparalleled economic inequality around the world, leading to increases in polarization in almost every country at once, the first time this has happened since record-keeping began more than a century ago.

Meanwhile, a government-appointed panel in BC, tasked with investigating the potential of a guaranteed basic income, has recommended that the province not implement this approach. The committee instead recommended a “coordinated and substantial reform of existing social benefits,” including raising social assistance and disability rates; implementing a targeted basic income for groups like youth aging out of care, women fleeing violence, and people on disability; and implementing universal extended health benefits for people living on low incomes.

In [The Tyee](#), Evelyn Forget, the economist who studied Winnipeg’s pioneering Mincome in the 1970s, now a professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, expressed her disappointment.

“I don’t disagree with any changes they recommend. I just don’t think they go far enough, and I don’t think they’re going to be implemented,” she said. “It goes back to the deserving and the undeserving . . . What basic income doesn’t require is a lot of personal oversight, and it doesn’t require us to police people’s decisions.”

A home in government for the non-profit sector

In late 2020, BC’s NDP government appointed a parliamentary secretary for community development and non-profits, a big step forward for BC non-profits, and for the third sector across Canada in making the case for improved representation and collaboration with government.

On [her blog](#), [Hilary Pearson](#), former head of Philanthropic Foundations Canada, reflects on that success, as well as the historic failure to activate the 2001 accord between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. She argues that a key part of the sector’s agenda for 2021 must be to create a renewed, reinvigorated design for the 21st-century relationship between the social good and public sectors. She cites the [mandate letter](#) for Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development Ahmed Hussen, which directs the ministry to “continue to work across government to ensure that charities and nonprofits have the tools that they need to modernize as they emerge from the pandemic to support the Government’s overall agenda in a manner that responds to the needs of Canadians in every region,” as an opening for possible progress.

For more on the subject, read Fateema Sayani’s story [“Charitable Sector Rules Need a Facelift to Meet New Demands”](#) in *Policy Options* and John Lorinc’s op-ed, [“Spinning Wheels: Why the Sector’s Lobbying Has Come Up Empty.”](#)

Healthcare equity for Indigenous communities

[A new report by the National Association of Friendship Centres](#) explores systemic racism in Canadian healthcare, the challenges Indigenous Peoples face in realizing their right to healthcare with dignity and respect, the role of urban Indigenous service providers in providing appropriate healthcare, and the need for an Indigenous-led and community-driven process that can advance the right to healthcare.

The report's findings are pulled from the 2020 Urban Indigenous Forum, a gathering of Indigenous healthcare providers and leaders from the Friendship Centre movement that was spurred in part by the death of 37-year-old Atikamekw woman Joyce Echaquan in a Joliette, Quebec, hospital, and whose focus was to honour urban Indigenous experiences in accessing their right to healthcare.

The document includes several recommendations, among them the development of a national Indigenous health framework that would map a continuity of health services for Indigenous people responsive to their specific needs and realities.

The impacts of COVID-19 on mental health in the charitable sector

A [new pulse-check from the Alberta Nonprofit Network](#) finds the sector struggling with a combination of increased demand and reduced revenue, and the resulting impacts on mental health. The survey finds that the number-one concern in the sector is the mental health of employees, with 52% of survey respondents reporting that staff mental health is an operational challenge. The next greatest challenge is access to technology.

Upcoming events and trainings

- February 9: Community Foundations of Canada webinar, [Transforming Public Spaces to Respond to COVID-19](#), on equity-based place-making, public safety, community development, and resilience. The webinar will also feature information on the forthcoming Canada Healthy Communities Initiative, a new \$31-million investment from the Government of Canada to support communities as they adapt public spaces for the new realities of the pandemic.
- February 11: The first installment of First Policy Response's Making the Future speaker series, featuring health promoter Sané Dube; Dr. Andrew Boozary; Adrienne Spafford, CEO of Addictions and Mental Health Ontario; and Ryerson Leadership Lab's Karim Bardeesy. [Register here.](#)
- February 17: Philanthropic Foundations Canada hosts a conversation with Senator Ratna Omidvar on charity sector reform. [Register here.](#)
- February 18: The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations hosts a conversation: [Nonprofits at 2:00: Systemic Racism and Diversity in the Nonprofit Sector.](#)
- February 19: The [Arctic Inspiration Prize](#), a pan-Arctic celebration, will be broadcast across the country, on TV and online, on APTN. Stay tuned for further coverage of the finalists here in *The Philanthropist Journal*.
- February 25: The Maytree Foundation's Five Good Ideas series focuses on [how to build lasting relationships with journalists](#), featuring the *Toronto Star*'s Royson James.
- Various dates: Goodcasting is offering a selection of master classes, including [financial management for non-profit leaders](#) and [non-profit mergers and integration](#), as well as a

slate of webinars on non-profit finance and related topics.

- April 14–16: Registration for the Canadian Association of Gift Planners conference, Reimagining the Future of Philanthropy, is open. Go to [org](#) for details and to register.