

## **Black Family Science and Technology Awareness Week** **February 13 -19, 2006**

Technology is revolutionizing how people live and work. Now, more than ever, careers are demanding skills in technology. Highly skilled engineers, mechanics, nurses, teachers, secretaries, even fast-food workers require more technology involvement than ever before. While increasing technology skills are important, it is not the only issue our communities are facing. Consider these:

- A low percentage of African Canadians are involved in the fields of Science, Engineering and Technology
- The plight of African Canadian youth in the education systems is a major issue
- The level of science and technology literacy in the African Canadian community is low
- The increase in youth violence is a major issue

Access to computers and the Internet, and the ability to effectively use this technology, is clearly important for full participation in Canada's economic, political and social life. There is strong evidence of a gap between individuals who have access to technology and those who do not.

Lack of access to quality and culturally relevant science education programming for African Canadian youth and other underrepresented groups in science is a major impediment to full participation in the most exciting, innovative and rapidly expanding economic sector in the Canadian economy.

The purpose of the *Black Family Science and Technology Awareness Campaign* is to empower and fully equip our community of families with the resources needed to become actively involved with the technology revolution. We intend to assist the process by working with faith-based organizations, corporations with a strong presence in our communities, small businesses, resource centers, such as schools and libraries, and municipal, provincial and federal government agencies. By bringing together all these entities to focus on finding solutions, we hope to create models of success that will close the digital and scientific divide that threatens to perpetuate educational, financial, and social inequality in Ontario and the rest of Canada.

### **The Digital Divide**

To be on the less fortunate side of the divide means there is less opportunity to take part in this information-based economy in which many more jobs will be related to computers. It also means that there is less opportunity to take part in the vast opportunities available online in education, shopping, entertainment, information and communication.

Black Family Science and Technology Awareness Week (BFSTA) wants Black families and youth to be a part of the scientific AND technological revolution.

### **A Few Reasons Why African Canadians Should Use the Internet.**

**Jobs.** The Internet is becoming more and more essential to getting and keeping a job. Increasingly, companies are moving their recruitment efforts online, and larger numbers of job seekers each day are putting their resumes onto career sites on the Web. More and more frequently, those without Internet access find themselves taking what's left after the electronic job matches already have been made.

And those already "on the job" are finding that the Internet is giving a whole new meaning to the term, as more and more people are working remotely from home, using PCs to stay connected to the office. Office workers without Internet access will be increasingly at a disadvantage, as companies move to increase their numbers of "teleworkers".

**Government.** These days, the words "government" and "downsizing" are often heard in the same sentence. On the municipal, provincial and federal levels, the Internet is a big part of efforts to slim down government budgets. The idea is to make interactions with the public more efficient, by putting information online and cutting down bureaucracy. In the near future, those without Internet access may find themselves holding the phone longer, with fewer and fewer government workers on the other end to answer.

**Health care.** More and more hospitals, private practitioners, and medical researchers are turning to the Web, putting up sites offering valuable information to the general public. Canadian medicine is among the most technologically advanced in the world, but Internet access is essential to getting the best it has to offer.

**Business.** Small businesses owned by African Canadians are decreasing and the Internet is becoming an essential part of doing business. More and more large companies and government entities are turning to the Web to choose contractors and suppliers, using business-to-business (B2B) sites. Businesses not on the 'Net will find it difficult to survive on a smaller and smaller share of the pie. The growth industries in Ontario will provide jobs in the emerging biotechnology field, requiring people skilled in biosciences, management, sales, computer science and engineering.

**Education.** The Internet will continue transforming education in the Canadian public school system. Schools are working under a government mandate to get wired to the Internet, and all schools -- public and private, K-12 and college -- are making use of it: distributing and collecting homework by e-mail; holding virtual classes in chat rooms; broadcasting lectures by streaming video; and more. "Distance learning," using information technology is one of the fastest-growing segments of adult education. Even many professional tutors are taking their services online. And for prospective college students, the Internet offers the best way to search for scholarship dollars. Those without Internet access will miss out on many educational opportunities.

**Shopping.** More and more consumer transactions are being done online. It is more efficient and definitely more convenient for shoppers, because it allows them to shop from the comfort of their own homes. Consumers are able to take advantage of the best prices through online auctions, which allow shoppers to name their own prices for goods or services. And, when "traditional" routes fail, the Internet often is the only way to get that hard-to-find item you really want, or need.

**Communication.** E-mail is by far the most inexpensive and efficient way to communicate with persons outside of local calling areas. Many Web sites now offer e-mail service free of charge. Internet Web sites, e-mail, and more advanced technologies such as Internet phone service and videoconferencing, are incomparable tools to organize communities and strengthen social bonds within and between African-Canadian communities.

## Agenda

*Visions of Science Network for Learning is requesting that Individuals and Community organizations consider the following actions in developing a program to increase the awareness of science and technology:*

**High Tech Sunday:** Contact your church and ask your leaders to host a dialogue about science and technology awareness with the congregation after the service.

**Business and Technology Day:** Learn how technology impacts our community and share this information with Black Youth in your area, your family or sphere of influence.

**Family Science and Tech Night:** Have your organization host discussions about how technology is affecting our community life. Include discussions about the employment and hiring trends in your community, the public/private school systems and their ability to prepare our children for technology in the future. Then submit a report to the VoS Review magazine for compilation.

**Children:** Take your children to a science and/or technology event at local museums such as the Ontario Science Center and The Royal Ontario Museum. Attend the THE REAL MCCOY, a powerful theatrical experience inspired by the life and times of the most famous African Canadian inventor, Elijah McCoy at Factory Theatre and attend a Visions of Science or an International African Inventors Museum event.

**Software and Hardware Product Review Day:** Spend time in your local computer store or have a representative speak to your organization and youth about the products available and their uses.

**Computer Lab Training:** Coordinate within your organization to host computer lab training (basic computer operations and/or intermediate core concepts) for students of all ages and their parents.

**Presentations:** Invite an Engineer, Medical doctor, Computer scientist, Dentist, Scientist, Inventor, Health professional or science education professional to make a science and/or technology presentation at your organization's monthly meeting, youth group or church group during February.

**Organizations:** Host your own science and technology awareness program during BFSTA week or collaborate with another organization or Visions of Science Network for Learning.

**Please consider hosting or supporting an activity? We need your commitment to make this important event a success. If your organization or group decides to host an activity, please forward the information to [fajeffers@rogers.com](mailto:fajeffers@rogers.com) for inclusion in the BFSTA calendar on the [visionsofscience.ca](http://visionsofscience.ca) website.**

Contact: Francis Jeffers, Visions of Science Network for Learning (416 266 6464) or Angelita Elliott (416 431 1222). Fax: 416 264 8015. E-mail: [visionsofscience2002@hotmail.com](mailto:visionsofscience2002@hotmail.com)  
Website: [visionsofscience.ca](http://visionsofscience.ca)

The following events are scheduled within the BFSTA week:

- The International African Inventors Museum ([iaimuseum.org](http://iaimuseum.org)) will be at Factory Theatre, 125 Bathurst St, Toronto on February 16, 2006.
- From critically acclaimed playwright Andrew Moodie, THE REAL MCCOY is a powerful theatrical experience inspired by the life and times of Elijah McCoy at Factory Theatre, 125 Bathurst St, Toronto - Box Office at 416-504-9971
- SHEREHEKEA AFRICA programming at schools within the GTA
- SHEREHEKEA AFRICA program at the Apple Creek Seventh Day Adventist church, 700 Apple Creek Blvd., Markham, (905) 946-8751 on Feb 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006