

AFRICENTRIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
Summer Institute



NORTH PRESTON COMMUNITY CENTER
JULY 18 – 22, 2005

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
REPORT**

OCTOBER 2005



**AFRICENTRIC
LEARNING INSTITUTE**





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NOTE: Additional information is available on the CACE website
– www.cace.ns.ca - and in the Appendices attached.

1. Introduction

The following is an Executive Summary Report of the activities, events and outcomes of the Africentric Learning Institute Leadership and Management Summer Institute for Educators.

A | Rationale and Desired Outcomes

The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) Leadership and Management Summer Institute was a five-day intensive cultural discovery designed to “foster and nurture excellence in leadership and management practices of African Canadian Educators.” Utilizing Africentric values, principles and approaches as a philosophical and experiential framework, the Institute attempted to fill the gap between the theoretical study and the practical stages of Africentricity.

The Institute was launched, appropriately, in North Preston Nova Scotia—Canada’s largest Indigenous African Canadian Community—whose leadership of a public campaign against racism in education gave rise to the groundbreaking Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) Report on Education (1991). The BLAC Report made forty-six recommendations to government for raising African Nova Scotians’ level and quality of education. The Report emphasized the need for an ALI as an educational strategy. The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), whose mandate is to monitor and implement these recom-

mendations, took the responsibility to design, develop and implement the Summer Institute as an ALI initiative. This was the first such endeavor to be offered from an Africentric perspective, and all the participants shared in that distinction.

The desired outcome of the Institute was:

“to provide participants with the vision and skills necessary to exercise culturally competent and culturally responsible leadership and management practices.”

B | Partners’ Support

During the official opening event the Delvina Bernard, Executive Director of CACE gave an historical overview of the Summer Institute then, outlined ongoing plans for the ALI as a first class institute dedicated to excellence in Africentric educational research and practice. Congratulatory remarks, supportive statements and encouragement were also expressed by Sheila Lucas-Cole, President of the Black Educators Association and the Executive Director of the African Canadian Services Division, Department of Education (DOE), Dr. Patrick Kkembo who added;

“... Congratulations to you all for being selected for the first ALI Summer Institute. As you already know, CACE and the ALI Committee, in partnership with the African Canadian Services Division, chose the first Summer Institute to focus on leadership and management development after extensive and

careful consideration...”. He added “Clearly, as African peoples, venturing into self-discovery and development of leadership skills, our understanding of history—our history, is critical....”

C | Target Group

Participant selection focused on African Nova Scotian (ANS) Educators who work in the ANS Education sector; had a minimum of two years experience in the education field; and demonstrated leadership and management aspirations. Every effort was made to ensure that program participants reflected diversity in respect to geography, gender, age, skills, experiences and ANS communities. The class size was limited to 20 participants who were required to complete a personal profile, prior to the Summer Institute, so that instructors could design both formal and informal learning opportunities to meet their needs and to achieve desired outcomes.

D | Instructors

The Institute had three instructors who brought diverse experience and great enthusiasm to their tasks. Dr. Adrian Dorrington shared her professional expertise in leadership and curriculum development for educators. Yolisa Dalamba, a cultural consultant, educator and multidisciplinary artist active in the global anti-apartheid movement shared her fundamental belief that;

“only we have the power to truly heal and liberate ourselves as Afrikans”.

Dr. Harvey Millar shared his broad and extensive experiences, as an Africentric logistician and management scientist. He focused on the application of Africentric Philosophy to organizational planning and good management practices.

E | Daily Schedule

The course manual for the five-day Institute emphasized the following: Africentric Leadership and Management, Spirituality and Principles of MAAT as core themes. Each theme contained modules and interactive participatory activities designed to: (1) expand participant awareness and analysis (2) stimulate critical thinking (3) devise alternative approaches to problem solving (4) and, encourage personal and political creativity (Kuumba). The curriculum was taught as an integrated program and required supplementary readings.

Together, in this learning environment, participants and instructors motivated each other to make the Institute a unique and memorable learning experience. For five days they utilized Africentric values, principles and approaches as a philosophical and experiential framework—working together to develop culturally competent and culturally responsible leadership and management practices. The class lectures were designed to give a balance between theory and practice. Participants’ presentations included interacting with community youth. One participant commented;

“... having the opportunity to work with the children of the community by putting theory into practice and getting a reaction from the children was significant to me. The children were responsive and affirming...the practice of the MAAT theory gave me tools to use...”

Other memorable learning experience highlighted by participants was a head-wrapping ceremony designed as a healing tool; also a unique experiential activity based on “the Cole Harbour event”.

This activity allowed participants to explore their emotional response to the “race riot” of 1989, to;

“reclaim and celebrate our Afrikanness”,

as well as sharing effective ways of teaching and problem solving.

F | Official Opening Event

The official opening event, held at the North Preston Recreation Center, was hosted by CACE, which extended an open invitation to the general community to attend this precedent setting event. Activities included inspirational contributions from the Community Pastor, Reverend Wallace Smith; Jonathan Smith’s Hallelujah Praise Choir; an African Libation Ceremony; a local Videographer to document key events; and a keynote presentation from motivational speaker and President, Visionary Leadership Institute, Ohio, USA, Mr. Ako Kambon. He gave a powerful presentation on the social, educational and criminal justice issues that affect our lives and shared his philosophy and beliefs about education

“....I am a profound believer in self-help...when it comes to community. Government should be a catalyst for the development of local initiatives and must not attempt to apply generic solutions to specific problems and situations.”

He forcefully advocated the need to establish policies, programs and procedures that engage parents in educating their children:

“parents must be hands-on participants in the educational process – be active partners with teachers and administrators ... getting parents involved often requires special effort and carefully devised programmatic approaches. This is especially true in multi-cultural environments where there may be race and communications issues to overcome.”

Generally, participant consensus about his presentation can be summed up in a quote from one remark;

“... we would like to have heard from Ako Kambon for the whole morning or for the whole day”.

G | Community Contributions

Many African Nova Scotian community professionals enriched the Institute with their perspectives on Africentric Leadership and Management, including panel presenters Michele Williams, Director, Indigenous Black and Mi’Kmaq Law School Program, Dalhousie University, Pastor Lennett Anderson, Hammonds Plains Emmanuel Baptist Church, Hammonds Plains Nova Scotia and Barbara Ann Simmons, RCMP Community Liaison. In addition, Mr. Brad Barton,

CEO of BarJan Consultants, gave “An Administrator’s perspective on Africentric Leadership and Management; and Dr. Sylvia Hamilton, Educator in Residence for the Africentric Learning Institute described her research project on segregated schools. All of the Institute’s activities were supported by the North Preston Recreation Center employees, Karen Hudson, Chair of ALI, Charles Sheppard, Chair of CACE and Charlotte’s Sensational Tastes, a community catering company.

A week-long African Nova Scotian Art and Literature display designed by David Woods, Exhibition Curator and President of the Black Artist Network of Nova Scotia greatly enriched the Institute’s learning environment by reminding participants of their community’s cultural achievements in the areas of: craft, sculpture, painting, literature, political writings and other aspects of fine arts.

H | Press Conference

Mr. Charles Sheppard, Chair of CACE, held a precedent setting Press Conference in partnership with the Minister of Education Honorable Minister Jamie Muir. The Press Conference began with the singing of the National Black Anthem “Lift Every Voice and Sing”. The goal of the Press conference was to create awareness and publicize the significance of the Summer Institute and to update African Nova Scotians and other stakeholders on the progress being made toward implementing the BLAC Report. Other guests included Municipal and School Board Officials,

Institute participants and many other interested observers. As he highlighted the BLAC Report on Education, the significance of the contributions made by members of the North Preston community and the role of CACE in the ALI he also confirmed

“ ... this is exactly what the ALI will be all about – to bring knowledge to the people ... – and to use the creative and cooperative dispositions pioneered and polished by our ancestors. Putting our indigenous knowledge at the center of all that we do is exactly what Africentricity is all about... ”

The Press Conference closed with a reading in unison of the institute’s African Pledge.

On July 22, 2005 local news reports included the following:

“The Province increased funding for Black students by \$1 million dollars yesterday, making some of the changes recommended by an inquiry eleven years ago. Education Minister Jamie Muir told African Nova Scotian teachers and parents the new money is part of a promise to fully implement the Black Learners Advisory Committee Report over the next four years with \$4.1 million.”

I | Closing Ceremony

Each participant presented a personal Action Plan for implementing the concepts and principles learned at the Institute. They focused on evaluating their learning, developing strategies that engage African families and communities, and proposing activities for future direction. Afterwards, they were

presented with Certificates to formally acknowledge the week's accomplishments. Enthusiasm about this collaboration was reflected in the following statements of Delvina Bernard, Executive Director, CACE:

" ... This Project has been an amazing adventure. Twenty participants looked into themselves to understand their/our own history and the shared inheritance of all humankind ...all of the project's goals have been completed successfully. This Africentric Institute was a pioneering venture with risks and uncertainties. But its success has created transformations far beyond what I could have imagined. We have opened the door to a vast and complex landscape".

According to one participant, most of our ambitious outcomes were met or surpassed.

"... Never would I have dreamed in 2005 that my life would encompass this kind of transformation. When the opportunity arose to attend the five-day intensive Africentric Leadership and Management Summer Institute, I knew it was something that could be done - and that must be done. "The completion of this Institute Project is a truly momentous occasion and should be experienced by every educator."

Calvin Gough, African Canadian Services Division, DOE

Another participant could not wait to share their new found knowledge:

" ...I am back to work today and... I wanted to tell you just how awesome the Learning Institute was this summer. It was so well organized, things just flowed so smoothly, and to top it off-the food was delicious! I learned

sooo much, not just from the wonderful instructors, but also from fellow participants. I am utilizing my MAAT principles on a daily basis and have been teaching my young son about them as well. I can't wait to share what I have learned with my students as they start school tomorrow. And our group action plan to spread "the Word" is scheduled this month here in New Glasgow, so I can't wait! ...I am eternally thankful for the life-changing opportunity of the Africentric Learning Institute - it has truly changed my way of thinking and doing. Kudos to you, and your staff for having the vision of creating this unique program."

Finally, today, CACE has unveiled another bold new vision for the future of the ALI initiatives by announcing the 2nd Annual Africentric Leadership and Management Summer Institute for Educators in July 2006.

"... if we as African People are to heal our damaged psyche, reclaim our sense of self and pride in our lineage then we must adopt an Afrocentric frame of reference. We must use an Afrocentric paradigm; a subconscious awareness of our Africanness and centering African People as subjects of our world history, culture, civilization and vehemently reject that we exist as objects of an Eurocentric constructed world view. Lets examine some of our illustrious and accomplished African and Pan-African Leaders."

Dr. Adrian Dorrington, Institute Instructor

"It is a sin to die with your purpose left within you"

Pastor Lennett Anderson, Hammonds Plains, NS

2. Daily Evaluation Summary

Daily evaluations were presented to discuss the benefits of this and future Institutes. Most evaluators felt that the instructors were excellent and the classes powerful but “too short”. They confirmed that the process of participant engagement helped to foster a deeper understanding of the philosophy, concepts, ideas, values and approaches of the African-centered models and many wanted a follow-up in order to reinforce their learning.

Participant feedback also suggests that the Institute helped to build a network and a critical mass of potential, committed leaders across Nova Scotia. These participants committed to initiatives proposed to develop collaborative African-centered activities and learning programs that will link Africentric program models with overall educational development and African Nova Scotian self-determination.

The following are a selection of participant evaluations and comments:

“... this is certainly ‘history’ in the making. It has been my great pleasure to be part of this setting, it has empowered me to continue in the struggle. Also, to read, learn and encourage more to get in touch with our Motherland.”

“ ... a beautiful facility. It is great to be in an African Nova Scotian Community—it is very affirming”

“ ... The way we were able to negotiate, share, assist, support and embellish on ideas, experiences and knowledge, was truly an attestation to the power of the

spirit that brought us to this phenomenal project. We had each made a personal investment in the success of this venture, which was evident throughout....”

“ Hats off to the presenters for their hard work in preparing and presenting. We were challenged to ask ourselves critical questions...”

“ ... I enjoyed acting out the MAAT, giving back to the children made me feel the spirit of our own people”; “topics were relevant and applied to our life experiences.”

“... I am very uncomfortable with any discussion that centers around Black people but does not have a class analysis first and foremost. We all have a very sophisticated race analysis but we tend to avoid the controversial issues that embrace ‘class’.”

“ I love getting to know myself more and I thank you for helping me with the wisdom and knowledge of my spirituality ... the interactive way you begin the sessions is wonderful, fun and inspirational.”

“ Dr. Hamilton’s presentation was so relevant to the work here. She is representative of the myriad benefits of doing our research for us! It is also refreshing that she brings the medium of film to our collective work.”

“I think we need to come together again to reaffirm the village, see if we are achieving our Action Plans and discuss next steps...thanks for this once in a lifetime opportunity”

“... participation in the Institute was a tremendously rewarding experience for me. The idea behind the program is a solid one on all accounts. It was a successful one as well. The success of the program on its first run attests to the value of the idea”

The summary of recommendations and suggestions below include participants views to:

- Hold the Institute in the same community and facility with controlled room temperature;
- Provide all readings several weeks before the Institute starts;
- Sessions were too short and time did not always permit critical discussions and debriefings;
- Consider having speakers during lunch or opening/closing sessions, so as not to shorten class time;
- Extend time to include another evening and a Saturday;
- In each class, try to give more emphasis to the overarching conceptual framework of the Institute;
- Fix the amount of time per Instructor and ensure compliance;
- Try to find more space for participant presentations;
- Have a scheduled debriefing on Days One, Three and Five to inform everyone of last minute changes and make a smoother transition between presenters;
- Build an electronic communication network for Institute participants;
- Future projects might consider more attention paid to timely participation of participants and Instructors;
- Consider including a youth focus.

The implementation of these participant evaluations, recommendations and comments will be used as guidelines “to provide participants with the vision and skills necessary to exercise culturally competent and culturally-responsible leadership and management practices”.

Posthumously: Mr. Ernie Earl Simmonds III earned his Attendance Certificate after completing the requirements for the ALI Summer Institute before his untimely death on September 8, 2005. Mr. Simmonds was a gifted individual who made valuable contributions toward promoting the rights and interests of African Nova Scotian students and educators. The following are his comments:

“This is to let the ALI committee know the gratitude I feel towards the committee members ... for their assistance in making a way for me to participate in the first summer institute in such a unique way. I have attended many conferences that were air conditioned: by attending I mean I sat outside of the conference area and did the best I can to “lip-read” or try and catch whatever I could. To attend something where I did not have to look like a “spy” was a plus. When people show such concern to address an issue that may not affect them --“not that I was looking for you to go out of your way”-- I feel the need to express my appreciation. Personally I take nothing or anyone for granted. Therefore I sincerely thank you and your committee for the audio device, for the concern when it was snack and lunch time and just for making me feel a part and not embarrassing my uniqueness.”

With Much Appreciation, Ernie E. Simmonds III

3. Appendix

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