



# ANNUAL REPORT



## Message From Founder

What a year 2020 was! The global pandemic took everybody by surprise and impacted our in-person programs. However, we adapted our programming to offer virtual activities which proved to be a big success. We offered songwriting workshops, sing-alongs and dance workshops online which lifted the spirits of our participants during this trying time. Luckily, we were able to offer our Black History Month School Tour live and in person this year as the tour wrapped right before we went into lockdown. Although we weren't able to hold any in-person fundraisers, we were fortunate enough to receive more funding on a municipal and federal level. This led to our annual budget increasing yet again!

2020 was a challenging year for many reasons including the global uprising in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. As an arts organization, OMTA prides itself in offering programs that spark conversations about equality for all and social change. We saw a handful of peaceful protests standing up against racism in the Montreal area.

However, as an organization that works with youth, we realized that children were also hurting. Therefore, we wanted to provide resources to help them address these matters in a safe and judgement-free environment. This led to us hosting our first ever Youth Unite Against Racism rally for kids. The event included inspiring speeches by youth, Black community leaders, and culturally diverse dance and music performances. The entire event was translated by an ASL interpreter.

Throughout the entire year we have been working comfortably out of Maison des Jeunes Pierrefonds where many new and exciting projects have been realized. This year saw a Covid-friendly version of our annual Winter Wonderland Brunch where we sorted, packed and distributed elaborate gift bags. This included toys, books, shoes, gift cards and food baskets for over 50 families in the West Island. Even though this year did not go as planned, we still had a successful year of operations while keeping people entertained. We hope to be able to offer in-person workshops again in 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Akilah Newton".

**Akilah Newton**  
Founder & President





## Mission

Overture with the Arts (OWTA) is a non-profit organization based in the West Island, offering education in music, dance, drama and vocal training. Our free and low-cost programs enable young people to pursue their passion in the performing arts when they wouldn't otherwise have the financial means to do so.

## Vision

OWTA encourages youth to express themselves creatively and use the arts as a tool to empower their artistic inspirations and communicate in the areas of social justice.

## Values

Professionalism • Youth •  
Community • Diversity • Respect

## Board of Directors

- President: Agnes Katsouros
- Vice President: Tina Wentzell
- Treasurer: Diane Bates
- Secretary: Alessia DiGiorgio
- Director: Kelvin Newton
- Director: Modupeh Taylor-Cline
- Director: Patty Xenos
- Director: Danielle Leggett
- Director: Allison Saunders
- Director: Erika Rath

## Programs

To carry out our goal of engaging with youth, OMTA runs several programs throughout the year. The programs are diverse in nature, including music, dance and radio broadcasts. Additionally, we focus on building partnerships with local organizations. This allows us to create a strong network of committed volunteers, partners and participants who continue to benefit from our activities.



### Tracking Black Canada Part 1

For the 10th consecutive year we visited schools with an edutainment (education and entertainment) presentation in celebration of Black History Month. The 2020 presentation focused on the often forgotten histories of early Black communities across our country. We visited schools in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, and delivered over 50 presentations. Approximately 10,000 youth benefitted from the presentation.

## Events



### Black History Month Caribbean Brunch

On Saturday, February 8th guests enjoyed a Caribbean meal, live music and a spoken word performance. Hosted by Breakfast Television Montreal's Catherine Verdon-Diamond, guests got a sneak peek of our 2020 Black History Month school presentation, Tracking Black Canada Part 1, hosted by Omari Newton.



### Online Silent Auction Fundraiser

From Wednesday, November 25 to Monday, November 30, we hosted a Silent Auction Fundraiser to coincide with Black Friday shopping weekend. The goal was to entice people to begin their Holiday shopping while supporting a good cause and local businesses. All of the proceeds from the night went to our Winter Wonderland Brunch.



## Events



### 8th Annual Winter Wonderland Brunch

On Sunday, December 13th we gifted 50 West Island families in need food baskets, fruit & vegetable baskets, books, toys, brand new shoes and more. Our dedicated board members and over a dozen volunteers made Covid-friendly deliveries to each family. The event was sponsored by CN, the Kiwanis Club of Lakeshore Montreal Foundation and the Flourish Arbonne Charitable Foundation.



### Virtual Sing-A-Longs

Every Thursday in July and August we hosted free virtual Sing-A-Longs using Zoom. From 10:30am to 11:00am children sang along to their favourite songs with musician Christina Koikaran.

# Impact

Through various fundraising activities OWTA cultivated new donors, reached new supporters and raised some much needed funds. As a result of this we were able to continue running our regular programs and introduced a new program.



## Support and Networking - Members And Partners

- Riverdale High School Community Learning Centre
- Pearson Educational Foundation

- Monsef Derraji - MNA, Nelligan
- Carlos Leitão - MNA, Robert-Baldwin
- Geoffrey Kelley/Greg Kelley - MNA, Jacques Cartier
- Red Cross
- CN

## Supporters

- The City of Pierrefonds-Roxboro
- The City of Montreal
- Sameer Zuberi, MP for Pierrefonds/Dollard-des-Ormeaux
- Francis Scarpaleggia, MP for Lac-Saint-Louis
- The Department of Canadian Heritage
- Alberta Association for Multicultural Education
- Arbonne Charitable Foundation
- Kiwanis Club of Lakeshore Montreal Foundation

## 2021 Objectives

- Increase funding by 50%
- Hire two full time employees



## **We Need Your Help!**

While we receive some government support, we depend on the generosity of individuals and corporations to continue to run our programs. We are a non-profit organization supported primarily by donations. To keep running programs, we need your help. We kindly ask you to consider donating to OWTA. No amount is too small.

## **Volunteer**

Not everyone can make a financial contribution, but there are other ways that you can help OWTA. We are grateful for any involvement as it helps us to achieve our goal of providing free and low cost arts workshops to our community's youth. Please contact us if you would like to volunteer for OWTA, plan a fundraiser event, etc.



A large, stylized "Thank You" written in a black, cursive script font. The text is set against a background of several hand-drawn hearts in red, yellow, and green. The entire graphic is framed by a white border with vertical green and orange stripes on the left and right sides.

*Thank You*

## Thank You!

To all our partners, board members, sponsors and volunteers for your continued support. Every year we will reach new heights with the energy, passion, and the commitment to change the lives of youth through art.

## Contact Information

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