



ANNUAL REPORT

OWTA.org

2023



Letter from the Chair of the Board

Dear OWTA Supporters,

As we reflect on the year that was, 2023 stands out as a time of both freshness and homecoming for the OWTA family. It is with gratitude and pride that I share with you the highlights of our journey through the past year.

This year marked the return of our annual gala, long-awaited after a four-year hiatus. Witnessing our community come together to celebrate OWTA's 14th anniversary in person was truly heartwarming. We also ventured into new territory with the introduction of Island Fete—an event dedicated to honoring the vibrant tapestry of Caribbean culture through food, music, and more. The overwhelming response from our community reaffirmed the importance of celebrating diversity.

Our commitment to education and cultural enrichment continued through our Black History Month presentations, which evolve and grow every year, which have become an integral part of school curriculums across Canada. These initiatives not only honor the past but also empower future generations to embrace diversity and strive for a more inclusive society.

This same balance of history and newness was felt in the staff. We welcomed a new Director of Operations, Zeeta, to the leadership team as the organization grows. But, I would be remiss not to highlight that this entire journey would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of OWTA's founder, Akilah, whose unwavering dedication continues to inspire us all.

As I mark my fifth year on the Board, I am filled with pride as I witness the remarkable growth and evolution of our organization and its programs. A big thank you to our donors, employees, board members, volunteers, and numerous families who participate in our summer camps, workshops, and events. Your support fuels our mission and allows us to carry forward the spirit of unity, innovation, and compassion that defines OWTA.

Sincerely,

Alessia A. Di Giorgio

Alessia A. Di Giorgio
Chair of the Board of Directors
Overture with the Arts





From empowering youth from diverse backgrounds to express themselves through various artistic mediums, to providing valuable resources and opportunities for skill development, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to nurturing the next generation of artists, performers, and creators. In the following pages, learn more about the diverse programs and events OWTA delivered in 2023.

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:** Alessia Di Giorgio
- **Vice President:** Tina Wentzell
- **Treasurer:** Guillaume Dumais
- **Secretary:** Erin Tedford
(Stepped Down October 2023)
- **Secretary:** Ryan Pozuelo
(Beginning September 2023)
- **Director:** Kelvin Newton
- **Director:** Danielle Leggett
(Stepped Down May 2023)
- **Director:** Allison Saunders
- **Director:** Wendy Bullion-Winters
- **Director:** Eran Stysis
- **Director:** Shawn Jackson

Programs

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

Black History Month School Tour + DEI Presentations

From Canadian Black history to presentations on inclusions, allyship, privilege, and more, OWTA provides opportunities to explore the complexities of identity, privilege, and bias, empowering students to recognize and address systemic inequalities using arts as a tool for communication. By offering these presentations, we are committing to creating more inclusive environments where everyone feels valued and respected. Through open dialogue, education, and actionable strategies, our presentations not only raise awareness but also inspire meaningful change, driving us towards a more equitable and just society.

Listed below are the presentations that were offered:

- Tracking Black Canada 4
- Unpacking the N-Word
- P is for Privilege
- I is for Inclusion
- A is for Allyship
- Unpacking Social Media

Funded in Part By: Canadian Heritage - Community Support, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Initiative

Programs

Unity Program

For second consecutive year, our UNITY program provided opportunities to youth ages 5 to 12 to explore cultural identity and diversity through the arts. Every Saturday our participants took part in different workshops including visual arts, dance, music creation, poetry, theatre, and African drumming, lead by a talented artists. Participants also enjoyed a field trip to the movie theatre and watched the live action movie, The Little Mermaid. This UNITY program was originally an 18-month pilot program but due to its popularity, as well as securing additional funding, we are happy to announce that the program will continue to run until the end of 2025.

Funded By: Canadian Heritage - Community Support, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Initiative

March Break Arts Camp

Our inaugural March Break Arts Camp gave students the opportunity to express themselves creatively from March 6 to 10. Through daily theatre and music workshops, a painting workshop, gingerbread house decorating, and a dance workshop, our campers unleashed their imagination in a supportive and encouraging environment.

Funded By: Réseau réussite



Youth Musical Theatre Summer Camp

From June 27 to August 18, our expert instructors lead engaging workshops covering various aspects of musical theatre, including singing, dancing, acting, stage presence, and character development. Each workshop was designed to enhance skills and ignite passion for the performing arts. Our campers also had the opportunity to perform in two shows: “Mary Poppins”, and “The Super Story Of...To Be Continued”, which is an original show written by our very own Artistic Director, Stephanie Murphy. At a cost of only \$75.00 per child per week, our camp is the least expensive summer camp in the West Island of Montreal area, offering safe and affordable childcare for families while providing campers with arts and cultural activities they might not otherwise have access to.

Funded By: Quebec Government + Service Canada



Events

14 Year Anniversary Fundraising Gala

On Saturday, April 29th, we celebrated our 14 year anniversary at the Gerry Robertson Community Centre. Guests sipped on wine, enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and 3 course meal prepared by Tasty Touch, and were entertained by 2019 OWTA Youth Songwriting Competition winner, Billie Du Page, followed by an accessible comedy show produced by Lawn Laughs Entertainment. All of the proceeds from the evening will help fund our free and low cost programs.

Sponsored By: Baylis Medtech + the Lester B. Pearson School Board

12th Annual Winter Wonderland Brunch

On Sunday, December 10th we hosted our annual Winter Wonderland Brunch to help 35 families in need feel the warmth and joy of the holiday season. Over 100 children were treated a special holiday gift bag filled with essentials, treats, and gifts to spread joy and cheer. Above all, our Winter Wonderland Brunch was a celebration of community spirit and kindness. Volunteers, donors, and local businesses came together to create a memorable experience for everyone involved.

Sponsored By: Kiwanis Club of Lakeshore Montreal, CN, Merrell, the Kurtz Family Toy Drive, the Afro Canadian Philanthropic Initiative, the Lindsay Place Alumni Foundation, ACDPN, Dreams Take Flight Montreal, Playmas Montreal, Association Chelaine du Millénaire, PME MTL, Junior Jams

OWTA

Island Fête

OWTA's inaugural Island Fête was a 1-day outdoor festival celebrating Caribbean food and BIPOC art. This free family-friendly event had guests enjoying authentic Caribbean food while being entertained by internationally renowned musicians. BIPOC-owned businesses selling Caribbean food, hot sauces, children's books, toys, and more were showcased in an onsite vendor market. Local artists and DJs had over 5,700 guests "fêting" throughout the day.

Sponsored By: PME West Island, TD Bank, the Federation for African Canadian Economics, the Borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro, the Lester B. Pearson School Board, No Limits Group, and Shading Trading Group.



CONTINUED: Aisha Delpeche, and the Borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro

Impact

Through various fundraising activities OWTA cultivated new donors, reached new supporters and raised funds through municipal, provincial, and federal grants, and multiple fundraising initiatives. As a result, we were able to continue running our regular programs and added a new event to our roster.



Funders & Sponsors

- Afro Canadian Philanthropic Initiative (ACPI)
- African Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDPN)
- Aisha Delpeche
- Association Chelaine du Millénaire (ACM)
- Baylis Medtech
- Borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro
- Brigitte Garceau, MNA - Robert-Baldwin
- Chamandy Foundation
- City of Pointe-Claire
- CN
- Department of Canadian Heritage - Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiative Program (CSMARI)
- Dreams Take Flight Montreal
- Federation for African Canadian Economics
- Fonds régional d'aide destiné aux organismes de formation en art (Government of Quebec)
- Francis Scarpaleggia, MP - Lac-Saint-Louis
- Gloria Baylis Foundation
- Greg Kelley, MNA - Jacques-Cartier
- Kiwanis Club of Lakeshore Montreal
- Kurtz Family Toy Drive
- Lester B. Pearson School Board
- Lindsay Place Alumni Foundation
- Merrell
- Monsef Derraji, MNA - Nelligan
- No Limits Group
- Playmas Montreal
- PME West Island
- Réseau réussite
- Sameer Zuberi, MP - Pierrefonds—Dollard
- Service Canada
- Shah Consulting
- TD Bank

2024 Objectives

- Recruit 1-2 more board members
- Launch 1-2 new programs/ activities





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.