

BlackWeb Urges African Canadians To Get On-Line

By Raquel Hamilton
Contributing Writer

The publisher of a new African Canadian computer magazine is urging the community to stay on top of the latest technology, such as the internet.

"If we do not participate in the new technology we will be left behind," warned Frank Coburn, publisher of BlackWeb.

Since being launched last month, BlackWeb, a new on-line magazine, has been committed to celebrating the culture and contributions of African Canadians and is now available on the World Wide Web with just the point and click of a button.



Frank Coburn

"In surfing the net, I came to realize that there was a void," explains Coburn, BlackWeb's publisher. "There was nothing of any substance that represented the Black community, especially in Canada."

Coburn, a former professor at Humber College, founded the magazine with Michael de Gale, a North York multi-cultural bookstore owner.

The magazine includes eight sections, each of particular relevance to African Canadians. One such section, called the "Griots Journey", is dedicated to keeping the storytelling tradition of African people alive.

A griot was traditionally the storyteller of a tribe or village, explains de Gale, BlackWeb's marketing director. The griot kept the history of the tribe in the tribespeople's

heads. "There's a saying that when a griot dies, it's like a library burning down," he elaborated.

Each month, a new story is added to the "Griot's Journey," detailing the historical experience of African Canadians in Ontario. By adopting the role of the griot, BlackWeb is attempting to ensure that these stories are not forgotten and will be available through the internet to empower minds for generations to come.

Another section of the magazine, entitled "My Hero", is generally a celebration of Canadian heroes, but the focus is more specific to African Canadian heroes in Ontario, Coburn explains.

One such story, features a woman named Zeinab Warsame who is originally from Somalia. This woman escaped the oppressive Somali regime while pregnant and walked hundreds of miles with three children in tow.

Unfortunately, one of her children died along the way but she finally made her way to Toronto and now does volunteer work in the Regent Park community.

"We thought that (was) worth celebrating," Coburn said. "There are a lot of local heroes right next to us that are worth celebrating . . . that's a great story."

Other sections of the magazine include a youth link, focusing on education and issues relating to young people. This section, Coburn points out, is written by the youth themselves.

There is also a section called "Back Chat" where people may have their views on different issues aired and commented upon.

"We try to look for the positive in the Black community and highlight it," de Gale says. "We hope to give voice or visibility to people whose contribution in the Black community goes unnoticed for the most part, but is significant yet."

Coburn believes that BlackWeb offers to the community a well produced magazine filled with content significant to African Canadians.

He asserts that the magazine offers an avenue whereby African Canadians can participate in the Black on-line experience.

BlackWeb Publishing also designs and programs web pages for advertisers. These may be accessed through the usual search engines.

Internet training and access, including Email and support services are also available.

To find out more about BlackWeb, call (416) 366-0090. They can be accessed on the internet at address <http://www.black-web.com>. or on Email: blackweb@idirect.com.

"We hope that BlackWeb will be like the north star on the internet that is the one we really recognize, the one that shines the brightest," de Gale says. ☑