

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

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DATE 31 January 2000

TO/DEST. Chair, Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissioner, Social Services

SUBJECT/OBJET **AFRICAN HERITAGE CENTRE - LANGUAGES, ART AND CULTURE**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council approve a one-time only grant of \$17,300 to the African Heritage Centre, from the National Child Benefit Employment Development Fund.

BACKGROUND

On December 16, 1999 Community Services Committee requested: *“That the African Heritage Centre be referred to staff for a report in the new year”*. The organization requested emergency funding totalling \$54,000 to cover arrears of \$6,000 per month over a nine (9) month period in order to ensure financial stability and focus their resources on fundraising and delivering programs to their target population.

DISCUSSION

The African Heritage Centre has been in existence for the past six (6) years. It was established *“to promote and share the rich diversity of Africa with ...fellow Canadians”*. Visible minorities make up 18.9 percent of the total Ottawa population according to the 1996 census, of which 28 percent are Canadian/American/African/Caribbean blacks.

In the Fall of 1999, the Centre expanded its mandate to include personal support to minority women and youth and employment related activities. The Centre provides a relaxed and friendly environment conducive to the expression of fears and uncertainties as well as the sharing of experiences and ideas.

The Centre acknowledges the fact that people who come to the Centre, primarily women and youth, have issues related to poverty, are receiving social assistance, express the need for support to access resources and find or develop employment.

For six years, the Centre covered operational costs primarily from personal resources of the coordinator and fund raising events. From August 1998 to April 1999, funds from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) enabled the organization to assist 10 youth who had dropped out of school deal with school issues, rights, racism and barriers to be successful. A school video was developed in partnership with the Bellevue Manor youth team. This HRDC funding source is designed to support people who are eligible for services related to Employment Insurance. The Funding was discontinued since participants were primarily receiving social assistance.

Currently, nine (9) people receiving social assistance are participants at the African Heritage Centre within the community placement component of Ontario Works. Of this group, four participants are in the initial stages of developing two business ventures: 1) involving the export of recycled clothing to developing countries, and 2) a catering niche for African foods. Another program in progress is a partnership with the Regional Police Department to work with youth in the area of crime prevention.

In addition, the organization has submitted a project grant application to Social Services which aim to assist minority women experiencing personal and systemic barriers to employment. Decisions concerning project grants to community organizations will be available by early March 2000. Any successful funding decision would address only the purpose/project for which funds are requested.

The Centre plans to seek funding from other sources such as The Trillium Foundation. The Centre would also seek linkage with existing local resources. For instance, the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) has the mandate to help grassroots organizations at the beginning stages of developing an economic initiative and is willing to meet with the Centre.

The Centre is a valuable placement opportunity for clients of Social Services. The Department can further assist the organization to identify resources to help build its capacity and resources with which to develop links and partnerships to better serve its target group.

The provision of funds to the African Heritage Centre is to cover seven months of rent arrears and rent for the months of January, February and March 2000. It would give the organization some time to assess how to link with available resources to best serve its target population.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

There was no public consultation for this report.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION

Funding to support the African Heritage Centre would consist of a one time grant taken from the National Child Benefit Employment Development Fund.

CONCLUSION

The African Heritage Centre is attempting to respond to the systemic barriers to employment experienced by its target population, primarily minority women and youth. One time funding is to enable the organization assess how it might fit in the broader context of human services.

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*