

**Feature Address by Consul General - Henry Mangal**  
**At Official Launch of Creole Heritage Month (English Version)**  
*St. Elizabeth of Hungary RC Church, Toronto, Canada*  
*01<sup>st</sup> October 2023*

Fellow Saint Lucians, Dominicans, Haitians, Canadians, Ladies and Gentlemen.

You have come to celebrate with us the honouring of our Creole culture and language in a deeper and more meaningful way than the previous one-day activity. In keeping with the profile of the celebrations in Saint Lucia, this year, the Consulate has intervened to expand the celebrations to a full month of activities, commencing with the Official Launch, comprising a Creole Church Service and a Reception today.

Our Creole history is rich with the advocacy, actions and positions of pioneers who used the Creole language to liberate and elevate our nations.

In Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe, and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, used creole as the language of liberation and empowerment for their people. Kweyol is one of the Official Languages of Haiti, and after President Aristide addressed the United Nations (UN) in Kweyol in 1994, the UN began to hire translators for the language.

According to the University of Central Florida, which offers courses in Haitian Creole, this is the first language of nearly eleven (11) million people worldwide, with over three hundred thousand (300,000) people in the state of Florida speaking the language, making it the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) most spoken language in Florida.

In Dominica, Mr. Felix Henderson has been hailed as a Creole Language pioneer, for his work in promoting Creole in the broadcast media as well as in the community. In fact, at the launching of Mr. Henderson's Autobiography – Because You are With Me – on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020, one of his colleagues Mr. Leroy "Radix" Charles stated that Felix Henderson was "sent by the Father on a mission to transport Creole throughout the length and breadth of the Universe."

In Saint Lucia, the names Earl Huntley, Sam "Juk Bois" Flood, Marcellus "Man" Miller, Hilary LaForce, Primus Hutchinson, Lawrence Adonis, Charles Popo, and more recently, Andrew "Yardie" Haynes and Jahiem Etienne, have become iconic in the creole broadcast media.

In the Arts and Culture, our Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, used Creole to underpin the cultural setting of some of his poetry. In fact, Laurence A. Breiner in an article entitled: "Creole Language in the Poetry of Derek Walcott, noted that "instances of Caribbean creole in his (Walcott's) poetry are significant and more frequent than they may appear at first glance."

Monsignor Patrick Anthony, George Goddard, George “Fish” Alphonse, and others, have advanced the Creole language through their advocacy and writing. Groups like Tambou Melee, Che Campeche, Mamai Lakai, Avot Sevis, and others, have also popularised Creole through theatre and music.

However, perhaps the greatest single contribution to date, towards the elevation of Kweyol as a language in Saint Lucia, was the decision of our Head of State – Dame Pearlette Louisy - to incorporate Kweyol formally and significantly in all her throne speeches in Parliament, from her appointment in 1997 to her demitting office in 2017.

Aware of this rich history, we at the Consulate General of Saint Lucia in Canada, listened to the complaints of Saint Lucians here, who felt cheated by the observance of only Jounen Kweyol on the last Sunday of October, and who were disappointed at the disunity of hosting competing activities on the same day.

We all know that our Creole culture is built upon a foundation of cooperation and collaboration, that is why we have Koudmen and Sou-sou, not cut-throat competition and see for yourself. In our creole culture, we work together to help each other and to build our community.

It is in that spirit, that as Consul General, I sought the services and support of cultural resources in the Diaspora community, to help bring about a more open, positive, and structured approach to the celebration of our Creole heritage, culture, and language. That is where cultural activist and Calypsonian Felix “Tricky” Fontenelle came in, to advise us and help us design a programme and strategy that was inclusive and beneficial to all stakeholders. Working with Mr. Felix “Tricky” Fontenelle and our Diaspora Affairs Officer - Ms. Arletta Walcott-Peter, we were able to bring together the major stakeholders to discuss the issues and chart the way forward for 2023 and beyond.

I am pleased to report that our deliberations were for the most part, cordial, progressive, respectful, and solutions oriented.

Where there was misunderstanding, we brought clarity, where there was disagreement, we mediated and moderated, and where there was distrust, we facilitated dialogue and discourse.

The Consulate General of Saint Lucia is concerned first and foremost with representing the interests of the Government and people of Saint Lucia in Canada, and in uniting our Diaspora through collaborative national endeavours. It is through those lenses that our actions and decisions must be interpreted.

We will work with and support everyone who wishes to promote Saint Lucia and Saint Lucian culture in a genuine and transparent manner. If we insist on high standards and ask for information and documentation, it is for accountability purposes and for your own protection.

It is not because we don't like you or we don't trust you, we just want to elevate you to ensure that you succeed and that Saint Lucia shines.

I am therefore honoured to announce the programme for Creole Heritage Month, Canada 2023:

1. Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October – The Official Launch of Mwa Éwitaj Kwéyòl
2. Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October – Solo Band, Storytelling, and Creole Dish Competition
3. Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October – Domino Competition & Creole Country Dance Festival
4. Saturday October 21 – Karaoke Night (hosted by Buddy Love)
5. Sunday October 22 - Jounen Kwéyòl Kick-off (with Toxic & Jamal)
6. Saturday October 28 – Jounen Kwéyòl Ottawa (with SLOA)
7. Sunday October 29 – Jounen Kwéyòl Calgary (with SLCCA)
8. Sunday October 29 – Jounen Kwéyòl Finale (with Kisha & STCC)

We invite you to participate in and enjoy Creole Heritage Month 2023 in Canada, and we wish every one of you, blessings of peace, love, safety, and health!