

ANNUAL REPORT

2019
EDITION



OUR MISSION

Based in Little Burgundy and serving participants across Greater Montreal, DESTA empowers Black youth aged 18 to 35 to reach their educational, employability, and entrepreneurial goals through a holistic and individualized approach.

INTRODUCTION

2019 was a year of transition for DESTA. Interim Executive Director, Barkley Cineus Jr., stepped down early in the year and for the majority of the year, DESTA was run by an Interim Management Team composed of 2 staff members and 1 board member. A new Executive Director, Kassandra Kernisan, joined the team in September 2019, bringing with her a strong passion to see the Black, anglophone community in Montreal thrive along with over 15 years of corporate experience, entrepreneurial experience and community work.

2019 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

CIF PROGRAM

2019 saw the completion of employability and entrepreneurship programming launched with support from the Community Innovation Fund (CIF) in 2017. The two-year grant received by DESTA in 2017 contributed to the development of several paid job training programs, as well as a small business development bootcamp.

RECEPTIONIST INTERN PROGRAM

Over the course of 2 six-month internships, DESTA supported participants in the development of office management skills under the direction of our dedicated Office Manager, Wanda Huskinson. The participants were trained in a range of pertinent skills including: file management and storage, bookkeeping, volunteer coordination and participant reception. All participants completed the training program and found full-time employment or chose to continue their education in other areas of focus.

BUSINESS BOOT CAMP

In January 2019, DESTA ran its second two-week small business development bootcamp in collaboration with the John Molson School of Business and led by Dave McKenzie, founder and coordinator of the MBA Community Service Initiative. Over the course of two weeks, participants were guided through writing their business plan, identifying business legal structure, developing goals and action plans.

TECH BURO

The main focus of our 2019 programming was a paid Data Analyst training program called Tech Buro, made possible with support from the McConnell Foundation as well as the Community Innovation Fund. From November of 2018 through August of 2019, DESTA ran two 18-week cohorts of Tech Buro and trained a total of 12 participants. Each cohort ran for a total of 30 hours per week; 24 hours per week dedicated to technical skills development and 6 hours per week to employability skills development facilitated by our program partner CEDEC. In addition to the partnership with CEDEC, we collaborated with other private sector and community organizations to offer a range of workshops focused on financial literacy and computer programming. Our main collaborators were Lighthouse Labs, Deloitte, and Canada Learning Code. In July of 2019, the cohort was able to attend Startupfest, a Montreal-based business conference, in collaboration with e-180, another program partner, as a part of their community tech Inclusion Initiative. Over two days, the group had the opportunity to network with founders and small business owners traveling to Montreal for the Startupfest conference and attend panel discussions related to a range of topics in the entrepreneurship space.



AWARDS

JOE MELL AWARD

DESTA is proud to be the recipient of the 2019 Joe Mell Award. This award was given to DESTA by Maison Cross Roads to recognize our work in the field of social reintegration for individuals who have been in conflict with the law. Maison Cross Roads is a community-based organization that provides social reintegration services, and a partner in DESTA's re-entry program. We look forward to building and expanding our collaboration to better serve our community.



OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

MARCUS SAMUELSSON PARTNERSHIP

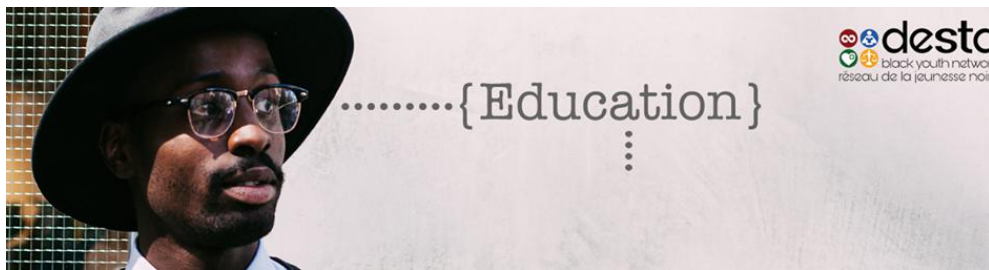
In April, DESTA launched an exciting new partnership with celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson and the Four Seasons Hotel to provide DESTA participants with the opportunity to intern in the kitchen of MARCUS, Samuelsson's new Montreal restaurant.



COWANSVILLE VISIT

In partnership with Cowansville Institution, DESTA organized a community visit to the prison in February of 2019. The visit included a series of performances and film screenings by community members. These visits are an essential part of our justice program and help create awareness amongst the inmates of DESTA's re-entry services and support programs.

OUR THREE PILLARS



Education at DESTA has largely been focused on the DEAL Program (Distance Education for all Learners), in collaboration with the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), this program allows students who have outstanding credits required for a Secondary school diploma to study courses independently and at their own pace. DESTA also facilitates pairing students with academic tutors for those who request or require additional help in their studies.



DESTA's employability program provides a number of different services based on participants' specific situation and unique needs. These services include skills training workshops, career guidance, access to job search resources, assistance with resume and cover letter writing, assistance with job applications, and referrals to staffing agencies.



DESTA's entrepreneurship program provides one-on-one business development mentorship, as well as access to business networks, accounting, legal, and marketing services. We also offer programming dedicated to developing the digital skills of entrepreneurs as it relates to the growth of their business.

RE-ENTRY & SUPPORT SERVICES

DESTA's re-entry services program supports the social reintegration efforts of individuals coming out of incarceration. These services are offered on an individualized basis, depending on the needs of the participant and include:

- Accompaniment and parole advocacy
- Legal advice
- Assistance with securing housing
- Assistance with finding employment
- Assistance with government identification cards.

DESTA works directly with Maison Cross Roads, a social reintegration services organization in providing culturally relevant support to our community.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It has been an honour and a privilege to have served as chair for part of this year, having succeeded a number of worthy predecessors. I trust that I have earned the confidence of my fellow board members and, most importantly, our dedicated staff and growing community of participants and donors. Our board has witnessed some important changes, and is, in my humble opinion, increasingly reflective of the community it serves. This year was challenging following the resignation of our Interim Executive Director early in the year which left a leadership gap at DESTA. In the last quarter of 2019, we hired a permanent replacement for the Executive Director role. The linchpin of our organization and the person who serves in equal measure the staff, the board, and the community, Kassandra Kernisan, is now poised to take the organization to another level, and we are very pleased to have her on board.

*Peter Dunn
Chairman of the Board*

Staff as at end of Dec. 2019

Kassandra Kernisan
Wanda Huskinson
Amanda Maxwell
Scott Clyde
Milo Johnson

Board of Directors as at end of Dec. 2019

Peter Dunn
James Patterson
David Simons
Dexter Peart
Barkley Cineus, Jr.
Vincent Wesley
Evan Pitchie
Mikaella Goldsmith