

TINKERERS AND CREATORS

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\$500 Winner

In Canada we have the tinkerers. Those who tear things apart, and build them back up; constantly in search of ways to change the status quo. We also have the creators, the imaginative thinkers that share their feelings, and bring people together through the beauty of their craft. Canada's diverse heritage stems from the commitment of Canadians to celebrate the work done by both of these characters. Throughout history, and continuing to the present, there are Canadian tinkerers, and creators who have fought against adversity in pursuit of their passion. It is these individuals who have helped mold Canada into the richly diverse and well-rounded nation that it is today.

Elijah McCoy was a great black Canadian tinkerer. His keen sense for innovation and his refusal to allow his potential to be capped by societal norms, lead him to revolutionary advancements in the locomotive industry. McCoy was born in Ontario in 1944 to parents who had fled from slavery through the Underground Railroad. In support of their son's interest in science and technology, McCoy's parents arranged for him to study in Scotland. Soon after, McCoy became a certified mechanical engineer and sought out work in The United States. With racial inequality still in effect in America, McCoy was forced to settle for a position much below his qualifications. Despite this, McCoy's tremendous passion for mechanics allowed him to turn his job as a machine oiler into an opportunity for ingenuity. He invented a system of lubricating the engines of locomotives, which helped improve their speed and performance. McCoy's system became so highly regarded that many engineers would not settle for anything less than "the real McCoy" when engineering their trains. Along with lubrication systems, McCoy created and patented nearly 60 products including a law sprinkler and ironing board. Elijah McCoy's inventions helped set the groundwork for what was to come in the locomotive industry, but moreover, he displayed that a tinkerer's passion for innovation can rise above any hurdle that society may throw in its way.

Landan Hussein, better known by the pseudonym Cold Speaks, is a contemporary black Canadian creator. Born in Etobicoke Ontario, Hussein has captured the ears of both Canadian and international audiences with her introspective lyrics, and soulful vocals. She takes a modern and stylized approach to traditional soul and gospel music by infusing it with the moody and atmospheric qualities of Goth rock. The elements of soul in her music are reminiscent of the style that African Americans developed in the 1950s. Soul music in America served as the glue that bonded black people together as slavery came to a close. Hussein, along with many other contemporary artists are reaching back in time to pay tribute to this distinct period in black history. Furthermore, Hussein's decision to creatively infuse other styles of music into her own is a testament to the melting pot of cultural influences that are present in modern Canadian society. The city of Toronto is praised for its cultural diversity, and is often coined as being one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world. Being a Greater Toronto Area native, Landan Hussein not only captures this diversity in her music, but also contributes to it even further. While creators such as Drake and Abel Tesfaye of the Weeknd are currently showcasing the wealth of talent present among black Canadians, Hussein is rapidly emerging as a black Canadian woman who is looking to do the same.

The contributions of black men and women, both past and present, are undeniably influential to Canadian society. Elijah McCoy and Landan Hussein are just two brushstrokes on the beautifully intricate painting of the achievements of black Canadians. Joining them is Jean Augustine, the first black Canadian woman to be part of the federal Cabinet; Donovan Bailey, former world record holder for the 100m dash and Clement Viagro, filmmaker and director of his award winning adaption of The Book of Negroes. Each of these individuals have influenced Canada's diversity by simply tapping into their passions, and being persistent in pursuing them. They are a testament to the ongoing resilience of black Canadians, but also to the support Canadian's provide in recognizing and celebrating the achievements of all members of society, whether a tinkerer, a creator or something in between, the remarkable achievements of black Canadians serve as an inspiration to the future generations of creative, innovate, and determine black youth in Canada.

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