

PLEASED TO CELEBRATE MAIRUTH SARSFIELD – FIRST BLACK WOMAN TO SIT ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CBC

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Mairuth Sarsfield was a Canadian writer, journalist, diplomat and broadcaster — who, among her many accomplishments, was the first Black woman to sit on the board of directors of the CBC.

Mairuth was born in Little Burgundy in Montréal in 1925, when the area was a predominantly Black, working-class neighbourhood. She attended McGill University prior to completing a Master's of Journalism at Columbia University in New York City. She enjoyed a decorated career as a broadcast journalist, working at TVO, CBC and CTV.

She became a diplomat and civil servant, playing an important role at Expo 67 in Montréal and again in the development of the Canadian pavilion at Expo 70 in Japan. She also represented Canada as a senior information officer with the United Nations Environment Program in Kenya.

In 1992, she produced the 'Many Rivers to Cross: The African-Canadian Experience' exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Curator Dr. Sheldon Taylor recalled Mairuth "swept (then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney) off his feet" with her attention to detail during the launch of the ground-breaking exhibit, for which she flew in flowers from Jamaica and commissioned an ice sculpture.

A novelist, her book *No Crystal Stair* was revived from relative obscurity during the CBC's Canada Reads in 2005. Set in World War II Montréal, the book ostensibly a love story set in the jazz era, but was also an unflinching depiction of the struggles and biases confronted by Black Canadians living in Little Burgundy at the time.

Her work has been credited as part of a movement to celebrate and acknowledge Black Canadian writers, history and culture that runs through contemporary fiction writers today.

Mairuth died in 2013 at the age of 83.

McMillan LLP is pleased to celebrate Mairuth Sarsfield as an Agent of Change. Her legacy of fulfilling



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journalism's highest aim — giving voice to the voiceless — and telling multicultural stories portrayed Canada as it was, not as it ought to have been.