



**For immediate release
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Celebrated author in high-tech interactive sessions with high schools

TORONTO – High school students from across Ontario and Canada will be able to meet Lawrence Hill, one of the country's most celebrated authors, in a unique, interactive, live reading from his novel, *The Book of Negroes*.

The students and their teachers are using high-capacity video links provided by Ontario's and Canada's advanced research and education networks, to connect directly with the writer and learn more about Hill's latest novel.

Hill, winner of the 2008 Commonwealth Writers' Prize, will lead two live readings and interactive sessions from Dr. John M. Denison Secondary School in Newmarket, on Thursday, October 2, 2008. The author has developed and will integrate online learning tools and resources to engage the students in an important period of Canada's history.

Students at other Ontario schools linked over Ontario's ORION network will participate in real time. These include English, history, writing and African studies classes from various Ontario schools, including Langstaff Secondary School and Newmarket High School in York Region, Korah Collegiate and Vocational School in Sault Ste. Marie, and C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute in Toronto.

A live stream, hosted by York University's Advanced Broadband Enabled Learning (ABEL) program, will also be available to other schools across Canada over the CANARIE network and over the Internet. Hill will also host a blog (<http://blogs.abel.yorku.ca/abel-interactiveauthor/>) which will continue to be available to teachers and students after the session.

Hill is participating in this session at the invitation of the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), with the support of ABEL and CANARIE, Canada's advanced network organization, to illustrate the capabilities of advanced networks and new technologies that are transforming teaching and learning.

"I love to meet students to talk about the merging of literature and history, and this is a great opportunity to make use of advanced technology to speak with and hear from many students in schools across Ontario," says Hill.

This activity is a culmination of a community effort – K-12 working with university and provincial and federal agencies – to demonstrate how advanced networks can bring knowledge communities together to create engaging learning opportunities.

"We're really pleased that the ORION and CANARIE networks enable this wonderful and innovative education experience," says ORION President and CEO, Phil Baker. "ORION is dedicated to help transform the way we research, teach and learn and this initiative illustrates what can be done to support engaging and meaningful learning experiences," he says.

"This interactive and authentic learning activity is possible because of Ontario and Canada's world class, world-connected research, education and innovation infrastructure, exemplary teachers who understand how to facilitate learning, and institutions that are willing to collaborate and extend the reach of resources beyond the walls of the classroom," says Janet Murphy, Director of the ABEL Program. "By bringing

Lawrence Hill into our classrooms and demonstrating the capacity to share his expertise as a writer and historian across the province, models for educators everywhere that the effective use of technology presents new opportunities for sharing, learning and knowledge building.”

“CANARIE is pleased to be able to provide funding through Industry Canada to enable this special event to take place,” says CANARIE President and CEO, Guy Bujold. “Educational collaborations such as this demonstrate the power of Canada's advanced networks and their ability to bring so many Canadians together to be a part of an interactive educational session such as this one.”

Lawrence Hill's latest novel, *The Book of Negroes*, became a number one national bestseller in Canada and won the overall Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. *The Book of Negroes* tells the story of an 11-year-old girl who is abducted from her village in West Africa to be a slave in North Carolina. She is able to escape to Nova Scotia after the Revolutionary War, only to still find slavery, segregation and abuse in Canada. The novel is inspired by the real Book of Negroes, an 18th-century document that recorded the names of black people who fled the United States for Nova Scotia.

For more information on Lawrence Hill and *The Book of Negroes*, visit www.lawrencehill.com.

About ORION

The Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) is Ontario's ultra high-speed research and education network which connects all of Ontario's universities, most colleges, several medical and other public research facilities and a growing number of school boards to one another and to the global grid of research and education networks. Stretching 5,800 kilometres over 21 communities throughout Ontario, ORION connects over 1.3 million Ontario researchers, scientists, students, teachers and staff to critical infrastructure for research, education and innovation. Learn more at www.orion.on.ca.

About ABEL

The award-winning Advanced Broadband Enabled Learning (ABEL) program strives to improve results through its community for sharing knowledge and collaboration, and its professional learning program. Through both public and private sector partnerships and a research-based approach, ABEL integrates new and existing information communication technologies in teaching and learning. The combination of its networks, partnerships and a focus on research results in innovative models for teaching and learning that drive institutional transformation and creates new opportunities for social innovation. Since its inception in 2002, the ABEL program has established national and international credibility as a leading authority in new modes of learning that leverage broadband networks and interactive technologies. www.abelearn.ca.

About CANARIE Inc.

CANARIE Inc., based in Ottawa, is Canada's advanced network organization. It facilitates the development and use of its network as well as the advanced products, applications and services that run on it. The CANARIE Network serves universities, colleges, schools, government labs, research institutes, hospitals and other organizations in a wide variety of fields in both the public and private sectors. By promoting and participating in strategic collaborations among key sectors, and by partnering with peer networks and organizations around the world, CANARIE Inc. stimulates and supports research, innovation and growth, bringing economic, social, and cultural benefits to Canadians. The national organization was created in 1993 by the private sector and academia under the leadership of the Government of Canada. CANARIE Inc. is supported by membership fees, with major funding of its programs and activities provided by the Government of Canada. www.canarie.ca.

- 30 -

Media Contacts:

Tamara Stoll
Communications Officer
ORION
(416) 507-9860 ext. 224
tamara.stoll@orion.on.ca

Janet Murphy
Director
ABEL Program
(416) 736-2100 ext. 20022
janetm@yorku.ca

Kim Dingwall
Manager, Communications &
Performance Measurement
CANARIE Inc.
(613) 943-5377
kim.dingwall@canarie.ca