

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

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African Heritage Month Edition

Every year, for the month of February, Canadians are invited to participate in **Black History / African Heritage** Month festivities and events that honour the legacy of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent, past and present. Canadians take this time to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of black Canadians who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada the culturally diverse, compassionate and prosperous nation it is today. During African Heritage Month (as it is called in Nova Scotia), Canadians can gain insight into the experiences of black Canadians and their vital role in the community. 2020 marks the 24th anniversary since Black History Month was first officially celebrated by the Government of Canada. The month-long celebration was formally recognized following a motion introduced in the House of Commons in December 1995 by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine. The motion was carried unanimously by the House of Commons in December 1995 and the Government of Canada officially celebrated Black History Month for the first time in 1996. In honour of this 24th anniversary, the Government of Canada is recognizing this important milestone through its events and promotional materials, including its educational poster (several are on display here at Park West). African Heritage Month will highlight key milestones and courageous accomplishments of those who helped shape Canada's history. We recognize contributions and moments from early settlement, the abolition of slavery, the Underground Railroad, icons such as Viola Desmond, and notable black Canadians in all fields (*including education, healthcare, inventions, science, academics, law and justice, civil and human rights, sports, entertainment, art, literature, politics, the military*) who have played defining roles in Canada's history. More information is available on our school website: www.pws.hrce.ca Lots has happened at our school and in our classrooms this month to honour and celebrate Canadians of African descent. Our students (in grades primary to 9) have learned so much about their contributions to the rich diversity of our province, country, and world.

- On February 20 the *Maritime Centre for African Dance* was here at PWS to help us recognise and celebrate African Heritage month through workshops (for grades P – 9). The workshop activities included African dance, African drumming, Afrobeats (a music genre which involves the combination of elements of West African musical styles such as fuji music and highlife with American funk and jazz influences, with a focus on chanted vocals, complex intersecting rhythms, and percussion.) and storytelling.
- Earlier this month students in grade P – 9 participated in African drumming workshops led by educator Ken Fells.
- In early March African-Canadian actor and playwright Leslie McCurdy will be here at PWS to present her one-person plays based on Harriet Tubman. Students in grades P-2 will see *Harriet Is My Hero*. Grades 3–9 students will see *The Spirit of Harriet Tubman*.
- Our **grade 9** teachers (math, social studies, science, and English language arts) have collaborated to create an impressive co-curricular African heritage themed project for their students. Students have formed groups to research various African countries (chosen by students based on their relationships to those countries; such as where they were born, or where they may have family ties). Each subject will be incorporating lessons and projects based on these African country groups and their research. The students will be doing research into culture, history, literature, science, math, economic and political issues, and various socio-economic issues. They will be reading, writing, analyzing, discussing, predicting, problem solving, creating graphs and pictorial depictions, etc. This is the second year our grade 9 teachers have collaborated and presented such an all-encompassing project that incorporates all four core subject areas at the grade 9 level.
- Grade 3 Thurston is reading and writing biographies about famous African Canadians and African Americans; such as Viola Desmond, Jesse Owens, Rosa Parks, Portia White and Ruby Bridges. Students will learn about the history of the Kente cloth and create their own Kente cloth art.
- Grade 8 art students (under the guidance of junior high art teacher Ms. McKnight) are creating plasticine portraits of notable and inspiring African Canadians.
- Grade 7 art students will be creating a #BlackHistoryMonth Mural. This mural will be a graffiti style word wall including names and quotations related to the celebration of Black History Month.
- Grade 9 art students are drawing portraits of notable and inspiring African Canadians.
- Grade 8 Social Studies students (with their teacher Mr. MacBurnie) created Black History Month banners highlighting inspiring African Canadians. The banners include facts, quotations, and images.
- Ms. Kostlac's grade 1 students have been learning about Viola Desmond, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., etc. They have been learning about African animals and will be doing some related art.
- Grade 8 English Language Arts students are exploring current events articles related to African Nova Scotian figures, and their successes, under the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Hickey.
- With a focus on persuasive writing, grade 4-Levine is reading and responding to books about Viola Desmond and civil rights. Meanwhile, at home, students are reading and responding to texts about Africville; culminating in a poster/ model presentation on March 5.

- Our Elementary School Choir is learning an African song of welcome and *The Dream of Martin Luther King*. They will be performing in our upcoming Winter Concerts.
- In music class grades 4 and 5 students are learning African drum ensembles, and listening to Shauntay Grant's "*The City Speaks in Drums*".
- In the library, the latest poster honouring the 24th anniversary of African Heritage Month is on display, as well as a variety of African themed books in our collection. Ms. Comeau, our librarian, has been reading aloud to elementary classes stories about African culture and books written by authors of African descent.
- Students in 4 Ross/Matheson, 4 Clements, and 4 McNally are learning about Viola Desmond and making a storyboard about her life. Students in those classes are also completing independent study projects on Africville, that will culminate in a presentation to their classmates.
- In Primary Campbell and Primary Paterson they made rain makers, using paper towel rolls, rice, and tinfoil. Rain makers are/were used in Africa as a ceremonial ritual to promote rain during drought season. During their investigations of sound, they read the book "*The City Speaks In Drums*", written by Shauntay Grant (a well-known author from North Preston). They also read a book about Nelson Mandela, and had a discussion about his importance in South African history
- The grades 5, 6 and junior high strings students have been working on the *Seaview African United Baptist Church Gospel Medley*. Their teacher, Mr. Joyce, recently visited the Africville Museum to do some research, and created a musical arrangement for his strings students featuring several tunes what would have been sung at Africville's church throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The arrangement includes *This Little Light of Mine, Go Tell It on the Mountain, Were You There?, Amazing Grace* and *Amen*.
- *More will be included in the next issue of PWS Update.*

There's Music in the Air: Winter Concerts for Grades P-3 will be held on **Tuesday, February 25**, and **Wednesday, February 26th**, beginning at **1:15 PM** each day in our gym. The concerts will feature the themes of winter, snow and peace, as well as recognizing African Heritage month and the Chinese/Lunar New Year in song. All students in these grades will be involved, showcasing songs learned in music class. Everyone (family and friends) is invited to attend. Tickets are not required. The following classes will be presenting on these days: **February 25** > Grades 2 Webber, 2 Lohnes / All grade 1 classes / All grade 3 classes. **February 26** > Grades 2 English, 2 Ssebazza / All primary classes / School Choir (Grades 4-6)

Pre-Primary and Primary Registration for 2020-2021 School Year: We're getting ready to prepare for the next school year already! Registration for students entering **pre-primary and grade primary** in September 2020 is being held during the month of **February**. Beginning in September the pre-primary program will be available to Park West parents and age-appropriate children. This program will not be located at our school, but at an alternate site within our community (to be announced in the spring). New primary students must be five years old on or before December 31, 2020, and live within our school boundaries. Pre-primary students must be four years old on or before December 31, 2020. Participation in the pre-primary program is optional. Parents must provide a birth certificate, N.S. health card number, and proof of residence documentation when registering. Acceptable documents for proof of residence include: **1.** ONE document from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), such as Notice of Assessment, Receipt of Child Tax Benefit, or Social Assistance. Documents submitted to CRA will not be accepted, as such documents are not confirmed by the CRA. **OR... 2.** TWO of the following documents: residential insurance policy (home owner or tenant), water bill, power bill, and property tax assessment. The names and addresses on both documents submitted must be identical.

Registration can be done at the school office during the month of February on Monday to Friday, 9:00 – 11:00 AM and 1:00 – 3:30 pm. Contact Ms. Johnston or Ms. Landers (our admin assistants in the school office) at 457-7800 for more information or to make an appointment. Please pass the word around the community so everyone gets registered on time. Our staffing allotment for next year depends on the number of students registered. **PLEASE NOTE:** *only students who live within the Park West School boundaries are eligible to attend this school. As our school and class sizes continue to grow we will be monitoring this situation VERY carefully. If any of our students are found to be living outside our boundaries it will be necessary for them to leave Park West and register at the school serving the neighbourhood in which they live.*

Congratulations on Your Retirement: A new journey has begun for **Mr. Leo Lee** (our head caretaker), as his 20 years at Park West has come to a close with his retirement. He has been improving the school from 2000 to 2020 for students, staff, and visitors. For all these years, he has made the school a more positive and welcoming environment. He has special bonds with many different students, and has seen nine generations of students grow up at Park West. We were given an amazing gift when the Park West family was joined by Mr. Leo, and his stories will always resonate with us. Everyone will agree that he is nothing less than amazing. One of many anecdotes Mr. Leo has shared is his time with a particular student. This student had difficulties with finding their true purpose at Park West. It was Mr. Leo's guidance and caring personality which allowed the student to thrive and feel accepted. He is the epitome of an individual who embraces various identities and backgrounds. Mr. Leo's contributions in bridging all Park West members is a quality that is immeasurable. While gratitude is something one can never get enough of, Park West members offer an infinite amount of appreciation to Mr. Leo for shaping the lives of so many.

Congratulations on your well-earned retirement. PWS is going to miss you. *(written by grade 9 ELA students)*