

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

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The month of February was *African Heritage Month* in Nova Scotia. This year's theme was *Black History Matters: Listen...Learn...Share...Act*. Our students, at all grade levels, were engaged in listening, learning, sharing, and acting, under the guidance of their teachers. We didn't simply celebrate African Heritage. We dug deeper, and immersed our students in meaningful learning to increase knowledge, understanding, empathy, and acceptance. Many students accomplished this through research of many kinds. Our hope is that we made a significant and positive impact on our students and our school community. Here are some highlights of what occurred here at Park West School during the last month...

- Grade 2-Ssebazza read about and discussed the lives and contributions of Ruby Bridges and Viola Desmond.
- Our grade 9 teachers have collaborated to create an impressive co-curricular African heritage themed project for their students (in math, social studies, science, and English language arts). They used the *Delmore Buddy Daye Institute's* project ideas. Each subject incorporated lessons and projects focused on local black Nova Scotia history. For instance, Social Studies and math students examined individual black Nova Scotian communities. In math class students participated in daily discussions about black history, with a local Nova Scotia focus. As they completed their research, students did reading, writing, analyzing, discussing, predicting, problem-solving, creating graphs and pictorial depictions, etc. This is the third 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.
- Class 4/5 Kelly: Grade 5 students in this class researched an influential African Canadian and presented their findings as a poster, slideshow or video (their choice). Grade 4's researched Africville and presented in a similar way. They also engaged in a "Hero" presentation, offered by the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, listening to a virtual presentation by Mark Smith.
- Ms. Therault (grade 8 and 9 social studies/citizenship education) had her students doing research on a variety of aspects of the African Nova Scotia History Challenge. In Citizenship Education, students were asked to participate in Challenge #2 of the African Nova Scotia History Challenge - Choose one out of 52 African Nova Scotian Settlements in Nova Scotia. They were permitted to choose the settlement of their choice and they were also allowed to choose between an essay or a visual display. Students were encouraged to submit their assignment to the challenge at the *Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute*. In addition, students in grade nine were introduced to the importance of justice / injustice and power, and the connection to the BLM Movement.
- Ms. Thurston's grade 3 class listened to read alouds, watched videos, did some reading, and wrote biographies about notable African Canadians, and African Americans, such as Viola Desmond, Portia White, Jesse Owens, Ruby Bridges and Martin Luther King Jr.
- Grade 8 social studies (under the direction of their teachers, Ms. Therault and Ms. Tasker) participated in the African Nova Scotia History Challenge. They were permitted to choose from any of the six challenges to do for a research assignment. Students were encouraged to submit their assignments to the Challenge.
- Some students in grade 8 compiled African Nova Scotia History questions to present to the entire school during the morning announcements.
- In junior high visual art classes (with Ms. Tasker) students were introduced to a few black Canadian artists in each class. Grade 7 art classes completed African Canadian Portrait projects. Students researched people of African NS Heritage; with the goal of discovering five interesting facts about the person they had chosen. They then created their portraits using cardboard and plasticine. Grade 8 and 9 students began the Pandemic Embroidery project, in which many focused on Black Lives Matter and Indigenous social justice issues.
- Grade 5 students (in Ms. MacDonald/Ms. Graham, Ms. Greenwood, and Mr. Shupe's classes) learned about, remembered, and honoured the achievements of African Canadians, by creating a poster, slide show or video highlighting important information.
- Students in Primary-Campbell and Primary-Cavanaugh listened to read-alouds by African Nova Scotian authors, and created their own clay piece with our school art specialist.

- Ms. Kostlac's primary/one students learned about famous African Canadians and African Americans; such as Viola Desmond, Portia White, Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.. They also learned about Kente cloth, African animals, read African tales, and read books by Shauntay Grant (a well-known local author from North Preston).
- Ms. Martin's grade 9 ELA (English Language Arts) classes researched some of the notable African Nova Scotians whose photos we have all seen on the posters around the school. Students wrote biographies celebrating the lives and achievements of these notable Nova Scotians.
- In 1-Griswold students read lots of stories and learned about significant people of African descent, such as Viola Desmond, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks. Students learned they were simply regular people that were brave enough to stand up for what they believed in to make the world a more fair place to live. They were inspired by these courageous individuals. They discussed and wrote about ways they can help make the world a better place too.
- Ms. MacBurnie's grade 7 ELA students read and researched people of African descent in science and technology, the business world, artists, and those who have influenced significant changes for African Canadians.
- Ms. Cusack (one of our school counsellors serving students in grades primary to four) read the book All Are Welcome to some classes. The book follows a group of children through a day at their school, where everyone is welcome with open arms. At this diverse and welcoming school students from all backgrounds learn from each other, and celebrate each other's traditions (just like here at PWS).
- In music class (with Ms. Kerr) students in grades primary to three took turns playing rhythms on the Djembe (an African drum). Grade 4 students sang "The Dream of Martin Luther King", and played the Djembe. The grade 5's learned about the origins and characteristics of ragtime and jazz music, and played in a percussion ensemble.
- Ms. Collins' grade 6 students educated each other about African Nova Scotians through Powerpoint presentations.
- Pre-Primary classes at PWS: While pre-primary is primarily play based, our pre-primary educators have included black history month into her classroom and intentional teaching. They've been reading aloud some books on different races. They engaged their students in an activity where the children were able to pick from a box of markers based on their skin colour. They were also able to choose their hair colour from a variety of colours of yarn.
- In grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) Mr. Hickey had his students explore a short story by Langston Hughes, and hosted a local spoken word poet and author, Andre Fenton, via Zoom. They are currently exploring poetry by Maxine Tynes titled "I'm a Kid of the World." In addition: in Health classes grade 8 students discussed the negative impacts of the Africville relocation, and how it relates to the different aspects of Social Determinants of Health.
- Grade 3 Bennett learned about Ruby Bridges and talked about how segregation has changed in schools. They agreed how lucky they are to be at PWS...a school that accepts the diversity of everyone.
- In Technical Education (grades 7-9) students have had the opportunity to learn about Garret Morgan. He was an African-American inventor, businessman and community leader. Born to parents who were slaves, and with only a grade 6 education, he opened and ran his own clothing factory, and was one of the first Americans in Cleveland to purchase an automobile. He is known for inventing the safety (smoke) hood which was used (by himself) in his home town of Cleveland to save several people in a mining disaster/fire. He also invented the modern 3-way traffic light. The grade 9's completed a research project on inventors and innovations.
- Ms. Morris (an HRCE fine arts - drama/dance/movement specialist - based here at PWS) did some outstanding work with Ms. Bennett's grade 3 class. They participated in three virtual sessions of African drumming and dance. Mohamed and Marielle Duranteau joined the class via Google Meet and the eager students learned two dances; the Kassa (a harvest celebration) and the Yankadi (a dance style for youth). They also built and played handmade instruments and drums. The students asked lots of thoughtful questions and learned lots about West Africa.
- Grade 4 students completed Africville projects. They also learned about Viola Desmond, and used BookCreator to create books about her life. They read and discussed excerpts from the book Amazing Black Atlantic Canadians.
- Ms. Comeau (our school librarian) purchased more books for our library collection, featuring famous African Canadians. She visited many classes to read aloud books that featured people of African descent and African related storylines (i.e. cultures, countries, etc.). A number of African themed books are on display in the library.

