

ABC focuses on allyship as Black History Month events near



Black History Month is little over two weeks away, and members of the Aurora Black Community Celebration are putting the finishing touches on a flag-raising ceremony that will kick off a series of programs – not just for the month of February, but throughout 2025.

On Tuesday, January 31, from 6 – 8 p.m., the Aurora Black Community Association and the Town of Aurora invite you to attend a special Flag Raising Ceremony and Reception at Town Hall that will feature, in addition to the flag-raising itself, poignant speeches by leaders and community members, as well as a Jamaican-inspired meal to enjoy on site or at home afterward.

The theme for the Black History Month events organized or sponsored by the Aurora Black Community Association is “One Heart, One Love,” an overarching theme which will also touch upon the themes of, “Recognizing our Worth?”, “Rising Together?”, “Amplifying Voices and Creating Equity?”, and “Bridging Gaps and Inspiring Change.”

“I find the way we really have to be intentional is to know Black History is relevant 365,” says ABC Founder Phiona Durrant. “In that month, there are so many amazing programs that we can do or need to do, but it also gives us the opportunity to enjoy others’ events. We’re partnering with NACCA (Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association) to be a part of that and it allows us to really spread the celebration throughout the year.”

As such, to support NACCA's programming, the ABC has opted to shift their annual Black History Month Gala to the tentative date of April 11 to maximize their outreach.

In addition to the Gala, the ABC is also engaging the community throughout this time with a window-decorating contest for windows – homes and businesses alike – in Aurora, Richmond Hill, and Newmarket, and creating resources for non-Black teachers to educate their students on Black History and allies who contributed to emancipation and freedom.

“We thought the contest was an interactive way for the community to display what Black History is to them,” Durrant explains. “Maybe it is a restaurant that is looking for culturally-ethical food that they love or cook differently and they want to share the story of this culturally-appropriate dish or item. It just gives exposure to businesses because communities can go around, take a picture, share what they learned.”

Participants will be eligible for a number of prizes, including a grand prize of an Air Canada Gift Card.

The educational resources in question are being prepared for all teachers, but have been inspired by those who have reached out to the ABC for tips on how to teach Black History in classrooms if they do not have the lived experience, including highlighting White

individuals in history, such as early abolitionists, who stepped up to support the Black community when others were reluctant to do so.

“We want to make sure we have an eclectic view on the different steps and the different people who make the change, the freedom that we're enjoying today,” says Durrant. “We just want to encourage people to not limit themselves and just participate ? be comfortable with asking questions and let's grow together.”

Rounding out programming for the winter and spring include two film screenings hosted by the ABC in partnership with the Aurora Film Circuit in March, and a partnership between the ABC, the York Region Food Network, and the Aurora Public Library on the foods that connect us all.

For more on the ABC and their upcoming programs, visit aurorablackcommunity.com. Additional information on NACCA's Black History Month initiatives, visit www.naccacommunity.ca/black-history-month-2025.html.

“Throughout Black History Month 2025, we will honour those who have charted their own paths?those who, in the face of immense challenges, chose to rule their destinies,” says NACCA Chair Jerisha Grant-Hall. “We will lift up the stories of pioneers in politics, science, the arts and education who broke barriers and made their mark on history. We will celebrate those who refused to be defined by the limitations of their time, choosing instead to write their own stories and, in doing so, inspire generations to come.”

By Brock Weir