

ABC, NACCA to join forces for Newmarket-Aurora Black History gala

The Aurora Black Community Association and Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association are joining forces to make Black History Month 2026 extra impactful in the Newmarket-Aurora community.

The two organizations, which have become prominent changemakers in each of the municipalities they serve, are set to formally come together for the first time for a Black History Month Commemoration, which they describe as a 'new intermunicipal collaboration,' which also includes the Towns.

'This will bridge communities, amplify Black voices and celebrate the collective achievements of our people across both municipalities,' said Jerisha Grant Hall, Executive Director of NACCA, and Phiona Durrant, President & Founder of the ABC, in a joint statement. 'Although NACCA and ABC operate independently, our shared vision brings us together to celebrate our shared legacy.'

'As we begin this collaborative journey of hosting Black History Month, we recognize that each year will bring new opportunities for reflection and growth. We remain committed to uplifting the voices and spirit of the African Canadian community.'

'At the heart of this collaboration is the Black History Month Gala, a ticketed event taking place on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at the Royal Venetian Mansion in Aurora. This formal evening will offer reflection and recognition through live performances, distinguished speakers, and moments of honouring the achievements and contributions of African Canadians. While the format has evolved from past community celebrations, our commitment to accessibility remains central.'

'The Newmarket-Aurora Black History Month commemoration reflects the essence of Umoja (unity) and Ujima (collective work and responsibility). It stands as a testament to what we can achieve together, honouring our shared history, celebrating our collective strength, and carrying forward the promise of a future built on connection and Pan-African pride. We extend a heartfelt thanks to our funders, sponsors, and community members for your continued support and partnership.'

Speaking to *The Auroran* this week, Durrant said this collaboration achieves part of her initial personal vision when she founded the ABC of seeing greater collaboration of Black leaders within and beyond Aurora, supporting each other's events in the process.

Coming together for an event such as this, she says, gives supporters a central focus in commemorating Black History rather than having to choose supporting one over the other.

'It brings us together because this is a shared legacy,' she says. 'This has great impact for unity and togetherness. We know that in our respective municipalities we have our own respective needs. Newmarket might not have the same needs as Aurora and vice-versa, but this is about unity for me and that's an impact, that's a legacy. This collaboration is a legacy that we want. I want to see us help to expand because we're stronger together, our resources are better used, our skillsets are put to a better use.'

'You're also monitoring burnout? sometimes these things can cause burnout, not because it's a burden, but because you're doing this with all your joy and all your passion, but you also want excellence. Somebody from one of the municipalities said to me, 'Sometimes municipalities don't work well together and this will really not only show unified support and oneness with you and NACCA, but also for Newmarket and Aurora.' That puts us in a position to be better in leadership, as a municipality, working together, collaborating. I just feel that I can't see any negative? I can't personally see any negative impact other than growth on this. I just see everything that's moving forward, growth, togetherness, legacy building.'

Asked whether this united forward momentum could lead to the organizations eventually merging, Durrant says there is a need for independent municipalities to have independent voices when it comes to advocacy. She doesn't, however, close the door to the possibility down the road, but stresses that while ABC and NACCA have similar overall visions, their approaches and experiences might be different.

?I don't write off anything ? I see an opportunity of coming in as one, but it takes growth, and it takes us also, as the individual leaders, to build that cohesion and relationship with ourselves and that takes time,? she says. ?It takes time to build because independent leaders are different. They build from their own values, their own pain, their own hurt, and from the place of healing.

?[This is a matter of] let's be an example to other organizations to say, ?We can do this, and we're still separated, we're still individually-operated organizations, but we share this big vision of Black history, which is our Canadian legacy and history.'?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter