

Aurora Black Community Association rolls out full programming for Black History Month

This February, you are invited to celebrate with us, another empowering Black History Month (BHM) program happening virtually.

This is not a Black people event, Black History Month events are for all. We all need to become aware of the history and its importance. Once we understand that it's everyone's responsibility, we can all take initiatives, take actions, and do the work!

The first time many Canadians learn about Black people is through the oppressive lens of slavery. Oppression has influenced Black histories, but it does define Black history.

This year, we will be highlighting Black Excellence, achievements, and courage that resonates with the Black community. These include Black arts appreciation and entertainment, historical engagement with inspiring speakers, Black history educational presentations, grants and awards for Black and other marginalized communities, and so much more.

The Hon. Jean Augustine, the first Black Canadian woman to serve as a Federal Minister for the Crown, has agreed to be a part of this celebration. We all know how this exemplary Member of Parliament has championed legislation to recognize February as Black History Month in Canada. We are truly humbled.

On February 1, 2022, the Town of Aurora will hold a Flag Raising Ceremony in partnership with the Aurora Black Community Association to commemorate Black History Month.

This, in itself, is historical as a flag has never been raised in Aurora in honour of Black History Month by centering the initiative of community organizations like ours. This partnership is also in line with how other exemplary towns and provincial leaders are centering Black History Month celebrations by empowering community organizations across Ontario and stand against all form of performative action.

We are committing in ensuring that our Town's intent mirrors its commitment to center community in action because Black communities are working towards partnerships that do not take away ownership and labour from the community and we are grateful that the leaders of our Town are in agreement with us.

For us, to see the change that's needed for diversity it takes more than just talking about it in February. It has to be a year-round commitment and ACTION. We have the following programs planned for the community to build awareness and cohesiveness:

- COMMUNITY AWARENESS BHM LAWN-SIGN INITIATIVE: An on-going initiative where individuals, families, businesses, and leaders in Aurora can either sponsor a lawn sign or get one free. It's a reminder that, as Canadians, we are committed to understand and learn about Black History. Black History is not just for Black people, it's Canadian history that needs to be understood by all. We hope all communities will commit to respecting resilience and leadership of Black Canadians.
- BLACK HISTORY OPENING CELEBRATION: February 5, 6 ? 7.30 p.m. ? This virtual celebration will focus on Black leadership and excellence and their contributions to what Canada is today. We trace stories of struggles, accomplishment and aspirations for the future
- PAINT & WRITE NIGHT: February 20, 7 p.m. ? We will work with Shelley Ware of the Town of Aurora & Nelia Pacheco from the Aurora Film Circuit. We plan to select a movie or documentary for participants to watch. Followed by creative expressions through written poems, songs, letters or a painting to demonstrate personal interpretations of the movie as it relates Black History.
- CALL-OUT FOR RECIPES: This is an ongoing initiative where we aim to blend culinary traditions. We aim to collate more than 75 ethnic dishes and embrace foods of many nations: our very own food revolution that breaks the barriers of race. Whether you cook seasonally, are on a budget, or a vegetarian, there's something here to inspire everyone. For example, there is Jamaican cuisine with its rich culinary influences from various cultures, including Africa, Asia, and Europe. As a Jamaican, I call this to break bread with someone. This is referring to the way that food brings people together and is important in our relationships. Food provides an important link to

our cultural heritage- ON THE ICE: An ongoing initiative in partnership with Sport Aurora. We want to encourage individuals and families of colour, new immigrants and new residents of Aurora to enjoy winter sports like ice skating- GRANT AWARD & CLOSING CELEBRATION: February 26 ? Two persons will be awarded through our I Believe grant, the Aurora Black Community Association's flagship grant to encourage new initiatives and self-development activities of community members

This February, we will also launch our new I CAN SWIM program. In Canada, immigrants are less likely to learn to swim or to participate recreationally. Most Canadian newcomers come from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. With the stereotype that make most assume that coming from the Caribbean surrounded by water, we must all be fish, or expert swimmers. That is not the reality. With your support we aim to fund swimming lessons for ten families, adults and children, who want to learn swimming, life skill that all should have.

For more information on each of the events or if you wish to donate and sponsor any of our events, please visit us at www.aurorablackcommunity.com.

By Aurora Black Community Association