

SIR ROBERT BORDEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents/Guardians;

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Last year our school used a team approach whereby cross-curricular academic lessons were created to promote and engage students in genuine learning about the Holocaust. The entire school undertook a variety of activities that were designed not only to teach students about the Holocaust, but also provide a deeper level of understanding of how a major period in history could be used to develop empathy, compassion, and engagement in students. All teachers in grades 7, 8, and 9, across all subject areas, developed lesson plans that focused on a Holocaust theme. This was the first time many teachers undertook an interdisciplinary approach to teaching in order to promote engagement in student learning. At the end of the week, Mr. Philip Riteman, a Holocaust survivor, addressed the entire student body. Mr. Riteman spoke to the entire student body about the atrocities he witnessed and endured during the Holocaust.

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students about their experience with the Holocaust project. Our students also requested that we use the same approach using the theme of African Culture. We at Sir Robert Borden Junior High are thrilled to announce our upcoming, cross curricular project on African Culture. **From** February 8 – 12, students and staff will be taking part in a comprehensive exploration of the rich culture and contributions of the African peoples, specifically highlighting achievements of our own African Nova Scotian communities. The month of February is designated African Heritage Month and while we recognize the struggles of peoples of African descent across North America we will focus more on the resilience and achievements of the local communities and the people who comprise them. An exciting theme has been chosen for the week: Harambee: meaning... “All Pull Together”.

In keeping with our continuous effort to engage students in their learning and give students a voice in what is relevant and interesting to them, we have used a team approach to planning and organizing this week of celebration and study. A core team of staff members has worked closely, first with a group of approximately 30 students who helped brainstorm the activities they would like to have during the week, and more recently with a focus group of students who read 2 books (Last Days in Africville, by Dorothy Perkins and Underground to Canada by Barbara Smucker) and chose one that the student body will examine together the week prior to our focus activities.

The school wide reading of the book chosen by students will give students common knowledge and opportunity to participate in discussions. We have booked a variety of guest speakers, arranged workshops and will showcase student work from all grade levels.

Under the leadership of our art teacher, Mrs. Donahue, students have also begun to create artwork to display throughout the school. With students and staff working together, we believe this experience will bring to life exciting opportunities for learning about black culture that students and staff would never get from a text book.

During this week, students will be presented with material addressing this theme in all of their subject areas. As mentioned, the entire student body will be reading, or have read to them the book Underground to Canada. This will be presented by teachers who will also provide contextual meaning behind the use of the 'N' word as a common word during the time of slavery that was used to dehumanize Black people. In an introduction to the book Lawrence Hall states, about the use of this word;

“...writers, teachers and parents do no one a favour by pretending that such things didn't exist. Much better to acknowledge them, to understand them, and to ensure that our children and grandchildren are even better equipped than we are to learn from the monstrous mistakes in our past.”

Students will be responding to this book through their own written reflections, poetry and other forms of representation. Those who wish may share their work with the school during the closing ceremonies on Friday, February 12th.

In addition to class work, students will be engaging in workshops where they can learn from local experts about Africville, The Prestons, walking sticks, dance, spoken word poetry and African drumming (see the attached schedule of events for more information). They will all hear The Honourable Mayann E. Francis, ONS, DHumL Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia speak at our opening ceremonies as well as Wayne Hamilton, Dr. Henry Bishop and Pastor Wallace Smith. It should be noted that Pastor Smith will be leading the school in a prayer. Our closing ceremonies will feature speaker Mr. Robert Upshaw, speaking on The History of Blacks in Nova Scotia, alone with our student drummers and a student produced video unveiling

At this time we are also pleased to let you know that Mr. Russell Wyse, professional film maker, will be spending 5 days (January 28, 29, February 3, 4 and 5) working with 10 of our African Nova Scotian Students to create a short (10 minute) film relating to African History. Students will learn about

everything from story development to editing. It will be up to the participants to come up with the story idea. The end product will be 100% student driven and created, while Mr. Wyse guides them the process.

We gladly welcome parents and guardians to join us for the opening and closing ceremonies of Harambee. The opening ceremonies will be from 10:10 – 12:10 on Monday, February 8 and the closing ceremonies from 10:30 – 12:10 on Friday, February 12. If you plan on attending, please contact Ms. Julie Wilson in the main office so that we can ensure seats are available.

We would like to thank you in advance for your support during this very important part of our school year. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Mr. Smith.

Lastly, please take a few moments during *Harambee: “All Pull Together”* to ask your child about their day and their perspective of what they are learning.

Sir Robert Borden: Cross Curricular Project on African Culture

Date	Time	Presenter	Event / Workshop
Master of Ceremonies Students		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Kirsten Hall ❖ Isaiah Simmonds 	
Monday, February 8 th	10:30 – 12:10 <i>Student Assembly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Honourable Mayann E. Francis, ONS, DHumL Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia School Band – Lead by Mr. D. Campbell ❖ Wayne Hamilton ❖ Dr. Henry Bishop ❖ Pastor Wallace Smith 	OPENING CEREMONIES
Tuesday, February 9 th	9:00 – 12:10	❖ Irvine Carvery, HRSB Board Chair , African Nova Scotian representative: <i>Student Talk</i>	Africville
	8:00 – 2:05	❖ Allister Johnson, Community Member <i>Student Talk</i>	“The Prestons”
Wednesday, February 10 th	8:00 – 2:05	❖ Wendie Poitras - Student Workshop	African Art
	8:00 – 2:05	❖ Avery Crawley - Student Workshop	African Walking Sticks
Thursday, February 11 th	9:00 – 10:10	❖ Marvin Trimm - Student Assembly	Spoken Word Poetry
	10:10 – 12:10	❖ Dr. Henry Bishop - Student Workshop	African Drumming
	1:00 – 2:05	❖ MUFARO - Student Assembly	African Dance
Friday, February 12 th	10:30 – 12:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Robert Upshaw - Student Assembly ❖ Student Drumming – lead by Mr. Rice & Mr. Campbell ❖ Student work ❖ Student produced video Unveiling 	History of Blacks in Nova Scotia

