

RCH NEWSLETTER



The History of Black History Month

I have enjoyed the first half of this school year as RCH Coordinator. I see some great things going on in schools and both students and staff focusing on what we say, how we say it, and being inclusive of diversity. It is a long process. Do we still have issues in the South Shore? Yes. Do we still have to look at our schools to make them more culturally inclusive? Yes. Is diversity embedded in all that we do? No. Are we getting there and moving forward? YES! I am very happy with this edition and the support documents that I am sending out. I have included: some posters around transgender awareness, an career opportunity for Aboriginal students, info on Viola Desmond Day, a story about quilts and a document about the shapes of quilts in African culture, and finally a couple of lessons that

stem from the *Book of Negroes*. Please take a moment and read through this edition. I hope you enjoy it.

THE HISTORY OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH:

The story of [Black History](#) Month begins in 1915, half a century after the [Thirteenth Amendment](#) abolished slavery in the United States. That September, historian Carter G. Woodson and minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting the achievements of people with African descent. The group

sponsored Negro History week the second week of February in 1926 to coincide with the birthdays of [Abraham Lincoln](#) and [Frederick Douglass](#). The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize local celebrations, establish history clubs and host performances and lectures. By the late 1960s, thanks in part to the [Civil Rights Movement](#) and a growing awareness of black identity, Negro History Week had evolved into Black History Month on many college campuses. President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to “seize the opportunity to honour the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavour throughout our history.”

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE AND FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS OF MINORITY LEARNERS

STRATEGIES

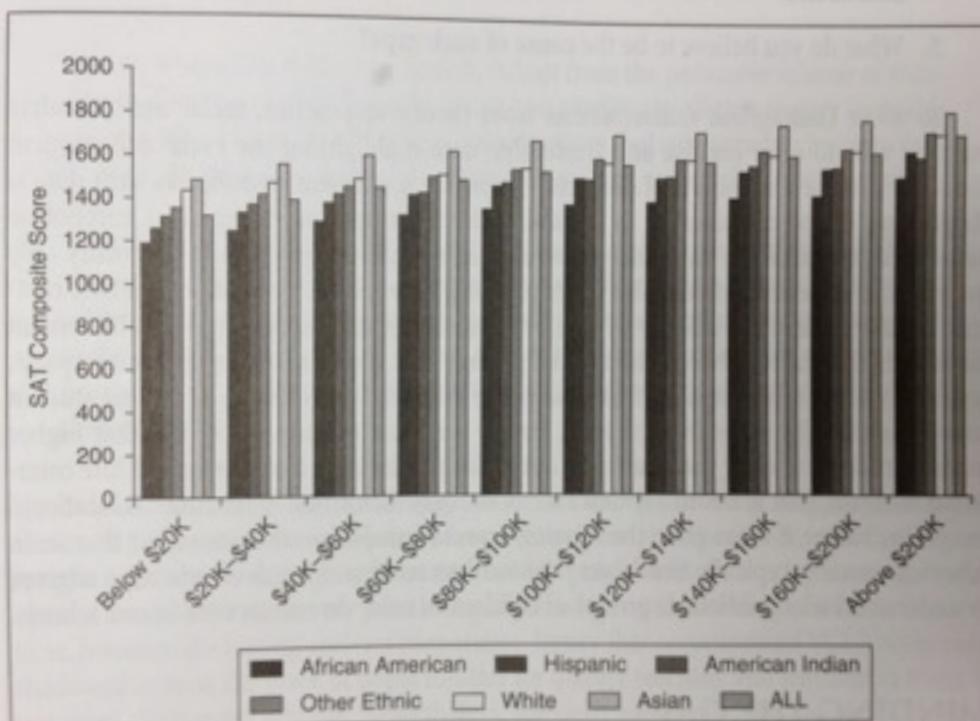
1. CONNECT TO STUDENTS
2. PROVIDE RELEVANT CURRICULAR CONTENT
3. PROVIDE EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES THAT APPEAL TO DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS
4. PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT FREE OF STEREOTYPES, HARASSMENT AND RACIAL/SEXIST SLURS
5. CELEBRATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM VARIOUS CULTURES
6. ENSURE SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LIBRARIES/RESOURCES REFLECT DIVERSITY

I have been to schools in which I get the question asked of me, "How do you teach black and aboriginal students differently than white students?" I think that before we answer that, we should ask ourselves, "Why have our aboriginal and black students traditionally had lower achievement levels than our white students?" If you question the validity of that question, look at the graph below and ask yourself, why is it that, no matter the income level, blacks and aboriginals are always at the bottom of the achievement level. I do not believe that this is always intentional. I do believe that it is a systemic issue that we have to be aware of and intentional in addressing. Below I have included two sites that address issues within our local and global community that we often overlook or dismiss. It is easy to push these topics to the side. I encourage conversation with fellow educators, students, parents and community around race and its impact. Since the premiere of *The Book of Negroes* on CBC, I have had fantastic conversations with staff here at the board and in schools. One comment that has been said to me multiple times is that we often forget our role in the whole slavery movement in Nova Scotia. We want to think that things were better than they were. We have to be honest with ourselves and have open eyes without bias. Take a moment to read the links below. On the side are 6 things you can do as an educator to help create a positive learning environment. Incorporate them. Don't be afraid to ask the hard question when lesson planning, "Is my lesson inclusive to all students?"

<http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/out-of-sight-out-of-mind-2/>

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/rewind/afrierville-a-community-destroyed-1.2919404>

Figure 4.2 2011 Average SAT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity



CALENDAR FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY:

BLACK HISTORY MONTH- Black History Month, and more importantly, the study of black history is greatly owed to Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Woodson chose February because it marks the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The purpose of this month is to recognize the contributions of Black Americans and develop a better understanding of the Black experience.

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FEBRUARY 9:

INTERNATIONAL KINDNESS AWARENESS WEEK-

Established in 1995, the movement inspires people to share kindness with one another as they discover for themselves what power it has to effect positive change

FEBRUARY 17:

NATIONAL HERITAGE DAY- The national flag of Canada was inaugurated on February 15, 1965. The anniversary of this date is officially called the "National Flag of Canada Day", which is often shortened to "Flag Day".

FEBRUARY 16:

VIOLA DESMOND DAY- was a Black Nova Scotian business woman who challenged racial segregation at a film theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia in 1946. She refused to leave a whites-only area

LOUIS REIL DAY- He was the famous Metis leader who in 1885 led a rebellion and lost against the Canadian authorities because he feared more Metis land would be taken away by the settlers. Today his name is a symbol for Native independence.

RCH JANUARY PHOTOS



STUDENT SUPPORT
WORKER CORBIN HART
WORKING WITH
STUDENTS



STUDENTS AT PENTZ
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LEARNING ABOUT THE
MI'KMAQ CULTURE



STUDENTS AT GREENFIELD
ELEMENTARY LEARNED
ABOUT THE KENTE CLOTH
AND THE TRADITIONAL
AFRICAN COLORS WITH
STUDENT SUPPORT
WORKER SHELLY WHYNOT



*If you want to go quickly,
go alone.*

*If you want to go far,
go together.*

AFRICAN PROVERB

Grant of Free Pardon VIOLA IRENE DAVIS DESMOND



Viola Irene Davis Desmond

Mrs. Viola Irene Davis Desmond was born on July 6, 1914 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to James and Gwendolyn Davis. Mrs. Desmond was one of 15 siblings who went on to be a successful entrepreneur. She operated her own beauty parlour and beauty college in Halifax.

On Nov. 8, 1946, Viola Desmond became a victim of racism. While travelling to Sydney as part of a business trip, Viola stopped in New Glasgow at a local repair shop due to car troubles. While waiting for her car to be repaired, Mrs. Desmond decided to watch a movie at the Roseland Theatre.

At that time, the theatre had a policy that prohibited people of African ancestry from sitting on the main level of the theatre. African Nova Scotians were required to sit in the balcony where seating cost one cent less than the main level. Mrs. Desmond attempted to buy the more expensive main level ticket but was refused because she was African Nova Scotian.

Mrs. Desmond purchased a ticket which she thought was for the main level and proceeded to sit there. Her ticket was actually for the balcony. Mrs. Desmond was then removed from the theatre by the manager and police. After spending a night in jail, Mrs. Desmond was tried and convicted for an offence under the Theatres, Cinematographs and Amusements Act for failing to pay an extra cent in tax to the Province. She was given the option to pay a fine of \$20 plus costs associated with the trial, or to go to jail for 30 days. Due to her business commitments, Mrs. Desmond chose to pay the fine.

In the early 1950s, Mrs. Desmond closed her business and moved to Montreal, Quebec, where she enrolled in business college. She eventually settled in New York where she passed away at the age of 50.

Granting of Official Apology and Free Pardon

On April 15, 2010, the province of Nova Scotia granted an official apology and free pardon to the late Mrs. Viola Desmond who was wrongfully fined and jailed for sitting in the white peoples' section of a New Glasgow movie theatre in 1946.

On the advice of the Executive Council, the lieutenant governor exercised the Royal Prerogative of Mercy to grant a free pardon. A free pardon is based on innocence and recognizes that a conviction was in error. A free pardon is an extraordinary remedy and is considered only in the rarest of circumstances.

A Royal Prerogative of Mercy Free Pardon is meant to right a wrong. In this case, the free pardon is meant to right the wrong done to Mrs. Desmond.





Quilts : the Thread that Connects the Past with the Present

Quilts are an integral part of African Nova Scotian history. Some quilts directed slaves fleeing to Canada via the Underground Railroad using symbols. Others act as personal memoirs of those who have passed, incorporating scraps of their old clothing. Skills are passed down through families and friends, like the quilts themselves. These pieces of cloth and thread are a tactile and visual reminder of our history, rather than just words in a book easily forgotten.

In the town of Monastery, a group of women gathered over 12 months at a community centre to create their own version of an Underground Railroad quilt. With the guidance of a member of the Quilter's Guild, Mary Desmond, Catherine Hartley, Sabrina Skinner, Katherine

Gero, and Jeanine Gunn lovingly and carefully hand-cut and sewed every piece of the quilt. The quilt was originally raffled off in support of the local church and community centre but through a stroke of sheer luck, or perhaps divine intervention, the winner returned the quilt to the community centre. Today it proudly hangs there—that is, when it's not traveling to local schools, museums, and community centres, telling the story of enslaved people who came to Nova Scotia. The quilt serves as a way to introduce the story of the ancestors of many members of Black communities across the province.

For the women who worked on the quilt, it is much more than history. The group is made up of women spanning three

generations, the youngest in her early twenties and the oldest in her eighties. What made this quilt so important to the group was the death of one of the original sewers, Deacon Everett Desmond, husband to Mary Desmond, who passed away before seeing the quilt completed. The women, who were distraught at the prospect of the quilt leaving them forever following the raffle, cherish his contribution and his memory. This quilt is also symbolic of the inter-generational friendship that sprung up amongst the quilters. They are unified by this project and are truly sisters who have shared experiences, emotions and heritage, despite not being related by blood.

Native Council of Nova Scotia & Healing Our Nations

Presents

First Nations Health Career Fair

Are you a First Nations high school student? Are you interested in a career in the health field?
Come join us and explore the many options that are available.

Where: Holiday Inn Harbourview
Dartmouth

When: Friday February 27, 2015
10:00am-1:00pm

Live Performers:

Dancing

Drumming

Spoken Word

Hip Hop

To Register Contact Brittney Francis at
reachyouth@eastlink.ca



Capital Health



Transphobic Words

Calling someone a Tranny or 'too butch to be a girl' etc. demeans and trivialises the wide variety of experiences held by those who identify as transgender. If you see this type of transphobic language being used, challenge it.

Coming Out

A gender identity is personal. If someone chooses to come out to you as trans* this means they trust you. Make sure to honour that trust by checking with them before telling anyone else as they may not want others to know.

Real Name?

Asking someone what their 'real' name is implies that their chosen name is in some way invalid or not 'real'. In the same way, asking someone what their 'real' gender is disrespects their own gender identity.

How To Be A Trans* Ally

Just Ask!

It is important to respect the names and pronouns that people prefer. If you are unsure, simply ask "What are your preferred pronouns?"

Show Your Support!

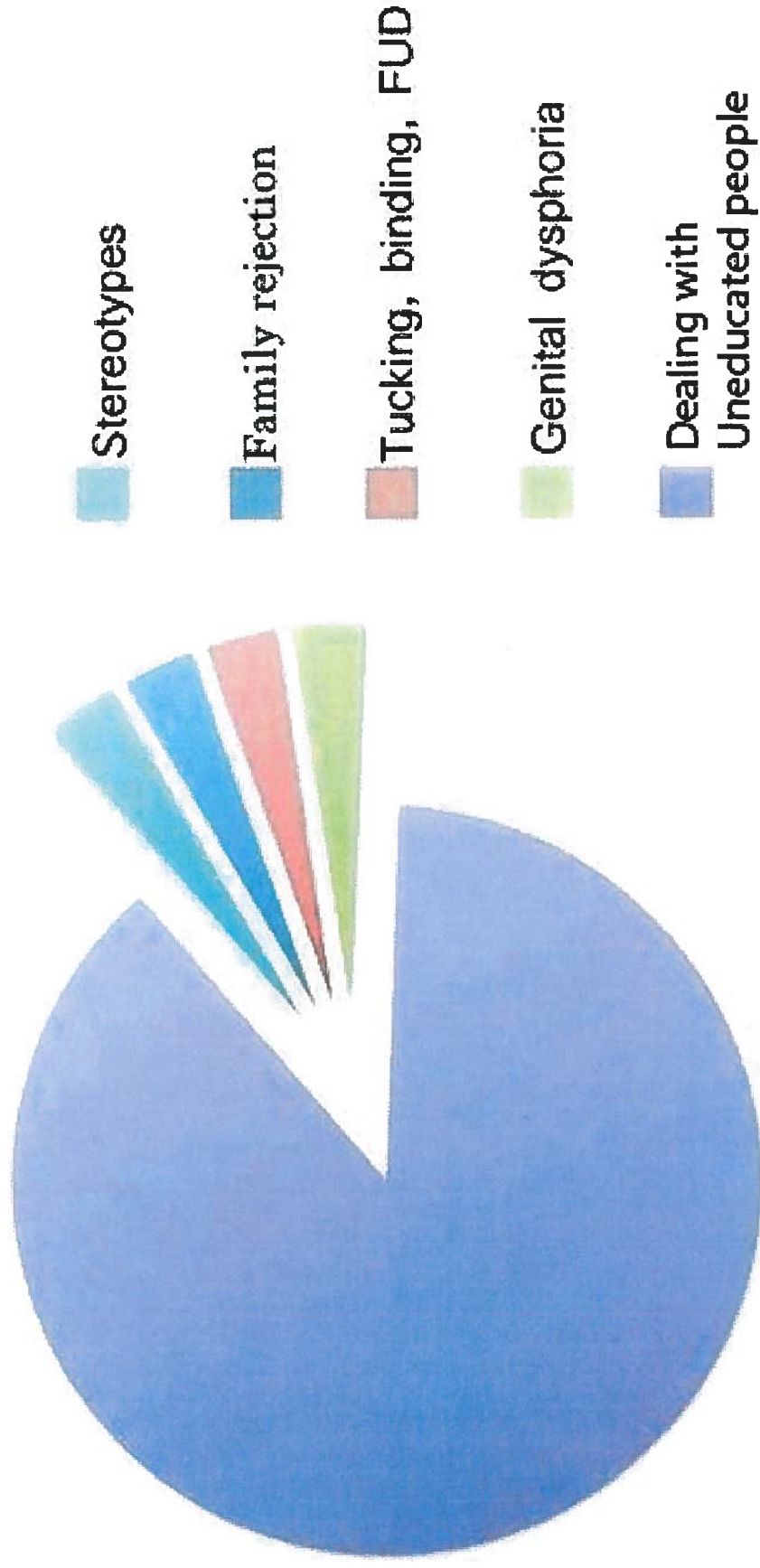
Make sure to show your support for your trans* friends by challenging transphobia when you see it.

Gender Identity is not Sexual Identity

Remember that, no matter how someone identifies their own gender, they may still identify with any sexual identity. Everyone has a sexual and a gender identity, and they are separate and distinct from each other.



The hardest part about being transgender:



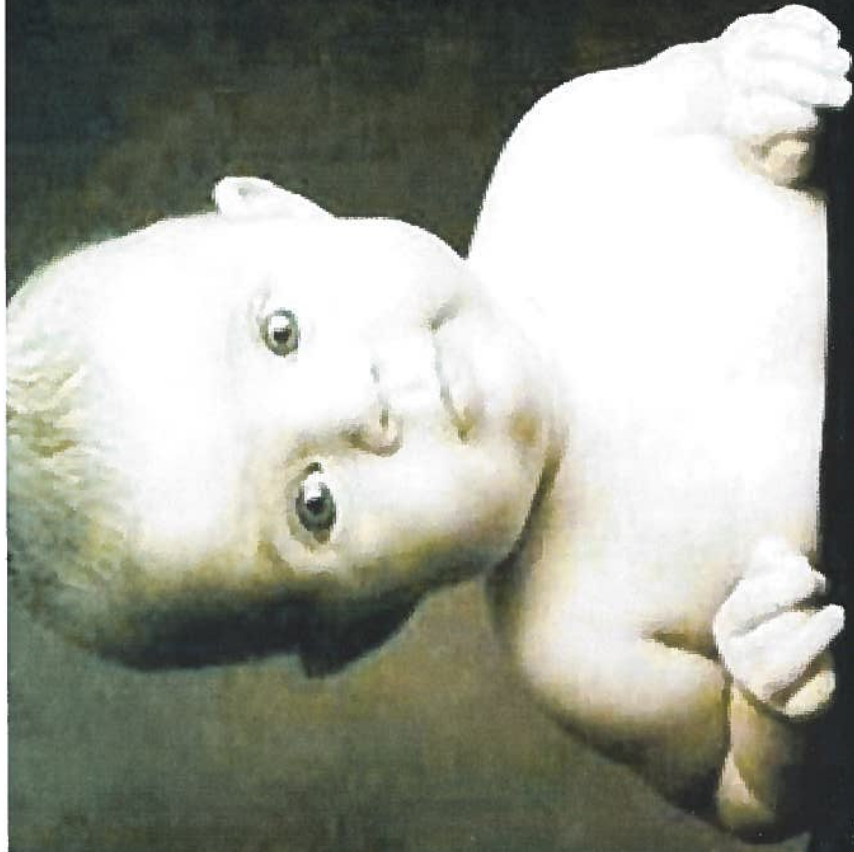
**IF YOU'RE OUT IN PUBLIC AND YOU CAN'T FIGURE
OUT A STRANGER'S GENDER, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:**

1. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

CREDIT: @EMOPRETEEN TWITTER

**THE
TRANS*
CENDING
GENDER
PROJECT**

WWW.TRANSCENDINGGENDER.ORG



I know nothing of hatred, intolerance, racism, sexism, bigotry, indoctrination, homophobia and prejudice. I don't yet understand things like love, compassion, integrity, tolerance, human decency and truth. For the first and most important formative years of my life all I will know is what you teach me. Choose wisely.