

Local high school commemorating Black History Month with student-led activities

Written By **Danielle Williams**

Centre Dufferin District High School (CDDHS) is commemorating Black History Month with numerous student-led activities. CDDHS follows its theme of reintroducing the black community to dispel the misconceptions they face.

Black History Month recognizes and honours black-identified groups and individuals from past and present. CDDHS started the month with a captivating display of culture, featuring drumming and flags representing diverse identities and cultures within the Black community.

"I think the kick-off for the month was really great. It showcased a lot of spirit and energy," said Emily Payne, the publicity manager of the student council at CDDHS. She's also an active member in many clubs, such as the Yearbook Committee and Jack Chapter, which focuses on improving students' mental health.

The Black Chapter affinity group took the reins, organizing a diverse range of activities aimed at empowerment and celebration for Black History Month.

According to Aaliyah Thompson, co-head of the Black chapter, its role is to promote "excellence within the school while creating a safe space." She emphasized the importance of encouraging "creativity and camaraderie", as well as the pride that comes from participating in such efforts at school.

"We do start talking about it [Black History Month] as soon as the school year starts. In terms of student involvement, we expect active participation when you think about the context of what we're doing," said Aaliyah Thompson.

Black Chapter has put together different activities for each week, accompanied by a weekly announcement.

"I think judging from what I heard from Gabby and Aaliyah [the co-heads of Black Chapter], I think it's going to be great; I hope it brings the energy and involvement," said Emily Payne.

Two workshops are scheduled for this month, a dance workshop, showcasing vibrant rhythms of dancehall and Soca, for students to glimpse into different black cultures. Additionally, CDDHS students will have the chance to participate in an art workshop where they can design a portrait following the theme for the month, which is the reintroduction of black individuals.

"We're more focusing on empowerment as opposed to education," said the co-head for Black Chapter, Gabby Spencer, when encouraging students to participate. "It may not be as impactful for the general population; I hope it is for black students who aren't in Black Chapter."

The weekly announcements serve as a platform for education and reflection, exploring various facets of black identity and heritage. From the meaning of one's name to poetry celebrating the beauty of Black hair, these announcements promote confidence and pride in one's culture.

Additionally, CDDHS is also putting together a food sale, featuring an abundance of cultural food such as jerk chicken, rice, peas, coleslaw, and more.

The highlight of the month is the assembly, which will include performances by the school band, singers, the Black national anthem, poetry readings, and dance performances. It will be a significant event, marking the first CDDHS Black History Month assembly in four years and recognizing the talents and accomplishments of the Black community.

In essence, Black History Month at CDDHS is a celebration of culture, heritage, and empowerment. Through a series of engaging events and activities, students and faculty come together to honour and recognize the contributions of the Black community, fostering understanding, pride, and unity within the school community.

?For me in terms of Black History Month, it is always about education, and if it is that we can inform one person who does not know, we'd be fulfilling our mission for the year, which is to get away from the misconceptions that exist. If we could just change that one person's mind or make a difference for that person,? said Tracy-Ann Spencer, a teacher at CDDHS who the supervisor for the Black Chapter group is also.

As Black History Month draws to a close, the spirit of celebration and empowerment will continue to resonate, leaving a lasting impact on all who participated.