

Shelburne to host storytellers and young innovators at Black History Month event

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES

The Town of Shelburne is set to host its yearly Black History Month celebrations on Feb. 22 at Grace Tipling Hall (203 Main St. E.). The event will run from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., and admission is free.

Len Guchardi, Shelburne Councillor and DEI Chair, said that inclusivity and diversity remain firm commitments for the town.

"Black History Month is a time to celebrate Black Canadians in our community and

beyond," he said. "Our DEI committee is committed to listening to, engaging with, and acting in the best interests of all residents, whatever their background."

The celebration will feature two guest speakers, beginning with Joy Akinkunmi, a youth innovator from Nova Scotia.

Akinkunmi was the 2024 recipient of the Discovery Awards for developing an automatic pill dispenser. At the age of 15, she witnessed firsthand the difficulty a family member with Lewy body dementia had in taking medication.

Inspired by this experience, she designed a dispenser capable of releasing multiple medications at different times of day at a fraction of the cost of similar devices on the market. While the device is not available for purchase currently, she plans to further develop it and release the device at a later date.

Following Akinkunmi, the spotlight will turn to Tracy Lee, a singer, speaker, and actor.

A fifth-generation Black Canadian, Lee was born and raised in Brantford, Ont., and now resides in Guelph. She has been performing since the age of three in musicals, festivals, and community events.

Her work focuses on sharing and preserving Black history in Canada through music. She will be delivering a presentation titled "And Then What Happened?" which recounts the stories of her ancestors as they traveled to Canada through the Underground RAILROAD, and will also explore the history of early Black settlements in Canada.

Alongside the guests and performances, Guchardi said that the town is also requesting that those who come to the event bring a non-perishable food item for donation to those in need.

"We're also asking if you are able to, please provide a donation to the food bank as something nonperishable, or a cash donation to the food bank, just as a little assistance to the community in general," Guchardi said. "It's not a requirement, it's just an invitation to assist if you can." Guchardi added that while admission is free, the event organizers are requesting that those who plan to attend sign up online through Eventbrite, so they can estimate how many visitors will be in attendance.

For more details or to register, visit shorturl.at/42VC8

"The DEI committee is proud to celebrate these stories and encourage everyone to join us on Feb. 22," said Guchardi.