

Community Spirit Award Nomination - Greenville, Nova Scotia

Introduction

The community of, **Greenville** is a community in the [Canadian](#) province of [Nova Scotia](#), located in the [Yarmouth Municipal District](#) in [Yarmouth County](#), one of 52 historic Black communities in the province. In 1820, a colony of Black Loyalist descendants established themselves in the community, which was then known as Salmon River. The community was later known as the Dyes Road Settlement and came to be known as present day Greenville. The most prominent people to come from Greenville were Alfreda and Reverend Anderson. Reverend Anderson was born in Upper Hammond's Plain and married in 1919. Greenville is home to the Greenville United Baptist Church, one of the oldest surviving churches erected by the Nova Scotia Black community. The people living in the community of Greenville have worked together for so many generations it has been commonplace. As a small isolated rural community Greenville demonstrates their remarkable community spirit in many ways but especially through the local Greenville Community Centre, a gathering place for the African Nova Scotian community in Greenville and Yarmouth County, that continues to educate and empower future generations. Being recognized with a Community Spirit Award would uplift the important work of the community and educate Nova Scotia about Greenville's significance and resilient spirit.

Greenville Community Centre Greenville is an African Nova Scotian community, that shares their space and time with the growth of the community, the greater community of Greenville and Yarmouth, and other communities. It is common for communities to form among those who share a common sense of identity, like this ethnic community that shares aspects of their culture and heritage they have in common with the greater community. These customs and values are evident in the small community of Greenville which is a community of African NS and diverse families that take care of each other. The community shares a common goal like their *community center*.

The evidence of quality of a community is in their pride and is often dictated by the degree of support and happiness in a specific project, the community of Greenville supports projects within their community such as the Greenville Community Center. To see the center and attend any event at the center it is clear the pride this community has in the community space. It is truly a community project.

Everyone from seniors to youth in the community supports the community through the center by volunteering when needed for activities, such as weddings, special events, gatherings, meals, and meetings. As well as gathering from other diverse groups.

Strength comes from the talents and knowledge of the community members who started and keep the center running in this community.

This Center has many activities that help build the strength of the community by supporting the community in many ways including programs. ***(Please see list of programs)***

Communities are based around networks of social relations beyond one's family. Through this center community members stay in regular social contact with one another. This helps people become mentally healthy by being involved with the community center and committing to this meaningful cause by volunteering.

Greenville's Community Spirit

The Greenville Community Centre is run and operated by community members of Greenville.

These positive experiences within the community, as well as the broader community, allow the community of Greenville to feel more connected and prevent isolation. The center acts as a support system to the Greenville community which builds a sense of pride for community members. This center unites the community with their goals and pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes. The interests of the community are reflected in the programs and activities of the center such as the arts, sports, cooking, and cultural events for all ages.

Based on how often the community uses this center it is one of the most important parts of the community. Involvement in the center is positive and has a tangible impact on individuals by helping avoid negative racial outcomes by providing a sense of belonging. The center helps direct attention and energy toward a beneficial outcome for the whole community of Greenville. Greenville's community spirit brings about positive change that impacts the larger community. Positive outcomes extend beyond the group who started the center and the members of the community who support the community initiative by welcoming the broader community into the Greenville community by using the center for their events. The positive thing about Greenville it allows members of the community to feel connected to the African Nova Scotian environment and all the people living there. This help others learn about the lives of those in the community and in turn helps to prevent racism and discrimination through understanding.

Greenville and the Greenville Community Center offer: School groups:

- Youth groups including youth cooking class to address food insecurity, Dances and get together. Seniors' events, Mens groups, Family activities, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, special events, Emancipation Celebrations, Community safe drinking water initiative

- This center is in the process of being set up as a cooling and warming center to address the impact of climate change for seniors.
- The Greenville Community center is an initiative to help the community and bring the community together.
- Encourages other groups to attend their community Center by personal invites and bookings the space for non-for-profit groups.
- Raised money and put in central heating so the center can be used year-round.
- Raised money and bought computers for the center to teach youth and seniors to use technology.
- The Greenville community group have been thinking about buying the church that is in the community to preserve this history in their community. They work with newcomers to the area and try to involve them in the center and this helps newcomers become and feel part of the community.
- They work well together to develop a way to keep their center going. If you look at the initiative to help in time of climate change by addressing the fact that a cooling center is needed in their community.

On Thursday, February 9th, the Tri County Regional Centre for Education, led by Mr. David Phillip and Mr. Joseph Bishara, held a Nova Scotia African Heritage 365 Event bringing over 114 students of African descent together from all three counties. The day highlighted community elders as well as various speakers and activities steeped in cultural. The event was held at the Greenville Community Centre and as students arrived, they were greeted with the aroma of authentic Jamaican jerk chicken, rice and peas, and festival bread, prepared by Mr. Robert Shaw, educator at Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School. Steve Berry, Deputy Mayor of Yarmouth, Student Support Worker at YCMHS, and recent recipient of the Black Community Change Makers award 2023, began the presentations speaking about the importance of recognizing all members of the community and bringing awareness to the eclectic makeup that is the African Nova Scotian Community. Elder, Mr. Chuck Smith brought highlights from the Black Construction Battalion memorial being created to honor the service of various veterans from countless Black families in the Tri County. Mr. Smith also provided some powerful perspectives on the importance of education in creating financial security for future generations.



February 9, 9AM-4PM - Tri County Regional Centre for Education (Digby/Yarmouth & Shelburne Schools)

Ms. Geneva Cromwell, mother of Ms. Margaret Cromwell, Student Support Worker for St. Mary's Bay Academy and Weymouth Elementary, provided an engaging presentation capturing the historical importance of quilt patterns and patch work as a method of knowledge sharing utilized within the Underground Railway as enslaved Africans attempted to escape their bondage.

As the day concluded, the Greenville Centre filled with the rhythmic sounds of a large drum circle led by the elder, Mr. Ken Fells. As the students boarded their buses to return home, they shared the various aspects of the day that they enjoyed the most. It was clear that this gathering, the first since the pandemic, was a true celebration of community spirit.

Emancipation celebration

There were many communities involved from Halifax to Digby.



The center a place where youth and seniors are respected in the community to help advancement of the African Nova Scotian community.



The center supports youth by providing programs where they can speak about issues in the community



Bruce Johnson

Seniors as well as youth of the community are always included in everything that the Greenville Community Center group presents.



They have special dinners to feed the community such as the Harvest Supper. This event brings other communities together as well as members Indigenous community to help with the preparation and feeding the whole community. As well as the **Emancipation Day Celebration** and the **Harvest Supper** which included people from the tri county region. This event included youth as well as seniors from these communities.



Sheridan Lawrence

The Greenville community has a clean water campaign that involves the Greenville community as well as one of their supporter ***Rural Water Watch*** is a help to the seniors who have a problem filling out the forms to have their water tested and sent off to let them know if their water was safe to drink. Members of other communities outside of Greenville were included in this process as well. The people from Greenville community helped the organization Rural Water Watch to do this work, so they were looking out for rural communities as well.



All the events in the community are attended by most of if not all the African Nova Scotians living there. So, attendance numbers are large and welcomed.



About the Greenville African United Baptist Church

The Greenville Center community group is doing what it can to help save the historic church in Greenville. The church was well known as a place of worship for the Black community from 1800. It is always sad to see this historic place of meaning to a community leave or are being demolished but the Greenville community hopes to find a way in future to acquire the church. The Greenville African United Baptist Church is a little Vernacular style church that persevered through tough times and remains a symbol of hope and faith in the community. Through the years, the church experienced many difficulties. It remains a symbol of hope and faith in the community of Greenville.

About the Greenville African United Baptist Church



Greenville's Future

In addition to the Greenville Community Centre group the is working to acquire the historic African United Baptist church to preserve their past history.

The next wonderful thing the Greenville Community Center group would like to do for their community is use the center and convert it to an environmental emergency center for the community in time of severe climate change events. For people living in the cities, it is hard to imagine just how hard it would be if a storm wipes out power for a whole community for days or even weeks. The center will be equipped with what is needed to make a safe place for the community to come and stay. They would have clean water, heat, and air conditioning and internet service as well at this center. The community is now working to find ways to make this happen. Their main goal has been to keep ageing and seniors in the community safe in times of climate change events. This has been a great challenge in the community, and they are working together to help make sure they all have clean drinking water and support as the community deals with climate change.

Conclusion

For over 200 years the community of Greenville has served as an example of the community spirit, determination, and perseverance of African Nova Scotians. Today the Greenville Community Centre continues to be an important gathering place and resource for residents and the wider community through events, programs, and their work to address important concerns like the impacts of climate change. Greenville's community spirit deserves recognition and to receive this award as validation for all their hard work and commitment to their community.