

BEECHVILLE - Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY SPIRIT AWARD
NOMINATION FOR

BEECHVILLE, NS

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Overview:

Beechville is a historically Black Nova Scotian settlement and rural Heritage community within the Halifax Regional Municipality of Nova Scotia, Canada, on the St Margaret's Bay Road. This Black heritage community is rooted in history, resilience, culture, heritage, traditions, and the collective. This is evident in the vibrant energy, positivity, and collaborations that take place at Beechville. The citizens of Beechville take great pride in their community, as such, they take great care of one another and the environment. The people of Beechville remain unwaveringly open to opportunities to build on the community's strong social fabric. This is achieved through continuous community partnerships and strong intergenerational ties and support across all ages, races, and abilities. The community of Beechville is not just simply an environment where diverse individuals are present, but rather where all individuals are involved, empowered, and developed.

Beechville is a Historically Black Nova Scotian settlement and rural Heritage community within the Halifax Regional Municipality of Nova Scotia , Canada on the St Margaret's Bay Road.

We strive to continue to create an environment where people from various backgrounds can share different ideas, skills, and insights. This diverse family environment ensures that every community member feels involved and supported. We are a proud community and believe and strive in the strength of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This spirit inspires diverse individuals to take action and contribute to the betterment of the community.

Beechville, Together we thrive!

History of Beechville

In 1816, Black refugees from the United States arrived in Beechville, Nova Scotia, seeking refuge and were granted 1,000 acres near the North West Arm to establish their community. This laid the foundation for a resilient and self-sufficient community.

Fast forward to the mid-1960s, Beechville became a focal point for a series of housing projects initiated by the Nova Scotia Housing Commission, originally established in 1938 to address housing for low-income families. Reverend Dr. W.P. Oliver emerged as a pivotal figure, leveraging his position with the Nova Scotia Department of Education to sponsor Credit Unions and Co-Operative Housing, particularly in Black communities. His leadership catalyzed the development of the Munroe Subdivision.

Dr. Oliver and the men of Beechville collaborated with the Nova Scotia Housing Commission to ensure the project was both nurturing and dignified. Under a co-operative self-help model, the plan aimed to make home ownership accessible to

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low-income families. From 1940 to 1973, the Commission facilitated the construction of 5,475 affordable homes, with Beechville significantly benefiting from this initiative.

The Munroe family, original landowners since 1816, provided the necessary land for this visionary project. The cooperative spirit flourished as community members pooled their labor and skills to build homes together. The Nova Scotia Housing Commission provided initial technical support, with community members contributing to the construction, design, and decoration.

The project unfolded in three phases. The first phase's success led to further developments, allowing various house styles and creating a cohesive yet diverse community. By the completion of the third phase, the subdivision had become a cornerstone of Beechville, symbolizing solidarity, pride, and heritage.

Despite modernization and new housing developments, the original residents strive to preserve their heritage through community activities, culminating in the annual Beechville Day. This event serves as a homecoming and a celebration of the community's rich history and enduring legacy. Today, that Black refugee settlement in Beechville has been officially recognized as a Nova Scotia Provincial Heritage site.

Munroe Subdivision

Today, the Munroe Subdivision stands as the last bastion of our original community and a testament to the strength and resilience of a historically Black community. It has navigated change while maintaining its identity and heritage, always welcoming

residents and sharing the deep historical significance of the land we now call home.



Along St. Margaret's Bay Road, where once stood rows of family homes, developers have long sold off and demolished properties. Yet the Munroe Subdivision endures—a resilient patchwork of memories, stories, and shared experiences. It is here that we find solace, where neighbors become family, and where the echoes of laughter still resonate.

And then there's the Beechville Industrial Park sign, erected in 2019. This unassuming marker holds immense significance. It delineates a clear boundary for Beechville, a boundary that had been shrinking over time. As developers encroached, our community fought to maintain its identity. The sign stands tall, a silent sentinel, reminding us of our

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roots and our determination. It's more than a sign; it's a legacy for the future of Beechville.

When walking through the Munroe Subdivision, or glimpse that weathered sign as you drive up the road, never forget that Beechville thrives not just in the bricks and mortar but in the connections we forge, the stories we share, and the unwavering spirit that binds us together. The Church has and continues to hold those stories and preserve those stories as a place of community, worship, and history.

Beechville Baptist Church: A Community Hub

Where the past intertwines with the present, stands the Beechville Baptist Church. This historic landmark serves as more than just a place of worship; it is a beating heart of our community. Regularly attended by most people of African Nova Scotian descent, the church embodies our shared heritage and resilience.



Beechville Baptist Church is a cornerstone of the Beechville community. Founded in 1832, it holds significant historical and cultural importance as one of the oldest Black Baptist congregations in Canada. Originally established by African American settlers and their descendants, the church has played a pivotal role in the spiritual, social, and educational life of the community. Throughout its history, Beechville Baptist Church has been a center for activism, community engagement, and place of worship.

In 2017, developers recognized the significance of this sacred space. Before constructing apartment complexes in the area, they signed a Heritage Impact Statement. This commitment ensured that the church's history and importance would be preserved for generations to come. The church, with its weathered walls and echoing hymns, remains a testament to our collective memory. Today, it continues to serve in these roles as well as in the cultural preservation and growth of the Beechville community and its rich heritage.

Baptismal Path

The Baptismal Path in Beechville, Nova Scotia, is a significant historical and cultural landmark in the region. It traces its origins back to the early 19th century. The path gained its name from the tradition of baptizing newly freed individuals upon reaching safety from slavery. It symbolizes resilience, liberation, and the enduring spirit of those who sought freedom from oppression.

The path winds through dense forests and rugged terrain. Along the way, markers and plaques commemorate the struggles and triumphs of the African Nova Scotian community. Visitors can learn about the history of slavery in Nova Scotia,

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the Underground Railroad, and the contributions of Black Canadians to the province's heritage.

Today, the Baptismal Path serves as both a historical site and a recreational trail, attracting tourists, hikers, and history enthusiasts alike. It offers a serene escape into nature while also serving as a reminder of the injustices of the past and the ongoing fight for equality and social justice.

In Beechville and beyond, the Baptismal Path stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of community solidarity in the face of adversity. It continues to inspire and educate, reminding us of the importance of remembering and honoring our ancestral history and the values that founded the community of Beechville.

Beechville Historical Society

The Beechville Historical Society in Nova Scotia has been actively involved in preserving the boundaries of the historic Beechville community. Through research, advocacy, and community engagement, the society works to safeguard the integrity of Beechville's cultural and historical boundaries. This includes efforts to document and protect significant landmarks, promote awareness of the area's heritage, and collaborate with local authorities to ensure appropriate development and conservation measures. By preserving its boundaries, the Beechville Historical Society aims to honor the legacy of Beechville's founders and maintain its identity for future generations.

Beechville Community Development Association

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the community of Beechville found its traditional community boundaries being eradicated through industrial development. Moreover, new community boundaries were being drawn within this new landscape. No public consultations were conducted with the residents of Beechville or surrounding communities, and this led to incorrect community boundaries and certain communities not even being included. The BCDA was developed to determine and advocate for accurate community boundaries through community consultations. The BCDA played a pivotal role in recent victories, such as the amendment of existing boundaries and re-establishment of historic community boundaries, and for the community to have a say in such future developments.

Celebrating Beechville's History, Culture, and Traditions

Beechville, Nova Scotia, has a rich history dating back to the early 1800s when Black Loyalists settled in the area. Originally part of Halifax County, Beechville became a thriving community for freed African Americans. Over the years, it saw significant development, with churches, schools, and businesses contributing to its rich African Nova



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Scotian culture. Community resilience and activism have preserved its heritage, making it a symbol of African Nova Scotian history and culture. Our African Nova Scotia heritage offers a unique lens through which communities can enhance their diversity and inclusivity. Beechville is very aware and in tune with the community's changing dynamics and strives to carry on our legacy and rich history.

For Beechville, the importance of community cannot be overstated. The community engages large numbers of member participation in planned gatherings, activities, events and special community promotions. The varied activities are designed in variation to meet the needs of the community and its members to encourage full engagement and community fun. Geared outcomes and learning objectives are for the benefit of the community and each individual of all ages with a common identity and sense of belonging and connection. Beechville promotes interaction, empathy and platforms of expression and connection. As a result, individuals feel valued and supported by their community during both joyful and challenging times.

Community Spirit is an energetic and vibrant expression to promote the well-being of community in big and small ways, such as gestures of goodwill, favors and volunteer work. These acts of kindness strengthen the social fabric, weaving a tapestry of interconnectedness where people in the community can rely on each other. This interconnectedness is also bolstered through the spirituality present within the community as well as different practices of connection, such as sharing of food. All in all, the goal is to have community members feel supported, happy and healthy.



In our close-knit Black community, equity, diversity, and inclusion are the lifeblood that sustains our shared heritage and collective progress. Diversity and inclusion enrich our cultural fabric by embracing a rich tapestry of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives - whether based on race, ethnicity, age, or abilities. We actively involve all community members in our celebrations and activities to promote and share our long-standing culture with all those who participate, and keep our heritage strong for the next generation. We ensure everyone feels included, valued and heard, we unlock our collective potential, and we foster a continued sense of belonging, where every voice matters. In summary, equity, diversity and inclusion aren't an abstract concept - they're the heartbeat of our community. By embracing these values, we honor our past, empower our present, and pave the way for a brighter future.

Caring for elders and children are also deeply embedded in the culture of Beechville. Caring for elders and children are also deeply embedded in the culture

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of Beechville. Our elders are our teachers, sharing stories of our roots and preserving the pages of our history. Our children are our future, playfully shaping what the next chapters will be. From generation to generation, we pass down our culture and spirituality, demonstrating for each who comes after what it means to belong to a community that supports one another from birth into old age.

For this reason, all community members come together to engage in physical, social, and cognitive activities to support elders. These efforts have been recognized by the Honourable Iain Rankin and news outlets, such as local newspapers and [CBC](#). Perhaps the most significant recognition comes from the Beechville Community where the achievements, contributions, and successes of members are always recognized and celebrated.

In conclusion, Beechville empowers one another, consequently providing a strong sense of including and belonging within the community. We take action for the collective good and support our friends, family, and neighbours as family.

Beechville Day

Beechville Day is an annual community event that celebrates the rich cultural heritage and vibrant spirit of Beechville.



This community event typically features a variety of family friendly activities encouraging the continued nurturing of the warm, welcoming spirit that has allowed Beechville to thrive throughout its history. Beechville Day serves as a platform for residents to come together, strengthen bonds, and showcase the unique character of their neighbourhood. Beechville Day exemplifies the strong sense of community and pride that exists

within Beechville. These events not only provide opportunities for recreation but also foster a sense of belonging and unity among community members. The community of Beechville has felt more like a family than a collection of residents and this is what makes it so special.

The Beechville Rockets: A Beacon of Community Unity

The Beechville Rockets are an African Nova Scotian community softball team based in Beechville, known for their provincial championship winning competitiveness and contagious team spirit. The Rockets have become a symbol of pride for the Beechville community, showcasing the talent, success, and resilience of community members. Through their dedication to community, the Rockets have not only achieved success on the field but have also served as role models for Beechville youth. The rockets continue to maintain their impact in the

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community by awarding educational scholarships and encouraging Beechville youth to work hard and excel to their potential.



In the heart of Beechville, where history echoes through every swing of a bat, the Beechville Rockets stand as more than just a baseball team. They are a testament to community bonds, resilience, and the enduring spirit of our people.

Origins and Legacy: Back in 1955, a group of young Black men, aged 13 to 20, shared a common passion: baseball. With determination and a mere 25 cents in weekly dues, they formed the Beechville Rockets. Their name reflected their youthfulness and speed—the very qualities that would propel

them to greatness. In an era when few teams existed in the area, they faced off against rivals from Lakeside, Timberlea, Kline Heights, and the City League. Their practice field, nestled in the Beechville Industrial Park, witnessed their sweat, laughter, and camaraderie.

The Royal Canadian Legion on Cunard Street recognized their talent and sponsored the team. With newfound support, the Rockets donned full uniforms, acquired equipment, and proudly wore team jackets. Their legacy was etched in championships won during their remarkable 8-10 year run. Today, Ossie Wyse and Leonard Hamilton, original team members, carry the torch—the living links to a pioneering era. The Beechville Rockets were more than a baseball team; they were trailblazers, the first all-Black team in Nova Scotia.



Resurgence and Entertainment: Decades later, in 1980, the Beechville Rockets rose again. This time, players hailed from Beechville, Africville, and Preston—a new generation inheriting the legacy. They embodied sportsmanship, dedication, and leadership. But they brought more than baseball to the field. Between innings, they sang, danced, and entertained fans. Paul Blackmore, center fielder extraordinaire, penned anthems for the team: “We Are The Green Machine” and “We Are The Rockets.” These songs

became fan favorites, echoing across Nova Scotia.

Beyond the Diamond: The Beechville Rockets weren't just about wins and losses. They were about unity. As they traveled across the province, they carried with them the spirit of Beechville. Their victories transcended the diamond, leaving an indelible mark on sports in Nova Scotia. They reminded us that community bonds are forged not only in victories but also in shared moments, laughter, and the rhythm of life.

Beechville Walkets

Inspired in name and the legacy by the Beechville Rockets, the Beechville Walkets are a vibrant community group committed to promoting physical and cognitive health, fostering positive social interactions, and encouraging active community involvement. Through community-based activities and events, the Walkets strive to raise awareness about various causes.



In the wake of the pandemic, our community faced challenges. We yearned to rebuild our sense of belonging, which had been nurtured through in-person interactions. To achieve this, we embarked on a journey to resume face-to-face activities and reconnect with one another.

Our initial steps were simple: casual walks, friendly waves to neighbors from the road, and chit-chat sessions on decks. Gradually, our daily walks evolved into a routine, with more neighbors joining in. Soon, our purpose crystallized: to create a social group that supports active living, social connections, learning, and good eating. We champion positive mental health and aging well while preserving community traditions.

With so many active members, we proudly embrace inclusivity, ensuring our community is dementia-friendly. As part of our goal, we look to hold onto our shared heritage while fostering an environment where everyone feels welcome. Most recently, the Beechville Walkets organized an event for the solar eclipse, which saw the entire community come together to enjoy the spectacle.

Partnerships & Local Development: Community Groups & Businesses

Beechville is home to many incredible local groups and businesses. All businesses and groups exemplify the community spirit and there are always community partnerships and collaborations happening. Example businesses and groups are, but not limited to:

- Beechville Walkets
- Beechville Youth Basketball
- Deanne's Eats and Treats
- Elle Dance Academy
- Gough Project Development
- International Sports Additive



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- Jungle Jim's
- Kim's Art Hub
- Lily Bee Bazaar
- The Africadian Empowerment Academy
- The Putting Edge
- Timberlea Beverage Room
- The Beechville Rockets
- Upfront Counseling Service

Certain community groups have also been recognized and supported by larger groups, provincial institutions and departments, such as Nordic Walking Nova Scotia, Alzheimer's Society, Halifax Public Library, and Nova Scotia Health who has supported the Beechville Walkets through the 2023 Community Health Board funding.

Most importantly, it is the community volunteers who time and time again embody Beechville's spirit of community support and contribute to the programming and activities that take place in Beechville.

In Conclusion

Beechville would be honored to be the recipient of the Community Spirit Award! Our community is built and sustained on history, heritage, culture, inclusion, community



pride, participation and collaboration and we strive for the best quality of life for our community members and the whole of the community. These ways have a long history in Beechville and have become traditions. Beechville's people have a strong cultural identity, a diverse population, inclusion, and a unique national history.

From Intergenerational Walks, to Food Drives, Sustainability and Gardening activities, Emancipation Walks, Youth Basketball Teams, Academic Excellence, Fundraisers, Black History Workshops, Community Walks and more! Beechville

continually demonstrates true dedication to the community and the people who make it up. We have a long history of ties to Beechville and know the importance of carrying on its history and legacy. Our spirit and commitment to community relations is real and top priority to keep our community strong, integrated and known for its rich culture, welcoming ways and just genuine accepting people.

We have struggled but together we have come so far. Beechville. We put the merit in community spirit. Community spirit now that's the way; the Beechville community does it everyday!

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Community Walk and Emancipation Walk



Beechville Day and Bottle Drive



CPR



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Season Start Up BBQ



Community Walk and Grant Acceptance



Intergenerational Walk and Nordic Pole Walking Session



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