Field Notes '26: Black History Month

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> Welcome to Field Notes '26, a series from the Reconciliation & Inclusion team, offering curated resources to support deeper learning and inclusive practices across Seneca Polytechnic. Each issue features a bespoke collection of resources — such as books, TV shows and events — that the team has personally engaged with, reflected on and found meaningful in our own learning.

Read Watch Local Favourites Other Recommendations

READ



The Reformatory by Tananarive Due
A haunting historical novel set in Jim Crow-era Florida, inspired by the real Dozier School for Boys. Through the story of a young Black boy sent to a brutal reform school, the book exposes the violence, racism and abuse embedded in so-called "correctional" institutions.

> **Why**: It confronts how systems meant to "rehabilitate" Black youth have historically caused harm and invites reflection on how the harm continues to persist today.



James by Percival Everett
A reimagining of Huckleberry Finn told from the perspective of Jim, the enslaved man. The author blends satire, philosophy and critique to challenge whose voices are centered in classic American literature.

> **Why**: It demonstrates the power of reframing narratives and how reclaiming voices can change how history is understood.



Africa is Not a Country by Dipo Faloyin
A thoughtful and humourous collection of essays that challenge Western misconceptions about Africa, from media stereotypes to colonial legacies.

> **Why**: It challenges dangerous narratives and encourages critical thinking in media.



Black Disability Politics by Sami Schalk
An exploration of how disability has always been central to Black activism, culture and political struggle. Schalk connects disability justice with race, gender and liberation movements.

Why: It expands how we think about Black history by centering disability as an issue and not an afterthought.

WATCH

Student Resource Feature
The Student Resource Feature highlights recommendations submitted by Seneca students who share works that have inspired their learning and perspective. Students interested in contributing can email us to be featured.

Toni Pettit (she/her)
Social Service Worker, member of Black Students United



Remember Africville
Africville was a vibrant African-Canadian settlement in Halifax, Nova Scotia in the 1960s, established by former slaves, Black Loyalists and Jamaican Maroons. Later, families that lived there were violently uprooted by the City of Halifax in the name of urban renewal. This touching documentary details how they maintain their dignity and share their story.

Why: Canada has long been seen as the place of welcome, safety, and second chances. However, its history is not perfect, and it needs to be remembered so that it is not repeated.

How does this resource reflect something that matters to you right now?
The importance of who I am is defined by where I have been and who has influenced me, including friends, school, church, my city, my government and the history of all those who have walked this path before me. As a Black woman, my rights and freedoms have been hard earned through the blood, sweat and tears of my recent ancestors. I do not have to look far back to see my great aunt as a nurse, stepping forward in her field and breaking barriers at her hospital. I think of the work that my grandfather put into his restaurant, and my mother who has given everything to see my succeed. The people of Africville, took their pains and sorrows and made them into a beautiful community of hope. While that community no longer officially exists – the place remains. The hope remains. Their history remains in the lives and success of their children and grandchildren. I want to have been an influence for growth and change in the those I interact with for a better, more equitable world.

What's one thing you hope other students take from this resource?
That there is a Canadian history that is dark and ugly. But it is also filled with hope. I want students to understand the nuances of what it means to be Canadian, and to challenge themselves to learn more and participate in the changes that they want to see. Canadian history is full and vibrant with stories that need sharing.

What's one piece of advice you'd give someone who's starting in your program?
For any program in the education, community and social services field, the real world can be overwhelming. There are so many people who need support, and the desire to help them all can be exhausting and frustrating. It's important to look at the good by celebrating and cheering on the successes of our peers/colleagues and to keep those memories alive for when times get dark and it seems that the lights have gone out. It's equally important to get rid of the bad. The things that pull us down, drain us and keep us from staying true to our goals, our communities and our friends and families. Lastly, it's important to reach out and connect to fix the pieces we cannot fix on our own. We are meant to live and work in community. Find your support and learn how to be that support for others as well.

Waging war on the Jamaican beef patty: Canada's bizarre beef with the delicious snack by CBC Docs

A documentary unpacking Canada's attempt to regulate the Jamaican beef patty through the use of "beef patty", revealing how food, culture and bureaucracy collide.

Why: It is a story of resistance and success in the Black community in Toronto, centering around Kensington Patty Palace (now Golden Patty), and the advocacy work it took to preserve culture and heritage.



Washington Black
Based on the novel by Esi Edugyan, this steam punk story follows a young Black boy who escapes slavery and travels the world, blending history, science and adventure.

Why: It reimagines Black historical narratives beyond trauma, centering curiosity, imagination and possibility.

LOCAL FAVOURITES

A Different Booklist
779 Bathurst St., Toronto

A Toronto-based, Black owned bookstore specializing in books from the African and Caribbean diaspora

and the Global South.

Why: Supporting this Black-owned business helps to sustain diversity in publishing and learning. Plus, it's a great place to purchase the recommended books on Field Notes!

Mascot Brewery
Etobicoke, Toronto, Vaughan

A Toronto-based and Black-owned craft brewery and restaurant that has beer, food and a place to connect with others.

Why: During Black History Month, Mascot uses its platform to support Black-owned businesses through intentional collaborations, including beers like Afro Puff and Bruze.

Kerl Beauty
A Toronto-based beauty brand created to meet the needs of textured and curly hair, centering Black hair care and hygiene.

Why: The African net sponge is a favourite for all skin types. They import them from Ghana, and they are durable and hygienic alternative to traditional sponges or loofahs. They also make a great gift!

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Ase Community Foundation for Black Canadians with Disabilities
A Black-led organization focused on advocacy, resources and community support for Black Canadians with disabilities.

Why: They offer a variety of free events centered towards youth skill building, career readiness, and thriving both academic and personally. Check out their next workshop on Turning Vision into Direction, hosted on Friday, Feb. 20!

The Reconciliation & Inclusion team knows the best learning happens in conversation. Let us know if you explore any of the resources above, or if there's something you'd recommend we include in future editions. Share your thoughts and suggestions in the comments, or email us at ri@senecapolytechnic.ca.

tags : black-history, black-history-month, fieldnotes, student-news