

## **ETFO understands the importance of Black History Month and urges a year-long focus on Black excellence**

Black History Month exists to remind us all of the rich contributions within our society from people of African and Caribbean descent, and of their ongoing struggle for equity and social justice. As we work to ensure equity and racial justice for all, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) encourages a year-long focus on Black history as an integral part of learning about Canadian history and current issues.

Given the legacy and prevalence of anti-Black racism in colonial systems, institutions and society that groups like Black Lives Matter have brought to light, we must do more to infuse Black excellence and Black Canadian histories into public education.

Black History Month presents an opportunity for self-reflection and commitment that all members can take to ensure that our increased awareness and knowledge about anti-Black racism doesn't rest passively, but leads to actions that eradicate systemic barriers.

ETFO is committed to creating policies, professional learning and curriculum resources that protect the rights of Black people, dismantle barriers, and ensure equitable outcomes for Black individuals. We acknowledge the urgency of this work and call on everyone to disrupt and eliminate anti-Black racism.

The racial unrest and injustice we have seen since Spring 2020 serves as a disturbing indicator of the white supremacy that exists and is growing in society. Racial injustice and white supremacy are also a part of our reality here in Ontario. It is crucial that we acknowledge its existence, recognize its influence systemically, and address it daily, both collectively and individually.

ETFO supports calls by the Ontario Black History Society, Black families and others calling on the Ontario government to make Black Canadian studies a greater part of the curriculum. While there are topics in Ontario's curriculum that relate to anti-racism and anti-discrimination, and options for more in-depth teaching, explicit learning expectations must be built into the curriculum related to Black Canadian history and issues. The Ministry of Education must work with the Anti-Racism Directorate and Black scholars to develop more substantive Black Canadian curriculum.

In January 2018, ETFO's provincial Executive passed a motion that ETFO take transformative steps to address anti-Black racism issues within its own organization and in the broader society. It also endorsed the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent and called for a multi-year plan to promote the Decade, which provides a relevant framework for ETFO to address anti-Black racism.

[ETFO's Anti-Black Racism Strategy](#) is focused on creating systemic changes to confront anti-Black racism and provide a more welcoming and inclusive union environment for Black members at provincial and local levels. ETFO has created a Black leadership program, and developed a webinar called *Name It: Understanding Anti-Black Racism in Ontario Education*. We are also developing a new curriculum resource document called *Race Matters: Teaching Students to be Race-Conscious*.

Systemic discrimination means that all aspects of the public education system must be rigorously assessed and accountable for their impacts on Black students, staff and administrators. ETFO will continue to lobby the Ontario government to address systemic racism within education. Our advocacy efforts will demand accountability to ensure anti-Black racism is dismantled.

**ETFO's anti-Black racism resources can be found [here](#). Black History Month resources are also available from the [ETFO website](#).**