



SEVEN OAKS  
SCHOOL DIVISION  
*community begins here*

# SOSD MARCH & APRIL ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

WELCOME!

Welcome to the SOSD Anti-Racism e-newsletter! We'll bring you the latest information on the SOSD Anti-Racism initiative. We'll share information on news, events, and anything else anti-racism related!



*Top Right: Students from room 7 at OV Jewitt learning about skin color and difference.*

*Bottom right: ESOMS students from room 3 create art celebrating important figures in black history.*



# AMBER TRAILS ANTI-RACISM TOWNHALL

On the evening of March 11th, teachers and Anti-Racism Initiative school reps from Amber Trails school gathered at Seven Oaks Performing Arts Center to livestream a townhall event to Amber Trails families watching from home. The townhall opened with a presentation on anti-racism by SOSD Anti-Racism initiative coordinator Shiv Raveendrabose and was followed by Amber Trails teachers speaking to their journeys around anti-racism.

Teachers also had the opportunity to share some of the amazing work they have done with their students on standing up against racism. Scroll down to see pictures! Students from Mr. Harpreet Mavi's class shared a video about racism with the audience.

The evening closed with a Q&A session, where families and students asked some very thought-provoking questions to our panel of Amber Trails teachers, leadership, and SOSD trustees. Amber Trails staff see this as the beginning of a very important ongoing conversation around race and anti-racism with the parent community

Click the link below to watch the recording:

<https://vimeo.com/524408645/d81ff6776f>



This is the reason we're doing this townhall ... for the children in the community, because they're going to make this world much better than it already is.

- Jamil Jian, Amber Trails Vice Principal

[Townhall Excerpt: A question from an Amber Trails Community member Nadia]

**Q:** how much is black history taught at Amber Trails: is it only talked about during the month February?

**Kira Burkett:** Black history month is a great opening for teachers who don't know how to do this work or who aren't sure where to start. Lots of us know its not enough having that relegated to one month in the year. Its both. There are some teachers who are using it as a way to start talking about race in the classroom, and that's a great start. I think there are lots people who are also including those voices in all of the histories we are looking at ... finding places to integrate voices of PoC and black people



# THE ANTI-RACISM WORK OF AMBER TRAILS

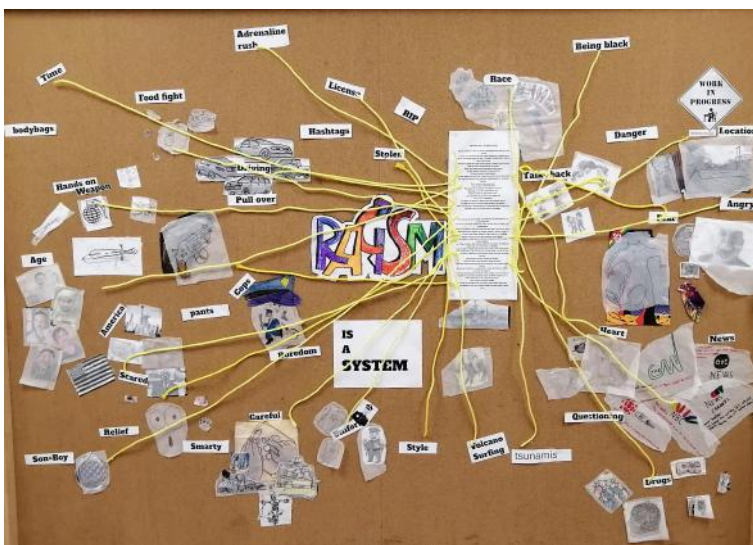
Some of the student work showcased at the townhall



An inclusive flag puzzle assembled by Amber Trails students. The Inclusive Pride Flag visualizes our need to prioritize Black, Brown, and Trans\* folks in our work for justice and equality.



Mr. Shiv reading the book "Chocolate Me" to Mrs. Kluz' grade 1 and 2 class. A great way to introduce the topic of race and skin colour to early years students.



Mr. Hon's grade 8 class learning about how racism is systemic through poetry and literature.



Mrs. Burkett's class is doing an art-based inquiry around "borders" and learning about how they affect refugees and immigrants.

## SOSD CENSUS: "THIS IS US"

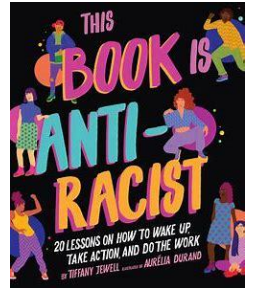
In February, we launched our first staff census to get a better understanding of who we are as a Seven Oaks Community. The census survey is now closed, and the final report to be released shortly. The survey will showcase the diversity and makeup of the entire workforce of the division. The census had very high participation spanning various SOSD employee groups. It will also include a qualitative portion, where staff members have shared personal stories relating to their identity. Stay tuned for the final report coming out very soon!



# HIGHLIGHTS OF ANTI-RACISM IN OUR SCHOOLS

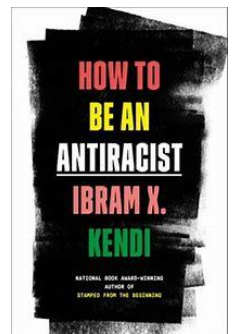
## OV Jewitt teachers talking Anti-racism

A group of MY teachers (Amandeep Badhan, John Mantolino, Wendy Coveney, Ari Leibl, Amandeep Badhan, Julie Springer) are discussing the book "This Book is Anti-Racist" with the SOSD anti-racism team. This insightful book is helping with kick-starting empowering conversations around race and racism with MY students.



## Maples MET students are learning how to be anti-racist

Maples MET school advisors Gurveer Turka and Jason Neufield have been doing a thought-provoking book study on "How to be an Anti-racist," by Ibram X. Kendi with their grade 12 students. This group of students have been thinking very deeply around anti-racism, and are learning about what it takes to be anti-racist.



## West K GSA exploring intersectionality

West K GSA supervisor Jay Jimenez has been having important conversations around intersectionality and what it means to have overlapping oppressions with his students, especially looking at the intersection of race, homophobia, and transphobia. If you're a GSA supervisor, this is a great topic to discuss with students.



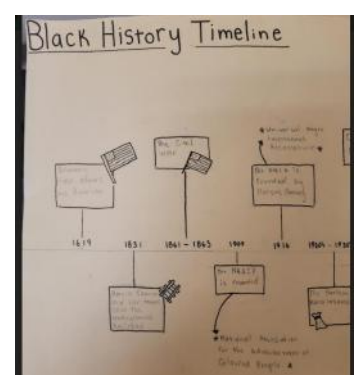
## Exploring Black History at ESOMS

Babita Bisht, a MY teacher at ESOSMs, has been exploring black history with her middle years student by creating biographies on monumental black figures in history. They have looked at Ella Bker, James Baldwin, Viola Desmond and more! Ensuring black history is reflected in our teaching is one way of challenging anti-back racism in the classroom.



## Lauren From Leila North Interviews SOSD Anti-Racism lead

Lauren Orobia, a grade 8 student from Leila North, is doing a research a project on anti-racism. As a part of her research, she sat down with the coordinator of the anti-racism initiative to talk about racism, where it comes from, and how we can challenge it. Lauren made a timeline around black history and learned a lot about how historical racism shapes how racism affects people today



# Talking Anti-Racism with Maples Met Students

April 21, 2021.



A short transcript excerpt from our podcast interview with Maples MET school students Parneet Buttar and Taleigha Joseph in Gurveer Turka's advisory classroom

Follow the link below to listen to the whole thing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKtW0xSuM0Y>

Parneet: I'm Parneet and I'm a grade 12 student in Gurveer's advisory.

Taleigha: I'm Taleigha and I am also a grade 12 student in Gurveer's advisory in Maples MET school .

Shiv : Okay, welcome! My first question for you folks is why are you interested in this topic of anti-racism? Why do you feel it's an important thing that we that we should talk about?

Parneet: I think like especially in schools. I think it's great that you're doing this like in the education system, because it's a feeder for society so like if people in this system are talking about anti-racism then we're going to create people that have those values like going into adulthood.

Taleigha: I agree, you took the words out of my mouth.

Shiv: The anti-racism initiative started out of trustees and our superintendent being moved by that what was happening in the United States from the Black Lives Matter movement and the murder of George Floyd. As of yesterday, we heard that Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murder. What are your thoughts on that? What was your response to that whole unraveling of the protests and how do you feel about this verdict that just came out yesterday?

Taleigha: It took way too long for him to get convicted with murder. Took way too long like a year almost. More than a year probably, but I mean it's great seeing that we're finally getting justice for George Floyd and there's all those other people now too that are still seeking justice that we need to push forward to.

Parneet: Yeah, I feel like while the trial was happening like even though it was so obvious that like he was the murderer. I still felt like "What if it doesn't happen?" "What if he doesn't get convicted?" because that has happened before, right? So it was like still that kind of fear; what if he doesn't get convicted? But, yeah it was a sigh of relief like, "Oh, thank god."

Shiv: I just want to return to the reason why we I decided to have this conversation and looking at the at your work around the book *How to be an Anti-racist* by Kendi. One of the major things that Kendi talks about is this idea of "not racist" versus "anti-racist." Do you find that difference important and what is your take on that distinction between non-racist versus anti-racist?

Parneet: I think we had a lot of discussions regarding this in our class too while we were reading the chapter and a lot of the feelings that came up were that there is a clear difference because [non-racist] is like you're in the middle ground you're not acknowledging when you say that you don't see color. It's like, "I'm not racist," so you don't want to acknowledge that you might have racist ideas or racist values, so that just that fear is stopping you from becoming anti-racist.

Anti-racist is like you realize that you might be racist in some ways, but you're willing to make a difference. Not racist is like you just don't want to be, like, "Oh it's not me, like I can't be racist." Just like being afraid of the word racist. We talk about this all the time in class. Non-racism is self-centered. So again, like that idea that "oh I can't be wrong" ... Anti-racism is like you're acknowledging that the other person has gone through those things and that race does exist like even though it's fake, right. It's made up, but it still has such like serious consequences for people and so anti-racism I feel like acknowledges that and is trying to push against it.

Shiv : Totally, yeah. I heard you say colorblind or can you elaborate on that that means? When people say they don't see color or that they're colorblind?

Taleigha: Yeah, in my experience when people say like they don't see color it's when ... It's so hard to explain. It's when something happens and there's like obviously two sides to it, especially like during the protest going on, and they're like there was BLM ... and then there are some people in like the middle being like "Oh I don't see color," trying not to pick sides... from what I like experienced.

Shiv: Right.

Taleigha: Yeah, they don't want to say something to hurt someone.

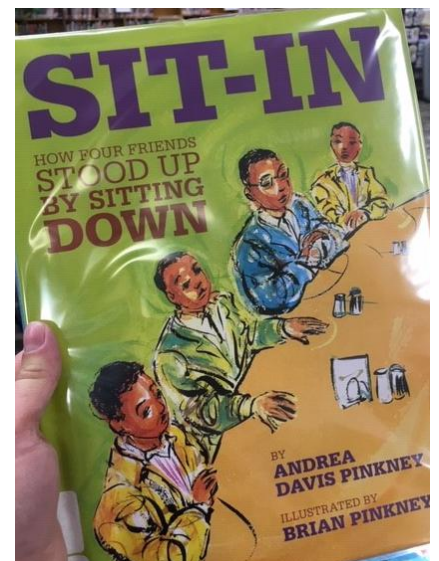
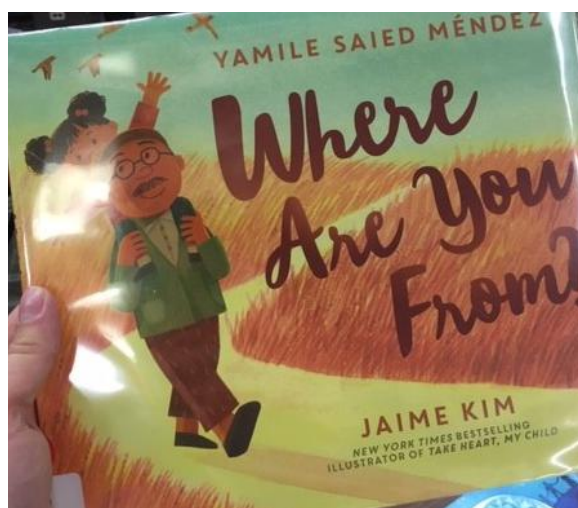
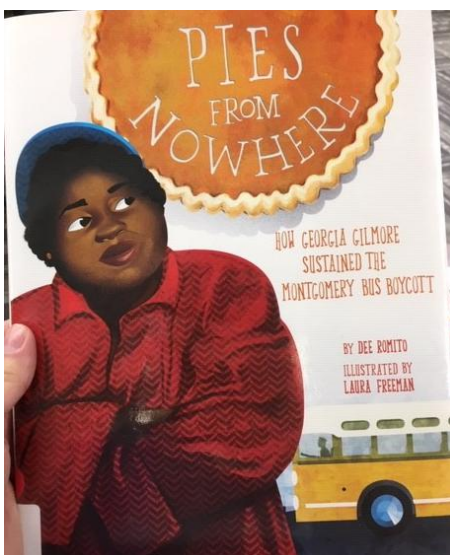
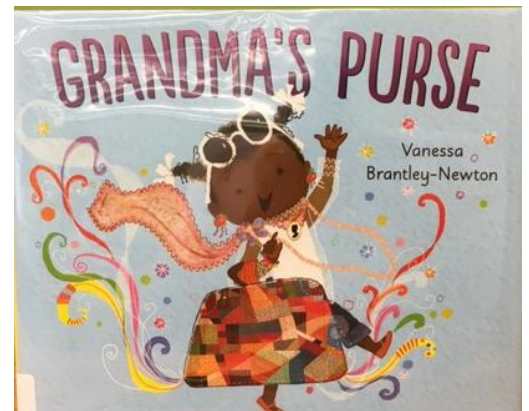
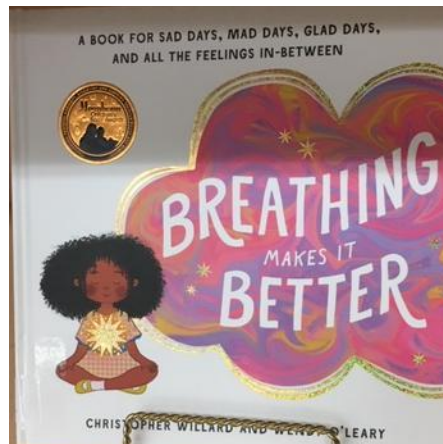
Parneet: Yeah, I think the "I don't see color," might come from a place of like not wanting to be perceived as racist or not wanting to be like "Oh I'm not wrong," because it seems like the equalizer, right? Being like "Oh we're all equal, so I don't see color, so how can I discriminate against you if I don't see your color," so I guess the thought is there, but it's not the right execution.

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## Seeing Ourselves in the Books we Read

It's important that students are able to see their identities and experiences reflected in the books and stories used in class. SOSD has given every school a budget to purchase books relating to the topics diversity and anti-racism. Below are examples of the amazing books purchased by our Library technicians.

(first row: Victory School, second row: OV Jewitt)



# LESSONS ON ANTI-RACISM

## Room 7 at OV Jewitt is discussing skin colour, racism, and anti-racism **FROM ROOM 7...**

In Manpreet Grewal's Class



Grade 1/2 students from **Room 7** read the book, *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz. As a classroom community they engaged in conversation around different skin colours. This is a starting point to confront unfounded assumptions around skin colour and further engage in discussions about race, racism, and anti-racism. The class created paintings of their hands and wrote about the colour of their skin. Mr. Camaclang shared pictures of his family and talked about the many different skin colours within his family



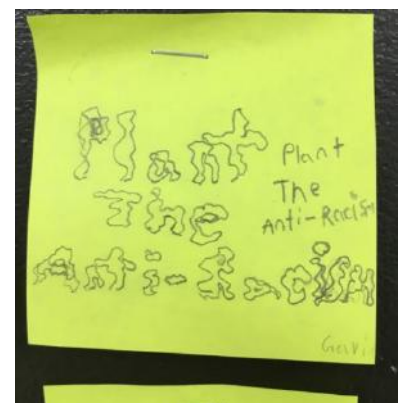
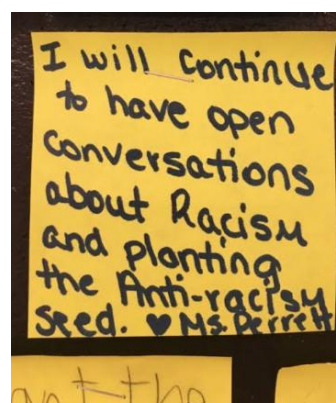
## A Mural Commemorating Important figures in Black History at ESOMS

From Taylor Smith's Grade 7 French Immersion class



## Planting the Anti-Racism Seed at James Nisbet School

Teachers and students and Nisbet school are having important conversations around anti-racism. Many of the Nisbet school assemblies are based on the seeds of P.E.A.C.E acronym which stands for Polite/Purpose, Empathy/Equity, Acts of Kindness/Activism, Cooperation/Community and Everyone Counts/Empowerment. They had their first anti-racism PEACE assembly last month! Challenging racism and bigotry is essential in nurturing and encouraged well-rounded and caring students. Let's start planting the anti-racism seed!



# Upcoming Events

## **Liberation75 Keynote lectures series on the Holocaust and Anti-Semitism**

*A series of webinars focused on fighting antisemitism and continuing Holocaust education and remembrance. Follow the link below to view more details and register:*

<https://www.liberation75.org/keynotes>

## **Can Education Change Society? An Evening with Michael Apple**

*A guest lecture from Michael Apple. Professor Apple has written extensively on the politics of educational reform, on the relationship between culture and power, and on education for social justice. Follow the link below to register:*

[https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/an-evening-with-dr-michael-apple-can-education-change-society-tickets-146642665159?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep\\_tld=1](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/an-evening-with-dr-michael-apple-can-education-change-society-tickets-146642665159?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1)