



# Africville Heritage Trust

## **The Spirit Lives On**

Presentation to the Executive Standing Committee

Halifax Regional Council

January 25, 2021

# Africville

The community of Africville dates back more than two hundred years, making it the oldest urban community of African Canadians.

When Africville was razed in the 1960's it was a community of about 400 people. That's roughly the population of the town of Annapolis Royal.

It was a place full of families and individuals. It had two churches, a school, a post office, a grocery store, and various businesses. It had sports teams, entertainers, athletes, and people of many occupations, some of who were celebrated internationally.

People knew their neighbours, enjoyed green spaces and had access to boating and fishing in the Bedford Basin.

# Africville

Sadly, one of the things that bound the community together was the racism they faced and endured. As a result, there are many stories and personal experiences of trauma that have been shared over the last 50 + years.

Former residents had many different reactions and opinions about what befell them collectively. In that respect, this has not changed.

# Africville 2010

In 2010 HRM and the Africville Genealogy Society reached an agreement to settle outstanding litigation. The terms included:

- Acknowledgement of Loss (Apology)
- \$3 million municipal contribution to the project inclusive of both capital construction and operational costs
- Conveyance of 2.5 acres of land adjacent to and west of Seaview Park
- Park Maintenance Agreement between the Africville Heritage Trust Board and HRM for the lands known as Seaview Park. Staff will work with the Africville Heritage Trust and stakeholders to establish a maintenance agreement for the lands known as Seaview Park.
- Renaming of Seaview Park to Africville - the park will still belong to HRM
- Community Development - The establishment of an African Nova Scotia Affairs Office or function within HRM that would enable our organization to better engage with the African HRM community.

# Africville 2010

A new organization was formed called the Africville Heritage Trust (AHT) to implement and act as stewards of the terms of the agreement.

Although many former residents and descendants worked to create and participate in the AHT and Museum, there are still others who continue to seek other forms of recompense for the city's actions. Like any community, there are many voices and many opinions.

# Africville 2011

## News Release

### Formal Deed Transfer Part of HRM Apology to the Former Africville Residents

(January 14, 2011) A formal deed transfer today of 2.5 acres of land at Seaview Park to the new Africville Heritage Trust Board marks another step forward in realizing the commitments made to the former Africville residents.

HRM Mayor Peter Kelly said he is pleased that all of the commitments made on behalf of Council and residents less than a year ago are either fulfilled or nearing completion.

“This is further evidence of our solemn commitment to the people of Africville and their descendants,” he said. “As I previously stated, history cannot be rewritten; however, I hope those who have been wronged will view today’s deed transfer as an opportunity, together, to hold the same pen and write a shared tomorrow.”

The deed transfer, along with the \$3 million contribution announced in November, is for the reconstruction and operation of the Seaview United Baptist Church to serve as a memorial to Africville. The \$3 million in funding includes \$2.5 million for construction and \$500,000 directed towards the installation of services to the new building.

Daurene Lewis, Chair of the Africville Heritage Trust (AHT) Board, said, “This is an important part of the settlement with the people of Africville, and allows the Africville Heritage Trust to proceed confidently with our planning for the construction of the Church.”

The AHT Board will be providing an update to the Community on plans for the construction of the replica Church at the Africville site during an open house at the North End Memorial Library Saturday, January 15 from 1 pm to 3 pm.

Africville was situated on the shores of the Bedford Basin for 150 years before its homes and the Seaview United Baptist Church were removed by the former City of Halifax and its approximately 400 residents were relocated away from their beloved community. Members of the Africville Genealogy Society worked tirelessly for recognition and a fitting tribute to the community’s vital history.

Irvine Carvery, President of the Africville Genealogy Society, said, “The return of this land back to the people of Africville repairs a tear in the fabric of our souls. As my good friend Terry Dixon noted, ‘We may own our homes in other communities, but something is missing.’ That something has been returned to us.”

# Africville 2011

1/21/2021

Africville Formal Deed Transfer

The official apology delivered on February 24, 2010 by the Mayor, on behalf of Council, included the following:

- ? 2.5 acres of land at Seaview Park to an Africville Heritage Trust Board that is to be established in short order;
- ? a park maintenance agreement between Africville Heritage Trust and HRM for the lands known as Seaview Park; and
- ? an African Nova Scotian Affairs function within HRM, which is to be included in business plans for the upcoming 2010/11 fiscal year.

The Mayor noted that HRM is very close to establishing an HRM African Nova Scotian Affairs presence/office in conjunction with the 2010-11 Budget discussions.

“This will bring a concerted focus on the needs and concerns of African Nova Scotians within our region,” he said.

For more information about the history of Africville, visit the Africville Genealogy Society website: [www.africville.ca](http://www.africville.ca) .

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# Who is the Africville Heritage Trust?



- Created in 2010 as a result of the negotiated settlement between HRM and the Africville Genealogy Society
- Its mandate is to create a long term sustainable connection for former residents and their descendants and to educate the general public by:
  1. Telling the historic story of the community from its beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to its demise in the 1960's
  2. To develop, promote and share interpretive and educational resources.
  3. To develop Economic Development Initiatives that will create employment opportunities.



# Africville Heritage Trust Board and Staff

- Executive Director Juanita Peters
- Seasonal and part-time staff supported by federal and provincial grant programs
- The Board is made of up to 15 individuals consisting of:
  - Former Africville residents and descendants
  - A member of the Africville Genealogy Society
  - Members of the public from both the African Nova Scotian Community and beyond
  - An ex officio municipal liaison



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**What have  
we achieved  
over the last  
10 years?**

# Achievements Since 2010

- The construction and operation of the Africville Museum
- The renaming of Seaview Park to Africville Park
- The renaming of Africville Road
- Establishment of the Scholarship Fund for descendants of former residents

# Achievements Since 2010

- Assumed property maintenance of Africville Park (formerly Seaview Park), using contracted former residents and descendants
- Creation of employment opportunities for members of the African Nova Scotian community
- Continued development and delivery of educational and social programs that benefit the history of African Nova Scotian communities
- The development of long-term partnerships with stakeholders within and beyond Nova Scotia
- Welcomed visitors from around the world
- Ongoing partnership with the HRM

# Our Continued Partnership with HRM

To re-energize and strengthen our partnership, we seek to:

- Enlist HRM in assisting to re-convene the tripartite government committee that supported and collaborated with the community to establish a fitting legacy for the community of Africville
- Work with us to realize our goal of proudly keeping the spirit of Africville, Canada's oldest *urban* African-Canadian community, alive through:
  - i. concluding land negotiations with HRM and the Port;
  - ii. improving pedestrian and transit site access;
  - iii. helping us work toward Heritage designations;
  - iv. providing guidance and assistance in our future development efforts;
  - v. promoting Africville's history and resilience to the broader general public.

# Looking to the Future

- **Financial Support for Ongoing Operations**

The Africville story is an important part of Canada's cultural mosaic. It is the story of urban African Canadians that dates back to the 1700's. Our current horizon for operations, without financial assistance is approximately seven years.

- **Development Agreement**

with HRM that supports the AHT's long-term strategic plan

- **Fundraising**

We are committed to embarking on a major fundraising campaign. Traditionally we have lacked the connections in the corporate community to achieve the needed level of success. HRM can open doors for us by introduction.

- **Interpretive Centre**

The AHT envisions an Interpretive Centre to tell the Africville story. The Church is not functionally suited to be a museum. Using it as such, limits not only its capabilities, but its use for other activities. The construction, outfitting and staffing of a proper Interpretive Centre is one of our major goals.

# Looking to the Future

- **Marina**

Africville's location on the shores of Bedford Basin made boating and fishing part of life in the community. We would like to use our advantageous location on the shore to build a Marina for both access and income. To this end, we have been in talks with the Port of Halifax and HRM Real Property.

- **Baptismal Pond**

Religious life was a cornerstone of the Africville Community. Baptisms were regularly held in Bedford Basin. We would like to enable the revival of this tradition through the construction of a Baptismal Pond on the former site of the Community.

- **Columbarium**

Many former residents and their descendants would like to have their final remains returned to the land they call home. The construction of a columbarium could make this a reality.

**Questions?**