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The Suburban

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BLACK HISTORY MONTH IS OPPORTUNITY FOR EDUCATORS: Black History Month activities at the English Montreal School Board are expected to take on more significance given the recent history of race-related events. The EMSB adopted a formal resolution to formally recognize Black History Month, with chair Joe Ortona saying “There were a number of events that occurred that make us seriously reflect on issues of race. These tragedies spark outrage all over the world. We are witnessing a coming together of people to denounce racial injustice, and we wanted to show our commitment by voting on and passing a resolution.” The board is seizing the opportunity for schools to teach students about pride in heritage and identity. Usual BHM activities are going virtual because of pandemic restrictions, with presentations planned from Youth Stars, Fatima Wilson and her Steelpan Band, the Black Theatre Workshop and more, with special activities lead by EMSB’s Spiritual and Community Animators Services (SCAS).

The SCAS is also creating a presentation for its animators to use during February, and for teachers to use recorded versions all year long. It’s an entry point into a conversation about Black history, with students engaging in stories and videos about Black Canadians, through the lens of character strengths, and take part in activities that encourage reflection on identity and representation. The SCAS invited Montreal historian Dr. Dorothy Williams to help them fill the gaps in knowledge and programs in relation to Black history and community, “so we can continue to work towards programming that is relevant and meeting the needs of our students and community,” said SCAS consultant Danika Swanson. “We are using precious take-aways from the workshop to facilitate discussion, increase knowledge and comfort level to encourage conversations in classroom about language, identity, heritage and diversity. It’s important to create a space for difficult conversations where people can talk, make mistakes and learn together – about ourselves and each other.”

Swanson says she is looking into acquiring Dr. Williams’ turnkey Black History teaching kits for Social Science/History or ERC Teachers. The teacher’s resource combats the misnomer that Blacks are relative newcomers to the “safe haven” of Canada, and its integrated lessons and activities reveal the history of Black Canadians from the early days of exploration up to the postmodern era. While there is no indication of widespread adoption of them at the EMSB, *The Suburban* has learned that some individual schools and teachers have already ordered the kits for their classrooms.

CDN/NDG

NDG GETS NEW COMMUNITY CENTRE: NDG is getting a new community centre. The lease on the Walkley centre space on Côte Saint-Luc Road comes to an end in September 2023, and the landlord is planning to convert the property.



An artist’s rendering of the Adagio winter station at Place Rodolphe-Rousseau

The borough of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce however, is partnering with the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal (CSSDM) for a new 575-sq.-metre facility as part of the enlargement project of Les-Enfants-du-Monde school on Rosedale Avenue just south of Côte Saint-Luc Road.

The CSSDM will build the facility as part of its school, and the city will rent the space beginning July 1, 2022 for a 30-year period, for \$1,935,697, with four five-year options to renew. The borough counts 11 community centres in municipal or private buildings. Western NDG counts only the Walkley and Westhaven centres in rented spaces never meant for such vocations, which are limited in what they can offer. It also contains neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of households with children. The borough will assume the \$4,339,723 project cost, as well as future maintenance and minor repairs on its part of the property. The facility will also serve the school, the CSSDM maintaining ownership of the land. The CSSDM cannot repossess the property before 41 years.

“This project is a trailblazer,” says Loyola councillor Christian Arseneault, adding that the borough and school service centre, and formerly school board, have been in talks about the project since mid-2019. “There aren’t exactly that many appropriately sized properties in NDG for a community centre,” he told *The Suburban*, adding that by piggybacking on an existing development plan like the school expansion, the borough was able to maximize its return. “The beauty of this is we will recoup our costs in 23 years.”

CÔTE ST. LUC

NEW TAX BILL DEADLINE: Côte St. Luc council approved a new deadline for this year’s property tax bills. Councillor Steven Erdelyi said the first installment is now due May 27 and the second installment is due Aug. 25. During a brief Jan. 19 council meeting, Erdelyi pointed out that CSL was able to institute new deadlines as Montreal extended the deadline for the island-wide agglomeration portions to be paid by demerged municipalities.

WATER TESTING: Côte St. Luc council recently awarded a contract for two years of lead and copper water sampling, which will take place in the summers of 2021 and 2022, for \$568,000, plus taxes. *The Suburban* has previously reported that the city has delayed accelerated

testing at local homes built before 1976 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.” This is strictly for water testing,” Councillor David Tordjman explained. “The guidelines that have changed only allow the testing to be done between the months of July and September, it’s a temperature issue, and it’s a longer test. The two years of testing will be of 3,000 to 3,200 homes, so about 1,500 homes per year. That is the anticipated rate.”

ST. LAURENT

ADAGIO WINTER STATION: The borough recently inaugurated Adagio, a “winter station” at Place Rodolphe-Rousseau. “The project, initiated by [the City of Montreal] and overseen by the [City of Montreal’s] Bureau du design, is an ode to winter intended to provide passers-by in the area with a resting place and to promote local businesses and local shopping along Décarie Blvd,” says a borough announcement. Mayor Alan DeSousa said the borough wants to “bring a little warmth and comfort, to St. Laurent families hard hit by the pandemic. We are combining business with pleasure, as this site will also encourage local shopping and give a helping hand to the merchants along Décarie, who are also suffering from this situation. In addition, this station will give children and adults a chance to enjoy the vitality of winter right up until April and to dream up the next dance steps under a summer sun.” The project “was spearheaded by a committee including representatives from Quartier D, the Société de développement commercial du boulevard Décarie and Développement économique St. Laurent as well as a number of borough teams, including those from Engineering and Culture. This committee benefited from the services of the firm Choses communes to bring the chosen concept to life.”

FREE PARKING SPACES DURING SNOW OPERATIONS: The borough recently announced that 431 free parking spaces in eight zones can be temporarily used “to ensure the smooth rollout of snow removal operations and accelerate the process. “These sites will be accessible free of charge between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m., as well as during the daytime for some,” a borough advisory says. “It will be important to pay close attention to the temporary signs announcing site hours for this purpose in the following locations: The Mairie d’arrondissement, the Complexe sportif, the Centre des loisirs and the

Jules-Poitras site.” The sport complex at 2385 Thimens has 180 spaces, the Centre des loisirs at 1375 Grenet has 80 spaces, the borough hall at 777 Marcel Laurin Blvd has 70 spaces, 1694 Jules-Poitras has 30 spaces, Noël-Nord Park at Toupin Blvd. has 25 spaces, St. Laurent Park at 845 Poirier has 19 spaces, Noël-Sud Park at 3005 Mathis has 16 spaces and Beaulac Park at 1145 Elizabeth has 11 spaces.

TOWN OF MOUNT ROYAL

TAX BILL DEADLINE: The town announced that the property tax bills were mailed Feb. 1. “In order to provide relief measures similar to last year’s, a first installment will be due only on May 25 and a second on August 25,” an advisory says. “If Town Hall remains closed to the public until then because of the pandemic, it will not be possible to hand-deliver your cheque at a service counter. Instead, please turn to: paying electronically, paying at your bank, mailing your cheque” or “using the drop chute at 90 Roosevelt Ave. Payment is charged to the account on the day it is received at our offices. Allow for a minimum of two working days for your payment to reach us.”

HAMPSTEAD

WINTER CARNIVAL: The Hampstead winter carnival takes place at Hampstead Park Sunday Feb. 14, but an advisory says “activities and procedures may change so that they are in accordance with all provincial Covid-19 regulations.” A schedule and procedures on how to partake in activities can be seen at hampstead.qc.ca.

NEW PROPERTY TAX DEADLINE: Related to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor William Steinberg and the town council announced that the “due dates for property tax payments are being extended by three months. The interest rate for late payments has been reduced from 12% to 7% per year. Therefore, the due dates for the payment of municipal taxes will be as follows—the first payment will be due on May 18 and the second on August 16.”

MONTREAL WEST

PROPERTY TAX DEADLINE: The town announced that it has “put an economic measure in place to help citizens face the economic challenges related to COVID-19. Following [the Jan. 25] council meeting where a new bylaw was passed, the first tax payment is now due on May 25, and the second installment on Aug. 27. Please note that this change has been approved after the printing of the tax bills.”

GARBAGE COLLECTION: Montreal West is reminding residents that, “since Dec. 24, garbage collection service in the Town of Montreal West is on Thursdays. Additionally, if you have any issues with your residential garbage collection, use one of the following methods for a quick and efficient response: fill out the online form on the Town’s website montreal-west.ca, send an email to publicworks@montreal-west.ca or call Public Works at 514-485-8597 (during regular business hours).” ■