

One Hundred Women Who Care Guelph – Presentation on behalf of the Guelph Black Heritage Society

I am honoured today to “speak” on behalf of the Guelph Black Heritage Society, herein after called GBHS for short. So here goes...

What is the GBHS and what do they do?

The mission and purpose of the GBHS is to promote Guelph and Wellington County’s distinctive place in Southwestern Ontario’s Black Heritage. They are in the process of restoring their site on Essex Street in Guelph in the former Guelph British Methodist Church, now renamed Heritage Hall. This building is a fitting home for the GBHS because it was built in 1880 by former fugitive slaves who settled in Guelph and Wellington County via the Underground Railroad.

How would our donations be used by the GBHS?

If GBHS receives our funding, they will allocate the money in two ways. The first project, “**Change Starts Now**” is a response to the increased demand in our community to learn about Black History, anti-racism, discrimination and diversity both locally and globally. Our funds will help sponsor educational programming events at Heritage Hall as well as on-line. In addition, they are currently in the process of developing a resource library at Heritage Hall. GBHS has reached out to local school boards about making these valuable resources available to local teachers and students. These these resources can easily be shared with everyone in Guelph-Wellington and beyond.

The second use for our funding is very practical and necessary. Heritage Hall needs a new front door. The GBHS is committed to restoring Heritage Hall to make it safe, environmentally friendly and accessible. There is great symbolism in funding this door. When closed, a door provides safety and protection for those within. When open, a door says “Welcome”.

Why am I interested in obtaining funds for the GBHS?

My interest in seeking support for GBHS is one that is dear to my history teacher’s heart. For many years I worked with colleagues across our province, and with the Ontario Ministry of Education to revise the History curriculum to make it a more accurate account of Ontario’s History. The story of the Black citizens of Ontario is one that had been sadly overlooked. As a teacher, I challenged my students to ask, “Whose story is getting told?” or “more importantly, “Whose story is **not** getting told?”. The mandate to the GBHS fits beautifully into this ‘ approach. Their “Change Starts Now” initiative will offer a treasure trove of resources for the students and teachers in our schools.

What are the funding sources for GBHS?

Like all of the groups we have supported, GBHS leans heavily on donations for funding. They have received some funding for the restoration of Heritage Hall from agencies like the Trillium Foundation and Heritage Canada. In post-Covid world, the GBHS plans to generate its own funds through renting space at Heritage Hall for educational and social gatherings, celebrations and the like. But the importance of donations cannot be overstated.

Finally.....

One school where I taught had a sign on the front door that said, “There are no strangers here, only friends we have not yet met.” To me this is a fitting description of 100 Women. Over the past five years we have friended and funded several amazing organizations that work so hard to make a positive difference in the lives of our families, friends and neighbours in Guelph Wellington. It is my hope that you will join me in including the Guelph Black Heritage Society in our ever-widening circle of new friends by supporting them in the important work they are doing for our community. Thank you.