



## Afro-Mentorship Program **FEATURE STORY**

### Saskatchewan African Canadian Heritage Museum Inc.: Afro-Mentorship Program

*By Carol LaFayette-Boyd, Executive Director*

The Afro-Mentorship Program works to empower children and youth of African descent through advocacy and recognition. This program helps develop social and emotional needs by creating a safe place where children and youth can engage in effective dialogue and creative activities, to ultimately increase their cultural wellness.

Zoom discussions cover topics around health and wellness such as overcoming depression; developing social support networks; self budgeting; goal setting and independence; healthy eating; keeping active; community, culture, and history; and love, compassion, and courage. Activities include scrapbooking where youth learn how to manage and reduce negative thoughts and self-criticism. The first in-person get together included guest speakers that discussed self-acceptance and involved youth performances.

Communication and partnerships have occurred with facilitators nation-wide. Built partnerships have grown in and outside of the Afro-community in Saskatchewan, and increased education and awareness of shared issues has occurred with mentees, mentors, and stakeholders.

Issues that are continuously experienced within early-and-middle childhood include low self-esteem, body shaming, and bullying. This can result in anxiety and depression and can create a negative paradigm of poor outcomes such as high school dropout rates, early pregnancy, substance abuse, and incarceration.

Together, children's narratives can be changed by providing them the skills and experience to increase self-expression. This program is meant to provide children and youth education focused on culturally appropriate coping skills which helps each participant develop a positive ethnic identity and increase cultural wellbeing.

### *Mentee's Experience*

"I would love to attend something like that again. It was an amazing place where I felt I could be myself and engage with others without feeling judged. It was such an open space. I felt the need to embrace who I am and get to know everyone and engage with them. It was one of my highlights by far. I loved the first speakers who came in and talked about their background, what grounds them to their culture, and what makes them, them."

**Chance B, Age 17,  
High School Graduate**

