

Looking Back into the Future Black History Month Essay and Artwork Competition 2026

As part of the 11th anniversary of the Looking Back into the Future Black History Month Conference on February 7th, 2026, the essay and artwork competition component has now become a core feature to ensure that the talents and gifts of youth in the Durham Region are heard, amplified and included in this edition and subsequent editions of the conference going forward.

About the Looking Back into the Future Black History Month Conference The objectives of the Looking Back into the Future Black History Month Conference are to foster the knowledge of the history in Canada, and to highlight the contributions, and achievements of Black Canadians. The program also aims to provide practical ideas and solutions for the community to forge ahead in building a better future. The program is strategically positioned to inspire young people to make a positive impact in their communities and to set new historical trends.

Competition Eligibility:

- Students must be in grade 7 or 8.
- Currently enrolled in an elementary school, which is a part of the DCDSB, DDSB, or PVNCCSB, at the time of the 11th annual Looking Back into the Future Black History Month Conference in February 2026.

Competition Instructions:

- Students must create an original visual arts piece (painting, drawing, etc.).
- Or write an essay that encapsulates **one** of the four themes listed below.
- Schools should only submit (based on the school's discretion), the **top two** essays and/or **top two** pieces of artwork.

Visual Art Requirements:

- 11x17 paper should be used for the artwork.
- Must focus on **one** of the following themes listed below.

Essay Requirements:

- 800-word essay.
- Must focus on **one** of the following themes listed below.

Themes to consider for the essays and artwork submissions:

1. Thirty years of officially recognizing February as Black History Month in Canada: Triumphs, challenges, and opportunities
2. Looking Towards the Future-Innovation and Perseverance of people of African descent in Canada

3. The Beauty of Resilience and Hope-The stories of people of African descent in Canada.
4. Emancipation in Canada-Freedom and Liberation for people of African descent.

What the Judges are looking for:

- A clear and concise essay which is well-evidenced and reaches a clear conclusion.
- Submissions that do not exceed 800 words (excluding references) - submissions over 800 words will not be considered.
- The word count should be provided at the end of the essay.
- Information should be referenced (no Wikipedia please!)
- Submissions are the entrant's own original work and relevant to one of the themes outlined.
- Essay and artwork submissions should be creative, original, and innovative, keeping in mind the rich, over 400-year history of people of African descent in Canada.
- Please note that essay and artwork submissions are judged without seeing the entrants'/ school's details.

Essay and Artwork Submission Deadlines:

- The competition is open from Monday December 31st, 2025, and closes on Friday, January 23rd, 2026.
- Entries received after 5pm on Friday January 23rd, will not be accepted.
- Winners (One winning essay and one winning artwork) will be announced on Friday February 6th, 2026.
- Prizes will be given to winners at the 11th annual Looking Back into the Future Conference on Saturday February 7th, 2026.

Prizes for the Winners include:

- A cash prize.
- Certificate of Recognition.
- Display of the winning artwork and reading of the winning essay during the 11th annual Looking Back into the Future Black History Month Conference on Saturday, February 7th, 2026.

Registration:

Schools should register for the essay and artwork competition and submit the top two essays and top two artwork to Channon Oyeniran (Conference Host) at: channonc425@gmail.com

Thank you and we look forward to your submissions!