

# Hometown a happy place

*Black History Month reminds us how education can dispel misinformation and ignorance*

**BY ANNISSEA HOPKINS,  
WITH JENDAYA HOPKINS**

**T**HE Black History Month is an annual observance in February to commemorate African American history. I look forward to the annual celebration with mixed emotions.

I am one of the few individuals of African Caribbean descent who can call Thunder Bay home. Yet, to this day, I am often asked, "where are you from?"

When I reply Thunder Bay, this usually elicits the response; "No, really — where are you from?"

Here is why I feel Thunder Bay is my home.

My parents immigrated from Guyana, South America to Thunder Bay in 1969. They chose Northern Ontario as it was a remote, safe and quiet location to raise a family.

My father, Christopher Culley, was a stationary engineer with CN Rail. My mother, Rosemarie, was employed by McKellar Hospital, now known as Hogarth Riverview Manor. She retired in 1998.

I was born in Thunder Bay. I



---

## ONE CITY, MANY VOICES

---

**The Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.**

---

of many immigrant families, especially from Ukraine and Italy. This gave me the opportunity to immerse in their culture.

Another location that I hold near to my heart is the Fort William First Nation (FWFN). I have many fond childhood memories of my adventures on the FWFN. I still enjoy spending time there with my lifelong friend, Helen Pelletier.

I am ensuring that my 17-year-

ened the need for more education and awareness with the Black Lives Matter movement. The events organized in the city were well attended which made us feel both proud and heard.

Thunder Bay is geographically isolated. However, there is an abundance of diversity, cultural understanding, and events here.

The annual Folklore Festival by the Multicultural Association gives the opportunity to experience traditional foods from all over the world including Caribbean and African Countries. You will be sure to find Jendaya and myself volunteering at this event.

Another event that we assist organizing is the much-anticipated annual Black History Month Gala and dinner, normally held in February. This signature activity is a sold-out event every year. The guests are treated to an evening of traditional food, dance, music, and fashion.

My parents came to Canada for a better life and opportunity not only for themselves, but also for their children, and the future generations to come.