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COUNTY *of* KINGS

## **Young Kings County authors celebrated at Windows & Mirrors book launch**

**April 18, 2024**

Grade 2 student Drucilla Medcraft rests the bright green permanent marker she picked for signing autographs between her index and middle fingers. She looks to the fellow published authors seated beside her at the crowded book signing table, sits up straight and makes her availability known.

“Anyone? Anyone else? Any more books?” she calls out.

Within seconds, a new book flipped open to the page featuring her vibrant artwork is in front of her and she leaves her mark once more.

Fifteen young Kings County authors of African descent were celebrated at the Windows & Mirrors Book Launch hosted in Council Chambers at the Municipality of the County of Kings April 11. The event was a red-carpet affair featuring poetry readings, remarks, photo opportunities and the popular book signing.

Grade 6 student Alexi-Jade Smith captivated the crowd with a spoken word performance of her poem, “My Beautiful Skin.”

“My skin is black and beautiful,” she began. “It’s the skin I walk in, talk in, and rock in.”

“It’s the skin that makes me confident, unique and the skin that makes me special.”

### **Your Art Matters**

Brittany Traynor, Manager of Community Development for the Municipality of the County of Kings, commended the young authors for rising to the challenge of coming together to create a book of stories, art and poetry made by and for People of Colour.

“We asked you to share your hopes and dreams, your love and heartache, your struggles and your joys, your courage and your fears, your prose and your poetry. We asked you to pour your hearts and minds into your work,” said Traynor, providing remarks as a Board Member of the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association (VANSDA).

The Windows & Mirrors project was funded by the Association of Black Social Workers Youth Development Initiative Grant, and supported by community partners Eaglespeaker Publishing, VANSDA, the Municipality of the County of Kings.

“For all the times each of you faced unnecessary hardship, I am sorry. It shouldn’t be that way for you. Racism and discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization have no place here - or anywhere,” said Traynor, addressing the young authors at the book launch.

“I want to affirm to you that you are loved by not only your families but by a community of people who see you and value you and who are working hard to make things better for you. Representation does matter. Your thoughts matter. Your words matter. Your stories and your art matters.”

### **Published Authors**

Authors from Grades 2-10 contributed to the Windows & Mirrors book. Project mentors Kathy-Ann Johnson, Lawrence Parker, Damini Awoyiga and Hissa Simpson-Barrows provided guidance as needed throughout the creation process and during a series of workshops hosted at VANSDA.

“Going to VANSDA was really fun because I could write some of my ideas down,” said Grade 6 student Amani Mutuku.

Amani credited the mentors with helping her take her ideas further. She appreciated the warm reception the published authors received when they walked the red carpet at the book launch.

“I felt really proud,” she said.

Grade 6 student Santeano Barrows hosted the book launch ceremony, shared some of his published work at the podium, and participated in interviews.

“The whole red-carpet thing was pretty cool,” Santeano shared during a break from autographing books.

“One of the things I really liked about the project was the fact that we could become a published author, but also the fact that most of the time we were basically allowed to do whatever we wanted to express ourselves.”

Santeano plans to continue writing in the future and doesn’t skip a beat when asked where a published author in Grade 6 goes from here.

“Well, there’s only one way,” he says, proudly pointing his index finger to the sky. “Up.”

### **How to purchase Windows & Mirrors:**

Copies of Windows and Mirrors are available for purchase at the Municipality of the County of Kings (181 Coldbrook Village Park Drive) for \$19.99 plus tax. For more information, email Graysen Parker at [gparker@countyofkings.ca](mailto:gparker@countyofkings.ca) or call 1-888-337-2999.