



February 2026 Newsletter Smokey Drive Elementary School

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Safe Arrival: 1-833-582-6940

Principal: K. Longard
Vice Principal: C. Garrett
Admin Assistant: L. MacNeil

Principal's Message

February is here, which means we are already half way through this school year! So many great things have been happening here at Smokey Drive. Students are engaged in their learning and it's wonderful to see and celebrate all of their accomplishments. This month, we will be recognizing African Heritage Month as well as preparing for September by ensuring that new Pre Primary and Primary students are properly registered to attend school in the fall. Thank you for your continued support!

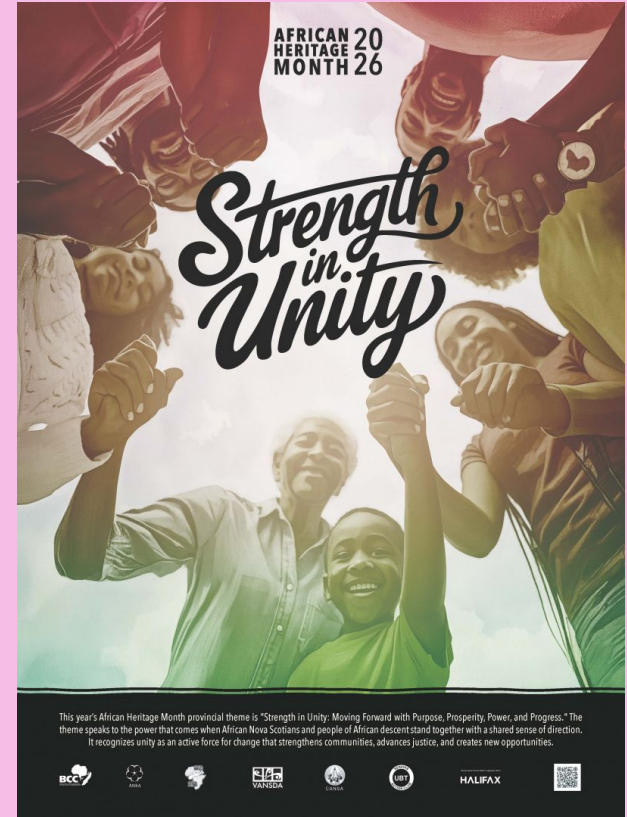
Mrs. Longard



February is African Heritage Month

African Heritage Month in Nova Scotia is a time to recognize and celebrate the rich history, vibrant culture, and lasting contributions of people of African descent in our province. This year's theme, "Strength in Unity – Moving Forward with Purpose, Prosperity, Power and Progress," reminds us of the importance of coming together as a community, learning from one another, and moving forward with shared purpose.

In our schools, African Heritage Month provides meaningful opportunities for students to explore African Nova Scotian histories and experiences, deepen their understanding of our shared past, and reflect on the values of respect, inclusion, and belonging. Through classroom learning, discussions, and activities connected to this year's theme, students are encouraged to appreciate diversity, build empathy, and recognize the strength that comes from unity. These experiences help foster welcoming school communities and inspire students to contribute positively to a more inclusive and equitable future for all.



Upcoming Dates

- Feb 4th: SAC @ 6:00pm/ PTA @ 8:00pm
- Feb 9-12th: Lockdown Drill
- Feb 16th - Heritage Day - No Classes for Students
- Feb 17th - Lunar New Year
- Mar 13th - Assessment & Evaluation Day - No Classes for Students
- Mar 16-20th - March Break - No Classes for Students
- Mar 31st - Report Cards sent home
- Apr 2nd - Professional Practice day for staff/Progress Conferences - No Classes for Students

Safe Arrival

If your child is going to be late or absent, please remember to call our Safe Arrival program, instead of calling the main office. Excuse them for the day and if they arrive during the day, the system will be updated upon their arrival.

1-833-582-6940 (Toll Free)

Playground Safety and Supervision

Students are not to be arriving at school before 8:15 am. There is no supervision for students arriving early to play before school. Any students coming early or staying after school to play must be with an adult. Supervision begins at 8:15 and goes until 8:25 when the bell rings and everyone enters the building.

Please ensure that your children are coming dressed appropriately for the weather during this time. We will only be coming in early during heavy rain and temperatures that are colder than -20 degrees (with the windchill). For more information on HRCE's windchill policy, please click on the link provided below.

[https://hsc.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/2025-01/Wind%20Chill%20Safety%20Protocol 2024.pdf](https://hsc.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/2025-01/Wind%20Chill%20Safety%20Protocol%202024.pdf)

February is Registration Month

Do you have or know a child who will be starting Pre Primary or Primary this fall? It's time to register!

Registration for the 2026-27 school year opened on Monday, February 2. To ensure we have the right staff and supports in place for September, it's important that we gather enrolment numbers now. **Current Pre Primary students are not required to re-register for Primary.**

Tip: Before you begin, make sure you have the following documents in electronic form (image, PDF or Word document):

- Proof of identity/age with one of the following: birth certificate, passport, immigration papers, or legal adoption papers if you are new to the HRCE
- Proof of home address with one of the following: a recently dated official government or utility document with your current address that includes your name and date, such as water bill, power bill, internet bill, home fuel bill, a tax receipt, property assessment, a mortgage contract or a residential lease agreement

Visit the [HRCE website](https://www.hrce.ca) for more information and to enrol your child today through PowerSchool Enrollment!

Don't have a child to register? Maybe you know someone who does!
Please help us spread the word and pass this information on to friends, neighbours or relatives who will be looking to register for the fall.



Valentines

As we did in October for Halloween, teachers will be sending home paper bags for families to fill with treats and return for Valentines Day celebrations on February 13th (Valentines is on a Saturday this year). Please note that this is meant to be a small snack in addition to the other food that might be sent in for recess and/or lunch on that day. To respect those with allergies, we are asking that you only send in food for your child and not for them to share with others. Thank you for your support with this.

Classroom teachers will be communicating about other activities that might be taking place in their rooms on that day.



Reminders

- Do not send nut or peanut products to school
- Please do not send food to share, due to allergies
- No pets on school property between 8:15 am-2:45 pm.
- Respect “No Parking” and “No Stopping” signs when dropping off and picking up your students.
- **Please do not enter the school driveway after 8:00 am and/or before 3:00 pm.**

Heritage Day 2026

Nova Scotia Heritage Day is celebrated on Monday, February 16, and provides an opportunity for students and families to learn more about the people, stories, and events that have shaped our province. Each year, Heritage Day honours a notable Nova Scotian, and in 2026 we recognize Joseph William Comeau, an important Acadian poet, writer, and cultural leader.

Joseph William Comeau is remembered for his contributions to Acadian literature and for helping to preserve and promote Acadian language, identity, and culture in Nova Scotia. His work reflected the everyday lives, resilience, and traditions of Acadian communities, and his legacy continues to influence Acadian culture today.

Heritage Day provides us with an opportunity to explore Nova Scotia's diverse history and to better understand how individuals from different backgrounds have contributed to our shared story. Learning about Joseph William Comeau helps students appreciate the richness of Acadian heritage and the importance of preserving culture, language, and community.



Arriving at school on time

Punctuality is an essential habit that helps students start their day with focus and readiness. Arriving on time ensures that students don't miss out on important instructions, activities, or the chance to fully engage with their classmates. It also sets a positive example of responsibility and respect for others. Together, we can help our students develop skills that will benefit them both in school and beyond.

Thank you for your continued support in getting your students to school on time. If there is anything the school can do to support, please reach out.



Safe Dismissal

Please send teachers a note if there is a change to your child's dismissal procedure (ie, someone different is picking your child up that is not on your contact list, they are going home with a friend, etc.) This allows us to ensure that children are getting safely to their after school place.



Toys from Home

A reminder that special toys from home should not be coming to school, unless pre-arranged by the classroom teacher for an activity such as Show & Tell or PJ/Stuffie Day. Please ensure that your child does not come to school with these items, unless they are specifically asked for.

Slow down in school zones

To ensure our students' safety, here are a few reminders for drivers navigating any school zone.

- Follow school zone speed limits
- Be prepared to stop for a school bus at any time
- Remember to stop whenever you approach a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing, regardless of the direction of travel
- Give yourself extra time during your morning and after school commutes
- Always watch for pedestrians
- Always obey crossing guards
- Avoid distractions while driving

Also, please do not drive into our parking lot after 8:00 am. We have had a number of safety issues regarding this in recent weeks and greatly appreciate your continued cooperation in this matter. If someone other than you is dropping off or picking students up, I would appreciate it if you could pass this message along.

Lockdown Drill

In the fall, we practiced what we call a Lockdown Drill. We will be having another one of those drills the week of **Feb 9-13th..**

During a lockdown drill, classroom doors are secured and the students remain in a safe spot inside the room until instructed by the teacher to resume their activities. All exterior doors are locked and no one is permitted to enter or leave the building. Students are kept inside the school and classrooms when circumstances make it safer to stay in the classroom rather than evacuate.

Please be assured that staff at our school will spend time discussing the importance of this procedure with students prior to running a drill. We will also take time after the drill to remind them that it was only a practice and there was no danger.

Winter Weather

We love to get outside and plan to spend as many recesses and lunches playing outside as we can throughout the winter. We love the snow! We take the temperature and wind chill into consideration when deciding to send students outside but we are able to get out most days. Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. When students are sent outside, we do not have supervision for students to stay inside. We require students to wear a jacket, boots and snow pants if they are to play in the snow. This helps avoid students having to sit around in wet clothes after coming in. Hats and mittens/gloves are important too; we do not have a vast supply of them here. Students can easily get wet playing in the snow so it's a good idea to tuck a dry set of clothes in the backpack in case your child needs to get changed during the day.

We will only be staying inside during heavy rain and temperatures that are colder than -20 degrees (with the windchill). For more information on HRCE's windchill policy, please click on the link provided below.

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PTA Dance

The Smokey Drive PTA is excited to host another dance for students and their families on Thursday, February 12th from 6:30-7:30 pm. Here are just a few highlights:

- Doors Open at 6:15 pm and the dance ends at 7:30 pm.
 - Entry is "pay what you can" at the door. All proceeds go to the PTA to give back to the school community throughout the year.
 - Parents/responsible adults are required to stay and be responsible for their child throughout the evening.
 - This event is for current Smokey Drive Elementary students and their families only. Fire code restrictions will be followed and once capacity is reached we will be unable to allow additional people to enter.
- As in previous years, we welcome and appreciate any canteen donations such as chips, bear paws, fruit snacks, individually wrapped candy (peanut free) to be sold the night of the dance. Donations can be dropped off to the school office at anytime.

Anyone interested in volunteering the night of the dance can sign up at the link below:

[Smokey Drive PTA February Dance — Signup Sheet | SignUp.com](#)

Talent Show

We are excited to announce that our school will be hosting a Talent Show on **Thursday, March 12th** in the morning. The performances will be for students only. Due to fire restrictions, we will not be able to invite families.

Each participating student will be expected to perform a **prepared** talent of their choice (such as singing, dancing, playing an instrument, acting, comedy, etc.). Please note that all performances **must be planned and practiced in advance**. Students will **not** be allowed to make up a performance on the spot during the event.

For students who are interested in performing, they must get a permission form from Ms. Garrett. This form must be signed by a parent and returned by Tuesday, February 24th. Please reach out to her at cgarrett@hrce.ca with any questions.



Power Outage Information for Families

As we move further into the winter months, we want to share how decisions are made when a school experiences a power outage.

Our priority is always to keep schools open safely when possible. A power outage does not automatically mean classes are cancelled – even if it happens during the school day. The decision depends on when power is expected to be restored.

Here's what happens:

- When a school loses power, HRCE's Operations Team contacts Nova Scotia Power to gather available details on the cause and an estimated restoration time.
- Once we have this information, we consider:
- Before school starts: Have buses begun their routes? If so, we wait until students arrive before making a decision. If classes are cancelled, elementary families will be contacted before dismissal.
- During the school day: How close is dismissal? What is the temperature in the building? Does the school rely on power for water or septic systems? These factors, among others, help us decide whether to stay open or close. Often, power returns faster than we could safely send students home.

Power Outage Information for Families continued

If classes are cancelled:

- HRCE will notify families by email and text.
- Families of elementary students will also receive a phone call before dismissal.

Deciding to close schools during a power outage is never simple, but safety is always our top priority. We understand that cancellations can be inconvenient, and our goal is to keep students learning in class whenever possible.

More information about school cancellations for any reason can be found [here](#).



What happens when a school loses power?

Learn more at hrce.ca/families/cancellations under *Power Outage Information for Families*



Halifax
Regional Centre for Education

Inclement Weather and School Cancellations

In the event of school cancellation due to inclement weather and other exceptional circumstances, the decision to cancel school is made as close to 6:00 am as possible. Here are some ways you can find out:

- HRCE Website at www.hrce.ca
- Call the information line at 902-464-4636
- Listen to the radio (all local radio stations)
- Sign up to receive text messages from the HRCE

At times schools may be cancelled by “Family of Schools”. **We are in the Sackville High family of schools.** In the event school is cancelled during the school day, the decision is usually made by 11:00 am. The school will contact all families to confirm procedures to release your children. Please ensure your child knows what to do in case of early closure and ensure that your phone numbers and email addresses are up-to-date so we can contact you. Students are not released until we have made contact with a parent/guardian or designate as you identified when you updated information on PowerSchool in September.

If school is cancelled during the day, we will dismiss students as per their parent/guardian instruction at 12:05 pm. If you can avoid it, do not come to pick your child up early as this will result in congestion in the office area. Parents, guardians and caregivers are requested to wait outside their regular dismissal door at 12:05 pm for their children.

On days when conditions exist that it is not safe to open schools at the regularly scheduled time but it is predicted that conditions will improve, a 2-hour delayed opening may be considered. In this situation, students at Smokey Drive cannot arrive before 10:15 am and classes will begin at 10:25 am. Lunch and dismissal times will not be affected in this case.