

CBRM PROCLAMATION

“Viola Desmond Day”

- Whereas:** In New Glasgow on November 8th, 1946, Viola Desmond, a black woman who refused to give up her seat in the “whites only” section of a movie theatre spent the night in jail and was fined;
- And Whereas:** This set off a chain of events and now 67 years later, led to a formal apology from the Province of Nova Scotia and a Royal Pardon that affirmed that there had been a miscarriage of justice and that Viola Desmond had committed no crime;
- And Whereas:** Since that time, Viola’s portrait now hangs in Government House and Canada Post has issued a stamp in her honor and the Viola Desmond Chair for Research in Social Justice has been established at Cape Breton University;
- And Whereas:** Ryerson University celebrates Viola Desmond Day with scholarships and the Town of New Glasgow has permanent teaching displays about her;
- And Whereas:** Wanda Robson, Viola’s sister and the author of “Sister to Courage” has suggested that the day should be called “Viola Desmond Day” in honour of all Nova Scotians who have fought for Social Justice;
- And Whereas:** Viola Desmond was also a pioneer woman entrepreneur in the field of black beauty care and she opened the doors for dignity and self-worth for other black women, giving the opportunities to achieve business success on their own;
- And Whereas:** Viola Desmond did not set out to fight racial inequality in the legal world, as that battle was thrust upon her in the Roseland movie theatre in 1946 by the ignorance of others and she fought back and chose to take on the challenges and responsibilities of the business world;
- And Whereas:** In a time when a black woman could not get her hair cut in a beauty parlor in Halifax, Viola Desmond decided to open her own shop and traveled to Montreal and New York to study hair dressing and skin care, to learn how to make wigs and her own cosmetic products;

And Whereas: After returning to Halifax to operate her beauty parlor serving black women she created a line of beauty products and skin creams that met the needs of black women and she began the Desmond School of Beauty Culture, graduating her first class in 1947;

And Whereas: Viola was enroute to Sydney to deliver her beauty products when her car brook down in New Glasgow and she had to stay the night, an opportunity for a night at the movies;

And Whereas: When she sat in the "whites only" section, she was asked to move and her refusing to give up her seat, resulted in being carried out of the theatre, jailed and found guilty of cheating Nova Scotia out of one penny in amusement tax, the difference between a ticket on the first floor and a ticket in the balcony where blacks were required to sit;

And Whereas: Being grateful for the actions of Viola Desmond in 1946, we would fail her if we did not also remember the day-to-day courage of a woman who was determined to succeed in business, created and managed a vital enterprise, trained others in the field of beauty care, and broke through racial and gender barriers;

Be It Therefore Resolved: That CBRM Mayor Cecil P. Clarke and Council support the idea of naming the proposed new provincial holiday to be held in February of each year as "Viola Desmond Day" in recognition of her fight for social justice and in honour of all Nova Scotians who also fought for social justice and instruct administrative staff to write to the Premier of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Stephen MacNeil asking for his legislature's support for this request.

Councillor Jim MacLeod – District #12 – CBRM

Councillor Charlie Keagan – District #2 - CBRM

January 21st, 2014

*With the
understanding
all encompassing*
Should be all encompassing

*Carrie Best Dr. Wm. Pearson Oliver
Henderson Park*