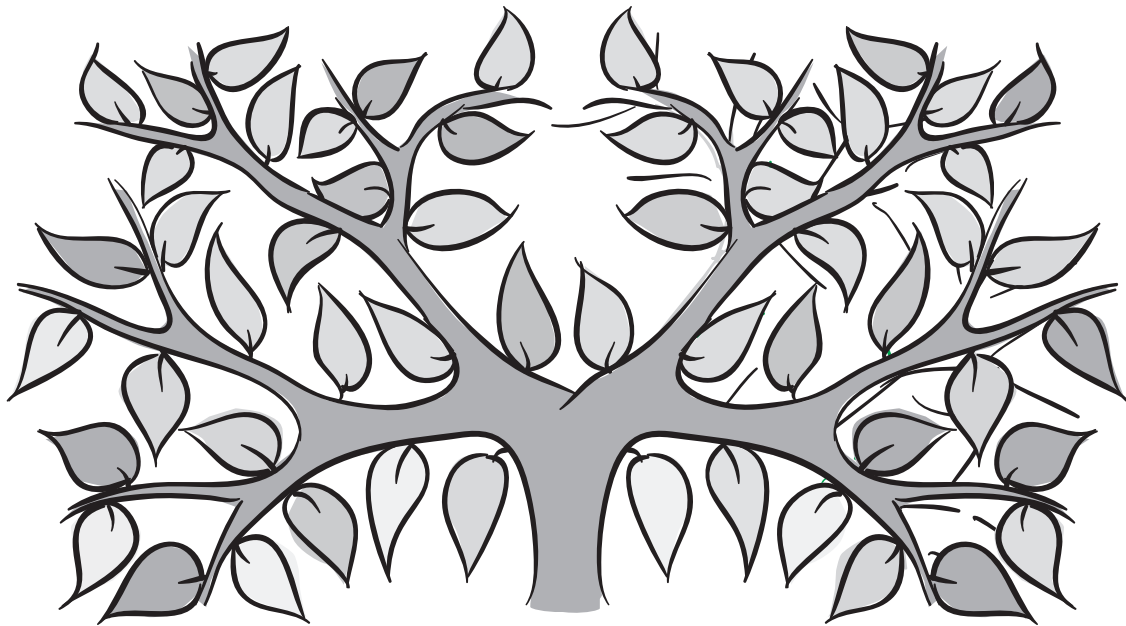


FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



learning objectives

By the end of this section, students should be able to:

- identify what is family folklore;
- understand the roots of lodges and the role they have played in black Bermudian life; and
- collect family stories, photographs, documents, and objects and create a composite picture of their family.

CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS

In this chapter, in addition to social studies curriculum links, there are readings, discussion questions, and activities that fit well with language arts, design and technology, visual and fine arts, family studies, library science, business studies, and advisory discussion period or circle time.

In this chapter, students will learn what family folklore is and how it is expressed in family sayings, stories, objects, documents, and photographs. They will examine the connections each of us has with our families and with communities within Bermuda and throughout the world. They will research and create a family tree that includes both genealogical information and rich details about family folklore and history. They will discover the important role lodges have played in Bermuda's black community since Emancipation. The family folklore that they collect may help orient them towards different research interests as they work through the following chapters about Bermuda's cultural traditions.

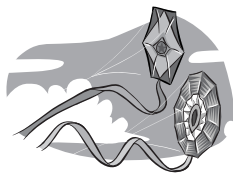


Diana Baird's 2nd birthday party, North Shore Road, Pembroke. Courtesy Diana Baird N'Diaye.

Family and Community Connections

Bermuda is made up of many small islands, interconnected by bridges, waterways, and the shared heritage of its inhabitants. Bermudians are connected by birth and marriage to people in Bermuda and around the world. Tracing one's **genealogy** and placing names and dates on family trees is one way that people in Bermuda are honouring and taking hold of their roots. Collecting family **folklore**—researching family stories, expressions, and ways of doing things, and examining photographs, objects, and documents—fills the tree with the details of lives lived. Researching family folklore may provide inspiration for writing poems, stories, making art, and other ways of representing family. Family folklore may help us understand the experiences that shape us and our families, and our island.

Families are one kind of connection among people. As Bermudians, we are also connected to one another through social groups such as schools, lodges, religious congregations, sport clubs, **maritime**/boating clubs, ethnic associations, and even the occupations at which we work. Sometimes, the organisations that we belong to are like extended families with their own shared stories, valued expressions, photographs, and objects. The family and community experiences and stories we share make life interesting and vibrant.



Connecting through Family Folklore

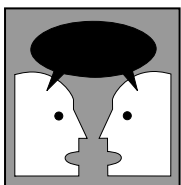
Tracing one's genealogy and placing names and dates on family trees is one step in understanding your background. Another step is collecting family folklore. Sometimes in collecting family stories you will discover your family history is a bit different than you thought. For example, Jolene Bean thought she came from a **seafaring** family but, through her research, found that although her family did have strong links to the sea, they were also master craftsmen.¹ While genealogy provides the trunk and branches of your tree, family folklore fills it with brightly coloured leaves combined, they provide a comfortable place to sit under and think about what has shaped you and your family to be the way you are.

So what exactly is family folklore? It is the stories families tell around the dinner table and when visiting on special occasions. It is the way families celebrate holidays with special foods and **rituals**. It is the family story behind a nickname. It is that certain expression that only our family uses. It is the photographs in the album and the objects we hold dear because they were passed on to us. It is your aunt's secret recipe. It is the story of the feud between two brothers. It is what you wear and do on your wedding day and how you celebrate your birthday. Family folklore is the flavour that we bring to everyday living. It is also what connects us to our family's past.

We relive our shared experiences through the photographs, documents, and memories we save and shape into stories that we share. But "a family's folklore differs from its history. [The stories] are glorious moments carefully selected and elaborated through the years, tailored to the demands of the present."² Truth is only the starting point for our family stories. As we share our family stories, we may change a few details each time in order to fit the circumstances of the telling or the audience. We may change the story slightly to make someone look more heroic or funny, or to give a warning or serve as an example. But, nevertheless, the story is our **lore** and is reflective of who we are.

Types of Family Stories

Every family has stories. As you collect them, see which of these categories they fit: heroes, rogues, mischief makers, survivors, innocents, migrations/immigration, lost fortunes, courtships, family feuds, raising children, cleverness, or supernatural happenings. What other types of stories does your family tell?



Discussion Questions

1. Do you think your family has folklore? Why or why not?
2. What are some examples of your family's folklore?
3. What types of stories are told in your family? When are they told?
4. What traditions are practised in your family? How did you learn them?

¹ Jolene Bean website: Extra-ordinary Bermudians, <http://www.uncle.com/jdbean/Extra-ordinarypeople.htm>

² Zeitlin, Steve; Koitin, Amy and Baker, Holly Cutting. *A Celebration of American Family Folklore*. NY: Pantheon Books, 1982, p. 2.



Sunday worship is a family tradition. Courtesy Bermuda Government Information Services.

Researching your Family Tree

Jolene Bean has been actively involved in researching and collecting her family's history. On her website she writes,

My interest in genealogy and family history dates back to the mid-1980s. Since that date, I have compiled a substantial database and collected many interesting stories about my black Bermudian ancestry. Similar to many others, I come from a family of ordinary people. Nevertheless, I have discovered through my research that some of these ordinary people have had extraordinary lives.³

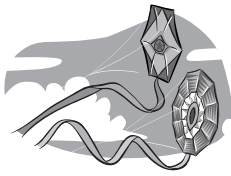
Joy Wilson Tucker has also been researching her family tree. When investigating your family history, she encourages you to:

Look in your Bible, behind old pictures and things of that nature. Even go to people in your community that you feel are not related to you, because sometimes they have been very tight friends with your mom or your dad and your grandparents and they have exchanged family stories and they can give you history on your family as well.



Courtesy The Registry General.

³ Jolene Bean website: Extra-ordinary Bermudians <http://www.uncle.com/jdbean/>



Jolene Bean offers these pointers to get you started on creating your own family tree:⁴

- You need an exercise book, pencil, and perhaps a tape recorder.
- Write down what you know about a particular branch of your family. Do not forget to include an individual's entire name along with his or her birth, marriage, and death dates. You may wish to include **biographical** descriptions of certain family members.
- Interview senior family members and friends in order to find out about your ancestors.
- Search for more information about your ancestors and for other relatives by:
 - inquiring about previously completed research;
 - looking through the family Bible or other spiritual readings;
 - taking note of names on the reverse side of old photos;
 - taking note of names on membership certificates, educational diplomas, etc.;
 - browsing through old family scrapbooks for newspaper clippings and old Christmas and birthday cards; and
 - checking the public records in Bermuda.

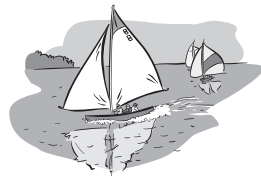
Both the Registry General and the Bermuda **Archives** are worth visiting. The Registry General's records include birth, marriage and death records, from about the 1870s until the present day. You will find property information there, as well. The Bermuda Archives records include 19th-century birth, marriage and death records, 19th-century wills, land records, slave registers, and a wide range of other materials.



Your Family Tree

1. Start creating your family tree. Interview your parents and other relatives about who is related to you and fill out a family tree form (use template in Resources chapter).
2. Write down as much as you know about each of the people listed on your tree. Ask other people what they know and add their details to your list.
3. Collect photographs of the people on your tree.
4. Identify family objects and documents that relate to the people on your tree. Carefully examine these for information. Ask family members about the documents and objects and about the stories related to them.
5. Look at Jolene Bean's pointers for ideas of other places to gather information about your family. Visit these places and see what further information you can dig up.
6. Remember to let the buds on your tree grow and become full-fledged leaves. Use the branches and twigs as the outline on which to hang your family's folklore. Create a book or web page to preserve your family's stories, expressions, photographs, objects, recipes, and customs.

⁴ Jolene Bean, *Searching For Your Roots* brochure, 2002.



Who Is Your Mama?

Sometimes asking “Who is your mama?” may give you an answer that makes you feel uncomfortable. Ruth Thomas describes it like this: “When we meet you, the first thing we want to know is who’s your momma, who was your momma before she married your daddy, where did she come from, Somerset or St George’s or wherever? We always want to establish connections.”

Joy Wilson Tucker shares a story that explains what can happen when you live on an island with a small population. She says this is one reason it is important to research your family history.

Some families intermarried and, well, even if you ask “Who’s your mama?” sometimes it was too late, you were already involved. Yesterday a young lady was looking through our family book, and she said, “I’m very upset.” So we said, “What happened?” She said, “I don’t want to be related to this person right here in this book.” We looked at her face and she said “I was infatuated with him, I don’t want to know.” Those things happen.

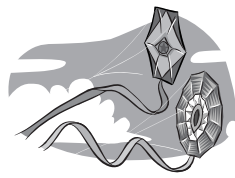
Black-White Bermuda Connections

In Bermuda many families have a family tree that may show only part of the family. Going back to the period of slavery there has been intermixing between blacks and whites in Bermuda. Yeaton Outeridge talks about his family’s tree:



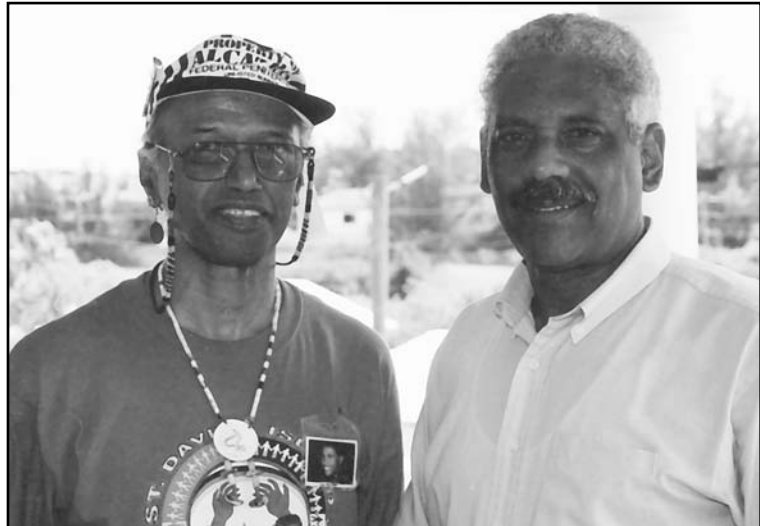
Yeaton Outeridge shows his family tree to visitors at the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.

One person looked at this family tree that I’ve got laying out here—and it goes for about six- to seven-feet long with all kinds of names on it—and he said, “Where am I, cousin?” I said, “Well, this [family tree] is on the white one. I know you are part of the family because I know what happened.” I know that his family lived on a piece of property that was given to them by the Outerbridge that got together with their ancestor back three generations. They still own that same piece of property. So, when he says cousin, it’s a cousin. There were probably lots of connections like that. It’s part of our history.



St David's Islander Connections with Native Americans⁵

Many Bermudian families from St David's Island trace their descent from Native American ancestors brought to the island in the early years of its settlement. The strong belief in possible ancestral connections between St David's Islanders and Native Americans on the eastern coast of the U.S. has inspired Bermudians to hold events of cultural reconnection and to seek out closer contacts with these Native American communities. In 2002, St David's Islanders sought to find out more and discovered that their roots are probably connected to the Pequots, not the Mohawks as previously thought.



Tall Oak and St Clair "Brinky" Tucker at St David's Island Indian Reconnection Festival. Courtesy St Clair "Brinky" Tucker.

American Indians were enslaved and brought to St David's in the mid-17th century. St David's uniqueness results from the mixing of **bondpeople** with American Indians and with Scottish and Irish prisoners.

When St David's Islander Mr St Clair "Brinky" Tucker set about researching his genealogy, his cousin living in Rhode Island was put in touch with Tall Oak, a Pequot elder. Mr Tucker and Tall Oak have spent many hours researching the Pequot-Bermuda connection in the Bermuda Archives. Mr Tucker says Tall Oak was very excited about what he discovered on his visit to Bermuda.

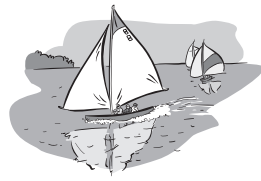
He thought that after 200 years there would be no knowledge about the Pequots, and he was shocked to find so much information, and also to see people who resembled each other. He could see similarities in the way St David's Islanders live, as well as elements of Indian culture. Basically, we were known for fishing, boating, and farming, which is what the Pequots did because they lived on the east coast of America.

In June 2002, the St David's Island Indian Reconnection festival was staged. St David Islanders and an American Indian delegation shared stories and traditions. Mr Tucker says that St David Islanders still recall some of the traditions derived from their Native American **heritage**. He explains,

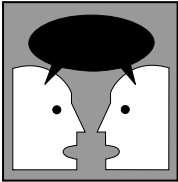
Dark Bottom is the area of the children's playground. As a result of our investigations it was discovered that many years ago our ancestors used to dance and chant around the campfire at Dark Bottom. In fact, there are a couple of St David's Islanders who recall those days as children.

The Minors, Foxes, Pitchers, Lambs, and Burchalls are all descendants of Native Americans. Because St David's Island was isolated to a great extent, many of them never left the Island, and intermarriage was very common; so as a result, just about all St David's

⁵ This section is based on articles in *The Royal Gazette* (1 February, 14 February, 12 June, and 17 June, 2002).



Islanders are related. [They] made their living fishing, farming, boating, and piloting. My grandmother always said there was only one tree that grew in St David's but it had many branches. When you do your family tree you go around in a circle because you are all connected.



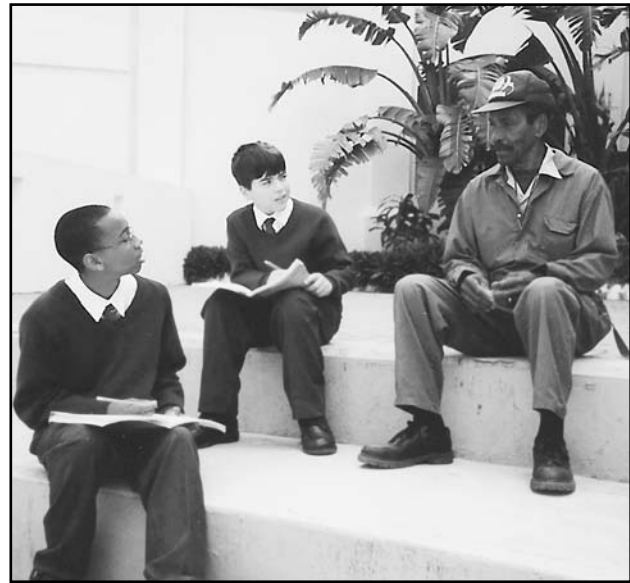
Discussion Questions

1. What different types of information might you discover if you collect the stories connected to your family tree?
2. Why do you think some people may feel uncomfortable with information that they discover about their family?

Collecting Family Folklore

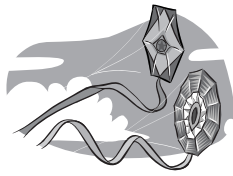
What questions should you ask to uncover the wonderful tales your family history has to offer? There are no set questions, but the list below is a good starting point from which to write your own questions. This list was created by the Smithsonian Institution to stimulate collection of family folklore in connection with an exhibition called *The Grand Generation: Memory, Mastery, Legacy*.⁶

1. What do you know about your family surname? Its origin? Its meaning? Did it undergo change coming from another country to Bermuda? Are there stories about the change?
2. Are there any traditional first names, middle names, or nicknames in your family? Is there a naming tradition, such as always giving the firstborn son the name of his paternal grandfather?
3. Can you sort out the traditions in your current family according to the branches of the larger family from which they have come? Does the cultural tradition of a specific grandparent seem to be dominant?
4. What stories have come down to you about your parents? Grandparents? More distant ancestors? How have these relatives described their lives to you? What have you learned from them about their childhood, adolescence, schooling, marriage, work, religion, political activity, recreation? Are they anxious to discuss the past or are they reluctant? Do their memories tend to cluster about certain



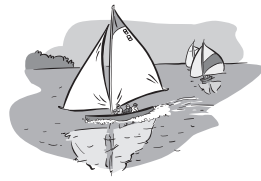
Two students interview a tradition bearer. Courtesy *The Royal Gazette*.

⁶ The entire family folklore guide is available on the web at <http://educate.si.edu/migrations/seek2/family.html>.



topics or time periods and avoid others? Are there certain things in your family history that you would like to know, but no one will tell you? Do various relatives tell the same stories in different ways? How do these versions differ?

5. Do you have a notorious or infamous character in your family's past? Do you relish stories about him/her? Do you feel that the infamy of the ancestor may have grown as stories passed down about him/her have been elaborated?
6. How did your parents, grandparents, and other relatives come to meet and marry? Are there family stories of lost love, jilted brides, unusual courtships, arranged marriages, elopements, runaway lovers?
7. Have any historical events affected your family?
8. Are there any stories in your family about how a great fortune was lost or almost (but not quite) made? Do you believe them? Are these incidents laughed about or deeply regretted? If a fortune was made, who was responsible and how was it achieved?
9. What expressions are used in your family? Did they come from specific incidents? Are there stories which explain their origin? Is a particular member of the family especially adept at creating expressions?
10. How are holidays celebrated in your family? What holidays are most important—national, religious, or family? What innovations has your family made in holiday celebrations? Has your family created entirely new holidays?
11. Does your family hold reunions? How often? When? Where? Who is invited? Who comes? Who are the organisers and hosts? What occurs during the reunion? Are there traditional foods, customs, activities? Are stories and photographs exchanged? Are records (oral, written, visual) kept? By whom?
12. Have any recipes been preserved in your family from past generations? What was their origin? How were they passed down—by word of mouth, by observation, in writing? Are they still in use today? When? By whom? Does grandmother's apple pie taste as good now that it's made by her granddaughter?
13. What other people (friends, household help, etc.) have been incorporated into your family? When? Why? Were these people given family titles such as aunt or cousin? Did they participate fully in family activities?
14. Is there a family cemetery or burial plot? Who is buried with whom? Why? Who makes burial place decisions? If there are grave markers, such as a tombstone, what type of information is recorded on them?
15. Does your family have any **heirlooms**, objects of sentimental or monetary value, that have been handed down? What are they? Are there stories connected with them? Do you know their origin and line of passage through the generations? If they pass to you, will you continue the tradition, sell the objects, or give them to museums?
16. Does your family have photo albums, scrapbooks, slides, or home movies? Who created them? Whose pictures are contained in them? Whose responsibility is their upkeep? When are they displayed? To whom? Are they specially arranged and edited? Does their appearance elicit commentary? What kind? By whom? Is the showing of these images a happy occasion?



Painting a Picture of Family and Community

Throughout your study of Bermuda Connections, you are conducting interviews, watching demonstrations, looking at objects and documents, taking photographs, writing descriptions, and discussing what it means to be you and to be Bermudian. What do you do with all the stuff? How do you preserve this information—the stories, photographs, documents, and objects—that explain who you are?

You may want to keep a family journal where you can write down the stories you have collected and will continue collecting. By keeping a related photograph album and/or a sketchbook you can preserve the images that go with the stories and traditions you are learning. Copy related documents and photographs to keep in the album.

Photograph special objects and add these. Be sure to write down descriptions of each item and cross-list it with the stories, or keep one album that mixes stories, photographs, documents and pictures.

Jolene Bean and other Bermudians are creating family websites. Websites are one way to safely keep the information and easily add more details as you come across them. Take a look at Ms Bean's website for ideas: <http://www.uncle.com/jdbean/>.

When preserving family photographs and documents there are certain precautions you should take. You do not want to touch the items much because your fingers have oils on them that will degrade the items over time. Try wearing a pair of soft gloves or only touching the edges. When putting original photographs or documents in albums, use albums that have **archival** paper and use special photo corners or glues that are not acidic. Do not leave pictures, documents, or fabric-based items in the sun, even if framed, as they will fade and deteriorate. All items, especially books and audio and video tapes should be kept in a cool, dry place. Fabrics also require special care and should not be washed or drycleaned. For more specific information look at the National Endowment for the Humanities website devoted to collecting and saving family history: www.myhistory.org.

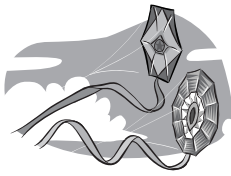


Dr. Jolene Bean. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.



I learned that it takes a lot of work to do what the people I interviewed do. I've learned that when it comes to Bermuda's culture no one minds putting down what they are doing and talking about it. Doing these interviews taught me a lot about Bermuda's culture.

— Andrew Smith, M3, Spice Valley Middle School



Ideas for Using Family Folklore

1. Create a family website and post the stories and images. Include a section where family members can add their recollections, comments, and photographs.
2. Create a family cookbook with recipes, photographs, stories, and pasted-in mementos such as wine labels, napkins from parties, etc.
3. Create a family quilt and invite different members of the family to make a square that in some ways portrays them. It may include photos, drawings, sayings, fabrics, and small objects.⁷
4. Write a series of short stories based on your family's stories. Make these into a book, website, comic strip, or script for a play or radio show.
5. Create art pieces that include images and words drawn from your research. You can include photographs, paint, drawings, and collages of images, words, and objects in these pieces.
6. Hold a family reunion and collect more stories, create family scrapbooks, and share recipes.
7. Make a family calendar that highlights birthdays, anniversaries, and other special events that have happened or occur regularly in your family. Use copies of family pictures, sayings, recipes, children's drawings, and other family mementos to illustrate the calendar.

Connections through Community

The sense of community in Bermuda has changed. While Bermuda has always been globally connected, our communities and sense of community has at once broadened and shrunk. No longer do we know everyone in our neighbourhood well enough to run in and out of their houses, but at the same time, maybe our sense of community has widened to include the many groups we are a part of that are spread throughout the islands. In addition, perhaps our sense of community extends even beyond the island as we communicate more frequently and quickly with Bermudians or people related to them who live in other countries.

At the *Bermuda Connections: Homecoming* festival in April 2002, Ruth Thomas, Ian Pitcher, Bonnie Exell, Jolene Bean, and Joy Wilson Tucker shared a conversation about community and community connections in Bermuda. Let's listen in:

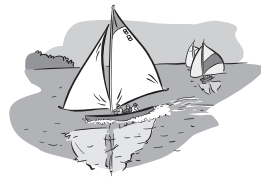
RUTH THOMAS:

Remember when we were children, we always spent time with relatives or friends in other parts of the island. For many of us that was very important because we didn't have that much transportation, we didn't have cars then, and that's the only way you were able to keep your connections—by going and spending time with the family.



Ruth E. Thomas, M.B.E., J.P. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.

⁷ Family quilt idea from the Bank Street Family Center, NY, in *C.A.R.T.S. Newsletter* (NY: City Lore, Spring 1997:1).



JOY WILSON TUCKER:

In the community area where I came from, I think one of the important things was the church, also the band. Also the other thing that I think is important and brought the community together was the lodges, when they were formed. It helped us establish gift clubs and things of that nature, to bring the community together, and that is something that sticks out in my mind today.

BONNIE EXELL:

[For the] Portuguese community, I think language keeps them together a lot. The people who still speak it—it is the cement for the community. Definitely within the Portuguese community, the Church is a big rallying point for the community.

RUTH THOMAS:

The Church has been a strong force throughout Bermudian life, be it the Roman Catholic Church or the African Methodist Episcopal or the Anglican or any other denomination. Those have been strong influences on our community, strong influences that have helped hold us together.

IAN PITCHER:

Communities that I remember have been led by the elders. In St David’s we’ve always had individuals who stood up and took responsibility. We knew that we had to give [them] respect . . . There was always a desire and a need to be one. We always did things together, ’cause when summer came and a child didn’t know how to swim, oh, “Well, Uncle James is good at teaching people how to swim so send him down to Uncle James.” It was really a unit, and that’s what it takes. [But] it does take individuals. It’s hard in these days for a person to stand up and say, “This is what I stand for.” I think that’s what I remember as a child. People stood for principle.

RUTH THOMAS:

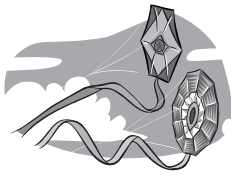
The clubs were certainly a unifying factor in the community . . . The clubs did a lot of good work in holding groups together. I think of the workmen’s clubs that used to provide benefits for the sick, and they would contribute towards a few people, or they would make sure that children had scholarships for schools. That, I think, has changed too.



Joy Wilson Tucker. Courtesy Joy Wilson Tucker.



Bonnie Exell. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.

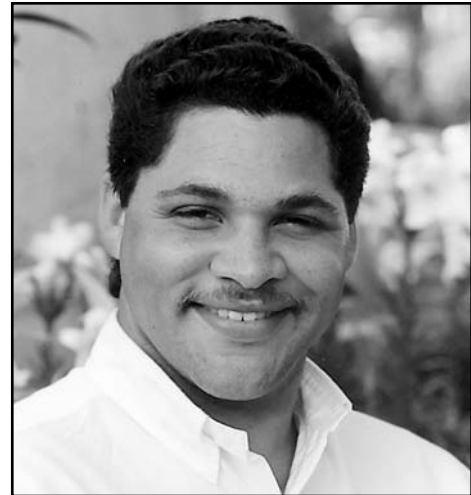


JOLENE BEAN:

I think the whole idea of community is changing. We don't have the same kind of communities that we grew up with. We knew our neighbours. We knew our neighbours 10 doors down. And now we know our immediate neighbours, perhaps. As you were talking I was thinking about my niece, who lives in the same area that I live in, but she doesn't play around in the community like I would have played around. However, I wonder if that whole idea of community has extended? She's part of the Warwick Academy community, she goes to school there; when she goes to ballet, she's part of another community. So I think the whole idea of community has changed considerably. Maybe it's kind of a Bermuda community, maybe it's kind of a national community rather than our local immediate community. But we still do have some kind of a community setting, it's just different.

IAN PITCHER:

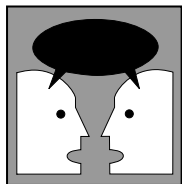
Just to make my point, you were talking about a new community, and maybe our new community is by everybody understanding what our culture and history is. It's not just one thing, it's many things that make us what we are.



Ian Pitcher. Courtesy Ian Pitcher.

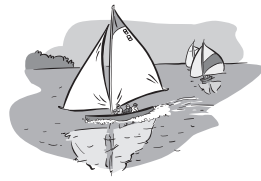
BONNIE EXELL:

You learn about your community, part of being part of the community is to know the history of the community. [By] researching my family history, I've learnt so much about Bermuda itself. I really would encourage people to research their family history, because your family is your first community, and it helps you to know the rest of the community and learn about your country as well.



Discussion Questions

1. What connects you to community?
2. What are the ingredients that define community?
3. What holds a community together?
4. Identify the groups in which your grandparents are/were members. Your parents? Yourself? Do you think belonging to different clubs or organisations creates a sense of community? If so, how?
5. Do you think the sense of community in Bermuda today has changed from when your parents were children? If so, how? Why do you think it is the same or different?
6. How does learning about your family help you learn about the larger community where you live and about Bermuda as a country?



Activity

A Sense of Community

1. Ask your parents/guardians and grandparents to describe the communities where they grew up. Do they mention places, people, organisations, customs, or language? How are their descriptions different from the community where you live today?
2. Now write a description of the community where you live. Be sure to include descriptions of the places, organisations, and ways of doing things that make up your community.

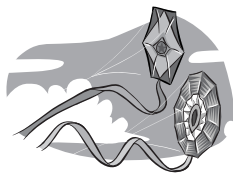


Senior ushers board, St Paul's A.M.E. Church, Hamilton, 2000. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Lodges: A Strong Community Bond

Ask any black Bermudian what has historically bonded their community together and they will tell you about the “friendly societies” and lodges. These societies, whose Bermudian roots go back to before Emancipation, served as support and social groups for enslaved and indentured blacks; later they became powerful (free) black organisations. Members of the societies and lodges worked together “to help the sick and distressed, educate children, give spiritual guidance, hand out loans to black businesses, and to support members’ widows and orphans.”⁸ These groups filled a void and need that resulted from the government giving blacks freedom, but not providing individuals the economic or educational support needed to live as free people. While only about seven or eight lodges exist today, the influence of the friendly societies and lodges is still strong within the black Bermudian community.

⁸ “Hands of Friendship,” by Joy Wilson Tucker, *The Bermudian*, May 1995, p. 34.



Like their overseas counterparts, the societies developed special signs, handshakes, greetings, and passwords to enable them to recognise fellow lodge members; but no secret, cult-like rituals were or are practised. Joy Wilson Tucker, a member of the Mayflower Lodge and founding member of the black history museum, the Bermudian Heritage Museum, emphasises that “they are societies with secrets, they are not secret societies.” The friendly societies started off in secret because members were enslaved blacks who were not suppose to congregate together or to be educated, which is exactly what the societies offered them—a supportive group meeting and education. The first public society, Somer’s Pride of India Lodge, was founded around 1843.

The main membership criteria for lodges are “a Christian background and upholding strong moral values and principles,”⁹ though some of the groups, such as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, don’t require members to be Christians as long as they believe in God. Mrs Wilson Tucker says, “The only criteria that we ask for is that you believe in God because all of our teachings are on the Bible, all of our lectures are on the Bible.”

Members refer to themselves as “sister” and “brother,” which emphasises the deep bond and obligation they feel for each other. They consider themselves to be an extended family. The mottos of these groups reflect their purpose. For example, the motto of the Odd Fellows is “friendship, love, and truth.” Marion Tannock, a member of the Odd Fellows explains:

I feel that Odd Fellowship is friendship . . . It is a friendly society, a place where people help one another be better citizens and help other people along the way. Whoever needs assistance can get assistance. We try to look after our elderly, and whatever may come along, we try to assist.

Boyd Smith says that Odd Fellowship is essentially about “trying to make a good person a better person.” Many elderly black Bermudians will tell you that they received their “initial training of firm discipline, education, business, as well as spiritual and general character-building through the lodges.”¹⁰

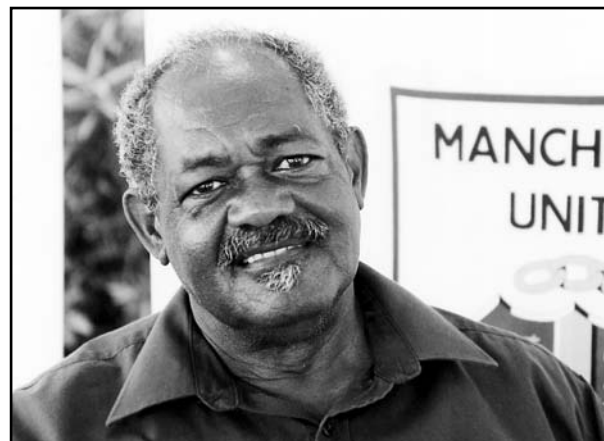
In thinking back on the effect the lodges had on his development as a young boy, Renee George William Earlston Tuzo said,

For me it was a learning process. I learned to walk with the children at church, and at school we had to line up and march in. There was no army-sergeant regimental situation, but you had to take instructions

Lodges

Each lodge has a number assigned to it that signifies the time it was granted permission to operate.

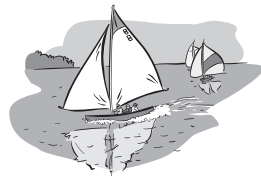
- Alexandrina #1026
- Household of Ruth #61
- Loyal Flower of the Day #6347
- Princess Royal Union #135
- Loyal Mayflower #9387
- Somers Pride of India #899
- Loyal Irresistible #6587



Renee George William Earlston Tuzo. Photograph by Lisa Falk, 2002.

⁹ “Hands of Friendship,” by Joy Wilson Tucker, *The Bermudian*, May 1995, p. 35.

¹⁰ “Hands of Friendship,” by Joy Wilson Tucker, *The Bermudian*, May 1995, p. 35.



Violet Brangman and Joy Wilson Tucker with lodge regalia at 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.

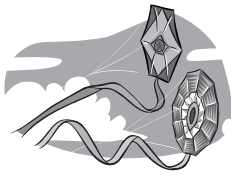
and you had to listen. They'd [teachers and lodge members] punish you, they'd send you home, and when they saw your parents they'd say, "You know, he doesn't want to pay attention." The morals were extended around the neighbourhood. What you did at Miss Jones's house and what you did at Miss Smith's house you had to do the same because they would discipline you and then tell your parents. They would discipline you, and you didn't want that.

In addition to teaching children how to behave correctly, the lodges also educate their youth and adult members in leadership skills. Through their association with the lodges, they learn skills that enable them to be successful in the business world. Violet Brangman, a member of the Mayflower Lodge, explains

As a high school student, I was introduced by my godfather into the juvenile lodge. It gave me a chance to work through the lodge, and it gave me an education as well as [taught me] how to create an agenda and how to conduct a meeting and how to keep accounts. So my interest was really piqued there. Then I went on and worked through the adult lodge, the Mayflower Lodge . . . Most of my leadership qualities I owe to the lodge.

Stanford Hart, a member of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows/Alexandrina Lodge, further emphasises the importance of the role of lodges in training men and women for the work world:

We learn in the Order, how to write a minute, how to do bookkeeping, how to put motions to a floor, how to amend the motions . . . Once you have worked your way around in the Order, you have no fear of going out into another organisation and being a president, vice-president, a secretary, because you have had the training there in the Order.



The societies also helped their members by working together to build lodges for meetings, churches for free worship, theatres for entertainment, and houses for member families to live in. The societies have been, and continue to be, active in the social world of Bermuda. Ms Brangman says that it's the social activities that bring lodge activities into the public eye.

We . . . have church services and anniversary services . . . and we take great delight in obtaining a band and marching along to church. We have public functions for fundraising, such as fish fries. We also have cruises and various other functions—tea parties, fashion shows—which will help us raise funds to preserve our lodge and to help with our [membership] benefits. We need the funds to help pay to keep our sick and help other people who are in distress.

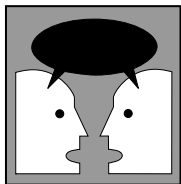
The friendly societies also spearheaded efforts to support their members financially. Mrs Wilson Tucker explains:

Organised around 1907, again by members of the friendly societies, there were what we called gift clubs. And those gift clubs would have members come in, and you could put in as much as—I'm going to speak in the English term now—threepence or sixpence. No matter what your savings were, you could put that [much] in. At the end of the year—it was the second week in December—you would come in and collect those monies, and those monies were used to buy clothing, to buy food, any medical supplies that you would need. Around summer time when school is getting ready to open, [people] will come and draw those monies out to help the children with the college. That's what those clubs were all about. They had them situated all over the island.

While some gift clubs still exist, most dissolved in the 1980s when businesses started paying their employees by cheque rather than cash, and individuals started opening their own bank accounts. Also growing out of the friendly societies are the benevolent clubs where members receive a death benefit (money) at passing. Some lodges offer members a sick benefit (money), too.

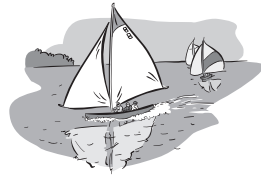
Over the years, the combination of larger financial-resource institutions, greater equality for black Bermudians, and the growth of other kinds of secular clubs has caused a decline in lodge membership. Nevertheless, those individuals who seek a strong, moral, supportive group continue to join and remain members of lodges.

Boat clubs and ethnic clubs, such as the Vasco da Gama Club, probably play similar roles. Are any of your family members or friends a member of such a club?



Discussion Questions

1. What have you heard about friendly societies or lodges? Do they match the description here?
2. Do you know anyone who is, or was, a member of a society or lodge? Have you spoken to them about what membership means? If so, what did they say?
3. In your life, where do you learn discipline, morals, and values? How do you learn them?
4. How do the lodges serve as a small community or extended family?



Activities

Discovering Lodges

1. Visit the Bermuda Heritage Museum and research the history of friendly societies and lodges. Find out how someone became a member and what activities the lodges undertook. What role did the lodges play in Bermudian society?
2. There are lodges still active in Bermuda. Find out their names and how many members they have. Ask about how one becomes a member, what benefits members receive, and what kinds of activities the lodges undertake.
3. Interview lodge members as to why they are members. How has membership shaped their lives?
4. Many lodges had or once had gift clubs. Find out more about how they function. A few are still in existence. Find out why members would use the gift club rather than, or in addition to, a bank account.

Chapter Links

- See Arts of Celebration for family traditions related to Cup Match and a list of ethnic clubs.
- See Arts of the Kitchen for family traditions related to food and meals.

Now It Is Your Turn

Start talking with your family about family folklore. Look at objects, documents, and photographs that help tell your family's story. Ask questions and listen. Also, look around your community for institutions and clubs that support and tie people together. What are they? How do they function? Who are their members?



The Bermuda Heritage Museum in St Georges is a rich source of information on history and traditions of black friendly societies on the island. Courtesy Departments of Community and Cultural Affairs.

LINKS

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Links to Social Studies Curriculum Goals and Subgoals

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- identify what family folklore is
(SS Goal 1, subgoal 1.1, 1.2; SS Goal 4, subgoal 4.1, 4.2, 4.3; SS Goal 5, subgoal 5.2, 5.3, 5.5);
- understand the roots of lodges and the role they have played in black Bermudian life
(SS Goal 1, subgoal 1.1, 1.2; SS Goal 2, subgoal 2.2; SS Goal 3, subgoal 3.4; SS Goal 4, subgoal 4.1, 4.2, 4.3; SS Goal 5, subgoal 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5); and
- collect family stories, photographs, documents, and objects and create a composite picture of their family
(SS Goal 1, subgoal 1.1, 1.2; SS Goal 2, subgoal 2.2; SS Goal 3, subgoal 3.4; SS Goal 4, subgoal 4.1, 4.2, 4.3; SS Goal 5, subgoal 5.2, 5.3, 5.5).

