

CARNIVAL UNITES PECKHAM SCHOOLS

IN JULY 2008, 1,200 PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS DRESSED IN RAINBOW-COLOURED CARNIVAL COSTUMES DANCED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE STREETS OF PECKHAM, LONDON, AND AMASSED TO PERFORM IN A LOCAL PARK.

The United Peckham Carnival was the result of a whole-term project involving and uniting the school communities of Camelot, St. Francis RC and Peckham Park primary schools.

The schools used an organisation called Creative Elements to help them embed community cohesion into the curriculum through the carnival project.

Pupils in all three schools come mainly from either African, Afro-Caribbean or white backgrounds and the project promoted understanding of the different identities within the classroom.

Teachers visited The Museum of H.A.D. (Heritage of Afrikan Descendants) to explore the origins of carnival, the history of costume design and to discover ways of linking carnival with literacy, numeracy, science, art and citizenship.

PETER, A PUPIL FROM ST FRANCIS PRIMARY SCHOOL SAYS:

"IT WAS REALLY EXCITING WORKING WITH CHILDREN FROM THE OTHER SCHOOLS BECAUSE I MADE NEW FRIENDS AND LEARNT ABOUT THE HISTORY OF CARNIVAL. WE ALL HAD TO WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR COSTUMES. IT WAS AMAZING WALKING TO THE PARK, PEOPLE WAVED AND CHEERED – IT WAS A GREAT DAY!"

A RIOT OF COLOUR AT PECKHAM CARNIVAL



The diverse histories and cultures of the children were woven into the project. They learned about the history and meaning of carnival – it is a celebration of emancipation and freedom in African-Caribbean and African culture.

Each year group, from reception to year six, across the three schools was assigned one of the seven colours of the rainbow. In the park the children sat in a rainbow formation to symbolise unity.

TERI N'GUESSAN, HEADTEACHER CAMELOT PRIMARY SCHOOL SAYS:

"THE IDEA OF THE UNITED PECKHAM CARNIVAL WAS TO GIVE THE CHILDREN A GREATER SENSE OF COHESION AS A COMMUNITY BY BRINGING PARENTS, CHILDREN AND SCHOOL STAFF TOGETHER IN A CELEBRATORY EVENT."

Barriers between schools were broken down. Each of the three schools hosted one of the workshops – performance, dance or poetry. For example, children worked with writer Sola Oyeleye to write poetry that communicated their beliefs and opinions about who they are in the 21st century.

Every pupil created their own costume and ten pupils from each school worked together with Mahogany Arts to produce three lead costumes to represent their school and to guide the procession.

Southwark's Mayor, the community wardens, the police, local businesses and parents were all involved in the day.

NICKY, A PARENT FROM PECKHAM PARK PRIMARY SAYS:

"JACK REALLY ENJOYED THE CARNIVAL PROJECT AS HE HAD A CHANCE TO SAMPLE A DIFFERENT CULTURE, SEE HOW OTHER PEOPLE LIVE AND DISCOVER THEIR HISTORIES AND THEIR BELIEFS. THERE SHOULD BE MORE PROJECTS LIKE THIS BECAUSE THERE WILL BE LESS IGNORANCE IN THE COMMUNITY!"

