

February is Black History Month

Every February, people across Canada participate in Black History Month events and festivities that honour the legacy of Black people in Canada and their communities.

Each year, Black History Month honours the experiences, achievements and enduring contributions of Black communities in Canada, while deepening our collective understanding of their history and impact on Canadian society.

Today, the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages, unveiled this year's theme: "30 Years of Black History Month: Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations — From Nation Builders to Tomorrow's Visionaries." This theme celebrates three decades of Black History Month in Canada and recognizes the enduring legacy of Black Canadians, whose leadership, creativity, innovation and resilience have shaped our past, continue to influence our present, and will inspire future generations.

Throughout February, Canadians are invited to learn more about and celebrate the diversity and accomplishments of Black Canadians across the country. Black History Month is also a time to reflect on Canada's painful history and the systemic barriers that Black communities continue to face, including anti-Black racism and discrimination, and to reaffirm our shared responsibility to address them.

As we prepare to celebrate 30 years of Black History Month in Canada, communities across the country are invited to join in honouring Black excellence in Canada and celebrating the remarkable contributions that Black Canadians make to Canadian society every day.

https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage.html

Black history in Canada

Black Canadians and their communities have been a part of shaping Canada's heritage and identity since the arrival of Mathieu Da Costa, a navigator, and interpreter, whose presence in Canada dates back to the early 1600s.

The role of Black people and their communities in Canada has largely been ignored as a key part of Canada's history. There is little mention that some of the Loyalists who came here after the American Revolution and settled in the Maritimes were people of African descent, nor the fact that many soldiers of African descent made many sacrifices in wartime as far back as the War of 1812. African

people were once enslaved in the territory that is now known as Canada, fought enslavement and helped to lay the foundation of Canada's diverse and inclusive society.

Throughout her expansive career as an educator, politician and social advocate, the Hon. Dr. Jean Augustine has been a staunch advocate for girls and women. In 1993, Dr. Augustine made history as the first Black-Canadian woman to be elected to parliament. https://www.jeanaugustinecentre.ca/

In December 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by Dr. Augustine.

https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/black-history-month.html

Profiles of Black Canadians, both historic and current can be found on the website of the **Ontario Black History Society**. Notable for us here in Ontario—Lincoln Alexander won a seat as a Conservative MP (Hamilton West) in 1968, the first Black Canadian to have a seat in the House of Commons.

https://blackhistorysociety.ca/

Kathy Wosnick
Advocacy Chair, CFUW Ontario Council