



BLACK LIVES IN ALBERTA

OVER A CENTURY OF RACIAL
INJUSTICE CONTINUES
-A TEACHERS' GUIDE-

BLACK
LIVES
MATTER



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Writers

Deborah Dobbins
Dr. David Este

Barb Maheu
Marin Thomas

Section A of this teachers' guide draws on the scholarly work of Jennifer Kelly, PhD, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta and David Este, PhD, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary.

Resource Review Committee

Sarah Adomako-Ansah
Dr. Jenna Bailey
Dr. Evelyn Hamdon
Gary Hansen

Dr. Jennifer Kelly
Harold Neth
Lynnsey Moger
Dr. Margie Patrick

Brandon Sonnenberg
Craig Wallace
Gail Wilson
Quintin Yardley

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Video Adaptation

Dr. Jenna Bailey, Bailey and Soda Films

Design and Layout

Flavio Rojas

Copy Editing

Theresa Agnew

Cover Page Photo Credits

1960s Dean Skog, Corry Skog, Wayne & Bob, Susan Murphy, Alison Skog, Eddie Whittaker Martin, Robin West, Christine Hayes, Princess Christine West, Shelley Murphy, Janice Heslep, Barb and Susan LaFayette

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can be sent to info@aspenfoundation.ca

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photo : Members of the Lewis family in Edmonton

Section A. Introduction

To understand racism, it is critical to learn about its historical roots. In doing so, students are better able to uncover the feelings, reactions and injustices that continue to play out in Canada—and more specifically in Alberta. As Karina Vernon, associate professor at the University of Toronto, explains, an understanding of the historical consciousness of the Black experience provides the foundation needed to address racism.

Deborah Dobbins, founder of the [Shiloh Centre for Multicultural Roots \(SCMR\)](#), iterates this view, saying: “I want people to know we existed.” In 2018, to ensure that the history of her people would not be forgotten, Dobbins, in partnership with Dr. Jenna Bailey, of Bailey Soda Films, and Dr. David Este from the University of Calgary produced the documentary [We Are the Roots: Black Settlers and Their Experiences of Discrimination](#). The one-hour production documents and preserves the recollections of second- and third-generation descendants of Black immigrants in Alberta.

This teachers' guide complements the student version (33 minutes) of SCMR's documentary, [Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues](#) (BLiA). Dobbins, Bailey and Este partnered on the student version, incorporating the voices of young Black Albertans while maintaining the historical narratives of the descendants of the original immigrants. The film shows how the original immigrants overcame adversity, resisted measures to exploit and control them and made significant contributions to Alberta's society and culture.

The Aspen Foundation for Labour Education partnered with Dobbins and Este, and our funders to develop this complementary resource guide, which reflects many Alberta social studies learning outcomes (Grades 4 – 12). The guide provides historical information relating to early Black settlement in Alberta, lesson ideas and activities, support materials and resource lists. As well as fulfilling social studies



learning outcomes, this resource can be tied to programs of study in English language arts, art, drama, music and media studies. (See Appendix 2 for pertinent Alberta Social Studies curriculum connections.)

More detailed information can be accessed by clicking on the embedded links. As well, a References and Resources section is included at the end of the guide. For additional historical detail, consider watching SCMR's award-winning documentary *We Are the Roots*.

Learning Outcomes

Through the following five learning outcomes, this teachers' guide and the documentary [*Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues*](#) help students more fully understand the roots of racism and ways to address it.

1. To gain a thorough understanding of the history of African-American immigration to the Canadian prairies in the early 20th century
2. To listen to the voices and experiences of descendants of the first African-American immigrants
3. To recognize the inequities inherent in laws and policies that uphold systemic racism
4. To personally reflect on ones' thoughts, behaviours and perceptions of race and racism
5. To take meaningful actions to address anti-Black racism

Section B. Historical Overview



photo : Library of Congress LC-USF34-T01-051738-D. Credit Line: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives.

To understand the extent to which anti-Black racism is rooted in Alberta's history, it is critical to review the events, perspectives and experiences of African-American immigrants to western Canada after Alberta joined the Canadian confederation in 1905. Their stories help us more fully understand the journey taken by the African Diaspora community. The lives of Alberta's first Black pioneers paved the way for other Black people who subsequently immigrated to the province.

This overview sets the context for utilizing the student-focused film [Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues](#). The lessons and activities in Section C engage students in a variety of learning activities that correspond to five learning outcomes.

Early in the history of Canada's west, various individuals and groups of African descent immigrated to the prairies. Karina Vernon, in *The Black prairie archive: An anthology*, notes four periods of Black immigration to Canada (p. 11):

- 1790 – 1900, the era of fur trade and early settlement
- 1905 – 1912, the Oklahoma migration
- 1960s – present, the Points System era
- 2012 – present, the era of neo-liberal immigration and asylum

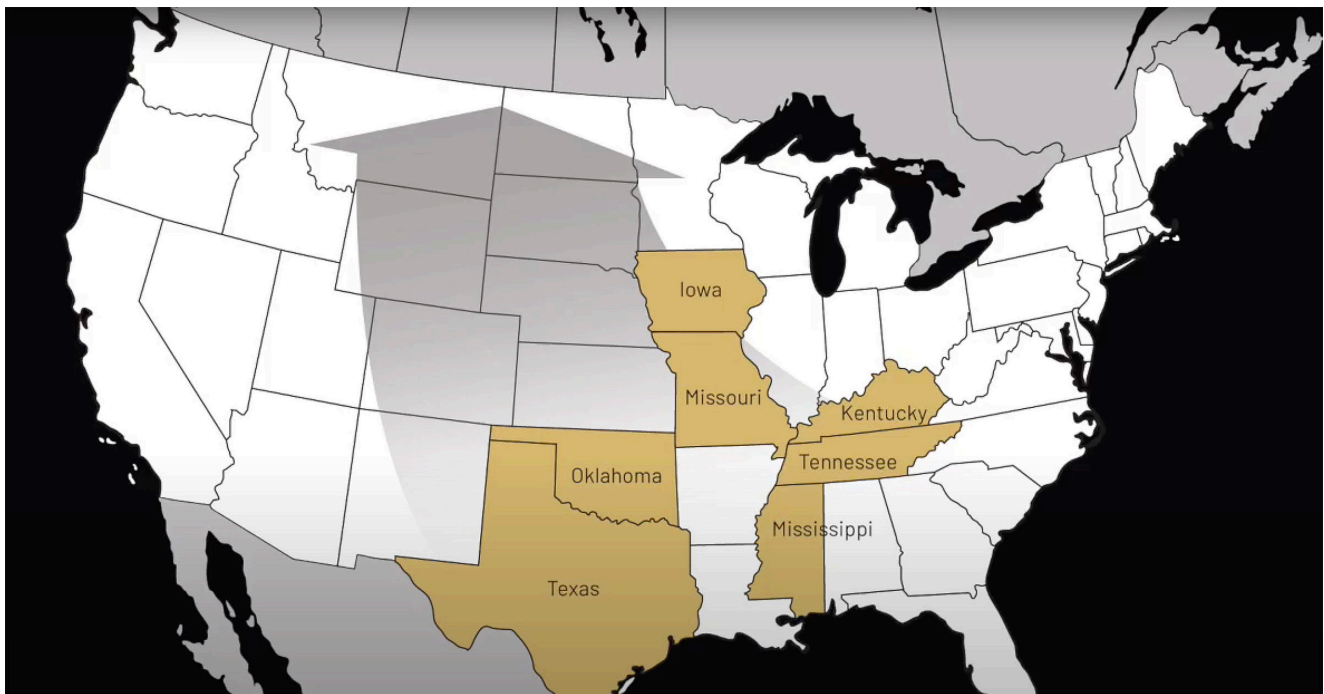
These migratory periods resulted in demographic diversity among people of African descent on the prairies, which is critical to acknowledge when referring to Black people in this country. This teachers' guide focuses primarily on the groups that came to western Canada during the second wave—the Oklahoma migration.



Events Leading to the Exodus from Oklahoma to the Canadian West

After the American Civil War ended in 1865, the period known as Reconstruction (1865 – 1877) was underway, transforming American society so that it was no longer based on slavery (Gates, 2019). Throughout this somewhat chaotic period of American history, legislators in the North and South sought to determine the extent to which former slaves would or should have civil rights and be able to vote (males), work as freemen, access public schooling and attend church. Political opinions varied, with some wanting to maintain the pre-Reconstruction status quo and others favoring complete emancipation. Overall, the period ended with little change for many former slaves in the southern states, with the exception of Oklahoma where many African-Americans took up residence. This unique situation is described below.

Reconstruction was a relatively liberal time in some places, but it did not last long. This period was followed by a shift away from more liberal policies to one based on repressive laws designed to racially segregate Whites and Blacks. These measures, known as “Jim Crow,” officially lasted until 1965. Even though the philosophy driving these laws was based on the concept “separate but equal,” the laws greatly favored White majority populations and reinforced the notion of White supremacy. Jim Crow laws legitimized and normalized anti-Black racism.





Oklahoma Origins

Many African-Americans who immigrated to the Canadian West between 1905 and 1912 (with the majority arriving between 1908 and 1911) came from the state of Oklahoma. Oklahoma has a unique history in that it did not formally become America's 46th state until 1907. The territory was largely occupied by Indigenous tribes and was called Indian Territories and Oklahoma. Before it became a state, many Americans (both Blacks and Whites) migrated to the area to establish new settlements and farms that were not subject to the same government oversight. [Brent Wittmeier](#) (2020) notes that over 50 Black communities were established in Oklahoma as well as a number of new White communities.

After Oklahoma gained statehood, however, Jim Crow laws similar to those in other southern states were immediately implemented. The new laws segregated races and disenfranchised Blacks in Oklahoma, leading to increased lynchings, burnings and other forms of race-based violence. The relative freedom Blacks experienced in pre-state Oklahoma came to an end. For some, the call to immigrate to Canada followed, with many African-Americans immigrating to the Canadian West after Oklahoma became a state in 1907.

Creek Indians of Oklahoma

The Creek Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes in eastern Oklahoma owned slaves but treated them much differently than their White counterparts (Troper, 1972). To them, slaves were considered symbols of status rather than workers to be exploited for financial gains. The Black slaves of Creek Indians could own property and farm independently, but they were required to pay a small fee to their “owners.” “Creek Negroes” sometimes intermarried with the Creek Indians and their children were considered Freedmen. Some of the offspring of the inter-racial descendants immigrated to the Canadian prairies. (See Oklahoma Freedmen descendants in the documentary *We Are the Roots*). The term Indian is not widely accepted in Canada but is still used in the United States, the home of the Creek Nation.

Immigrating to the “Last Best West”

**In this section, we first use the term “settler.” You’ll notice that the term is italicized throughout this document. We use the italics to differentiate between Indigenous people who are the first “settlers” of North America and the European and American settlers who came to Canada centuries later. See “Pioneers to western Canada” in the Key Concepts section below.*

In the late 1800's, western Canada was occupied by Indigenous nations that had been forced onto reserves through treaty agreements. The government knew that settlement was an effective way to secure power and control over the territory. To encourage settlement, the “Last Best West” campaign was launched by the government of Canada, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, to entice *settlers* from



Europe and the United States (Wolters, 2015, 339). The campaign used colourful [posters and brochures](#) to promote homesteading on the Canadian prairies and enticed *settlers* with the promise of 160 acres of land for a small registration fee of \$10. The presumption was that the ads would attract only White immigrants; however, African-Americans were also attracted by the promise of land and liberty in a new country—with [freedom and property rights](#) for all. Many families packed up, boarded trains and headed north.

Immigration records indicate that between 1,000 and 1,500 African-Americans immigrated from the southern United States to the province of Alberta between 1905 and 1912. Most of them came from Oklahoma, but others came from Missouri, Illinois, Mississippi, Iowa, Kentucky, Tennessee and Texas. Enticed by the notion of Canada as a safe haven offering land ownership, freedom from discrimination, more liberal customs, homesteading opportunities and citizenship regulations, they felt they were leaving discrimination and violence behind (Troper, p. 272, Sheppard, 1997).

Most took up the challenge of establishing farms, with about one third of their numbers moving to urban centers, such as Edmonton and Calgary, where they established businesses or found jobs.

For most Black Americans, the right to immigrate was short lived. Policies that actively discouraged further immigration for “people of colour” were implemented after 1912.

Black Lives on Homesteads in Alberta

The majority of African-American immigrants established their homesteads in five areas:

- Junkins, Alberta (now Wildwood)
- Campsie, Alberta, near Barrhead
- Pine Creek, Alberta (now Amber Valley)
- Keystone, Alberta (now Breton)
- Eldon District, near Maidstone Saskatchewan

In addition to clearing the land and establishing viable farms, they built churches, schools, post offices and general dry good stores in their communities. They organized baseball teams and other community activities and interacted, to varying degrees, with neighbouring communities.



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives. Library of Congress - LC-USF34-046270-D

Black Lives in Urban Centres in Alberta

In their research, Dr. Dan Cui and Dr. Jennifer Kelly (2010) cite the 1911 census, which reported that 30% of Black immigrants made their homes in Edmonton (208 people) and Calgary (72 people). In their examination of urban settlement, they reviewed the Edmonton-based “Our Negro Citizens” column written by Reverend George Slater Jr., pastor of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church (EAME), where they learned that some individuals established their own businesses and had significant schooling. They note, “Peoples of African descent were able to live bearable lives with similar as well as different aspirations to those who were racialized as White (p. 255).”

Prejudice ran high in cities, and job opportunities were restricted for Black immigrants. Men could find work as [railway porters](#) and in low-paying menial jobs, while women were primarily employed as domestic workers (Foster, 2019). Nonetheless, these new Albertans were determined to purchase homes and establish themselves in their urban communities. In some urban areas, they established their own churches and businesses as a way of overcoming unwelcoming



William Melton, Amber Valley, took his first job as a porter with Canadian National Railroad.

attitudes. They made many sacrifices so their children could receive an equitable education and have a more promising future. The community had to be strong and determined to survive and be resilient in the face of adversity and unequal treatment.

Roots of Anti-Black Racism

In *Black Lives in Alberta*, we learn of the most egregious laws that targeted immigration of Blacks from the United States, despite active campaigns across the United States and Europe to attract immigrants to western Canada.

From the moment of their arrival in Alberta, African-American immigrants became the targets of racist beliefs and stereotypes. Campaigns based on fear, selfishness, protection of existing power structures, misinformation/untruths and blatant ignorance resulted in laws and unfair practices designed to halt immigration of Black citizens after 1911 (Order -In-Council PC 1911-1324). A petition sent to Prime

Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1911 “respectfully urged” the federal government to take steps to “prevent any further immigration of negroes to western Canada for the period of one year” (*Edmonton Capital*, April 25, 1911. See Appendix 3).

The Order in Council did not pass; however, an unofficial campaign was launched that strongly discouraged “mass exodus” of African-American immigration (Cui and Kelly, 2010, p. 255). Immigration officials began to demand stringent medical exams and monetary requirements, and they delivered powerful messages about the unsuitability of the Black race to endure the cold prairie winters. These measures, it was claimed, would avoid importing the American “race question” to Canada, but they simply reinforced negative stereotypes that were prevalent at the time. *The Edmonton Capital* reported, “The task of assimilating all the White people who enter our borders is quite a heavy enough one without the color proposition being added” (Wolters, 2015, p. 346).

After 1911, the Canadian government sent officials, agents and recruiters to the southern United States to “convince White American farmers that the Canadian climate was certainly not too cold to live in while simultaneously convincing American [Black farmers] that the Canadian climate was indeed totally unsuitable for them” (Puplampu, 2020, p. 10). These campaigns were effective, and the number of Black immigrants decreased dramatically. However, their communities continued to exist and progress in the Canadian prairies. There was minimal continued growth within the Black population but added growth from immigrant families from European countries.

Throughout the history of Canada and the United States, even mainstream groups have pushed against emancipation reforms. The dominant group regarded



themselves as British and northern European and viewed Blacks as biologically inferior and incapable of assimilating into their preferred White *settler* society. Their tactics included propaganda, intimidation and sometimes violence. Official organizations, such as the [Boards of Trade in Edmonton, Strathcona, Calgary, Ft. Saskatchewan and Morinville](#), Edmonton Municipal Council, the Orange Lodge and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), gathered petitions protesting Black immigration and sent them to Ottawa (Troper, p. 281). The “official” basis for their concerns was that they believed Black people would be unable to live peacefully with Whites.

Frank Oliver, MP for Edmonton and Minister of the Interior, shaped Canada’s immigration law in 1910 ([Puplampu, 2020](#)). The *Edmonton Daily Bulletin* reported that the most appropriate immigrants to Canada were those who “accepted British institutions and values” (p. 7), thereby enforcing moral barriers to the acceptance of African-Americans. At the time, immigration policies were crafted on the assumption that belief systems of Black newcomers would threaten the Canadian way of life, their presence would depress wages and these new Canadians would not be well suited to the climate (p. 4). In addition, they could become an economic burden to the state and even criminals. “A notable aspect of Oliver’s 1910 Immigration Act, Section 38c, could ‘prohibit for a stated period, or permanently, the landing in Canada, or the landing at any specified port of entry in Canada, of immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada . . .’ (Government of Canada, 1910, p. 218).”

There were rare moments of support for the Canadian newcomers (Wolters, 2015). In 1911, the *Edmonton Capital* published, under the headline, “Land of No Lynchers, No Snakes and No Jim Crow Laws,” a letter to the *Chicago Defender* that encouraged Blacks to head north, adding, “This is a fine country where people get equal rights in every business and pursuit. Those that do come are doing well; they stand the cold as well as anyone else” (Wolters, 2015, p. 339).

In 1962, Ellen Fairclough, minister of Citizenship and Immigration, introduced legislation to eliminate overt racial discrimination from Canadian immigration policy. Racial restrictions were lifted allowing anyone to apply for Canadian citizenship. The new criteria used a points system that considered education, training, skills and other qualifications unrelated to ethnicity, race or country of origin. It also allowed for sponsorship of family members ([Immigration Regulations, Order-in-Council PC 1962-86, 1962](#)). Jennifer Kelly (1998) notes, however, that “even after the removal of restrictions based on race, the government continued to manipulate the immigration rules in favour of groups from Europe in spite of the points system and the official policy that all races be treated equally” (p. 41). For example, in 1967, Blacks were asked to post bonds at the Toronto International Airport, while their White counterparts did not have to do so in a single instance. In other words, anti-Black racism continued despite changes to official policies.



Today, systemic racism continues. [Amnesty International cites](#), “It has long been recognized that [the Canadian justice system is fraught with racism](#) that disproportionately impacts Black people and communities across the country, resulting in racial profiling, harsher sentencing, mistreatment in prison, denial of services, and other injustices which can be compounded for people with intersecting identities (e.g., Black Muslims, Black LGBTQ2S folks, etc.).”

Resilience and Resistance



photo : Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Resistance and resiliency are prevalent themes in any discussion of African-Canadian history. Este, Sato and McKenna (2017) highlight the variety of ways the Colored Women’s Club (which was formed in 1902 in Montreal by the wives of American railroad porters) confronted various forms of racism. Similarly, the Black pioneers who migrated to Alberta from 1905–1912 and their descendants organized themselves to confront and resist the unjust experiences they faced on a regular basis.

Many African-Americans who settled in Alberta established Black churches, which helped to preserve cultural identities within their communities (Kelly, 1998). Reverend George W. Slater Jr., who was minister of the Emanuel African Methodist Church as well as a contributor to the column “Our Negro Citizens” (ONC), employed different strategies to combat racism and stereotypical representations of Black Albertans. Through print media, he highlighted community events, told the everyday stories of people of African descent and commented on national and international racial issues (Cui & Kelly, 2010).

In 1922, Reverend Slater, through a series of actions, fought the ban that prohibited Black students from attending Campsie schools. Once again, he emerged as a champion who focused on social justice issues. The work of Reverend Slater is consistent with the contributions by ministers/pastors and African Canadians throughout the country. Quite often, these individuals and the churches they represented were regarded “as pillars of strength who challenged anti-Black racism in the areas of employment, education, and the general public” (Este, 2004, pp. 5-6).

Reverend Slater recognized the importance of collaborating with other churches, such as the Shiloh Baptist Church, also located in Edmonton, Alberta. The churches supported the Negro Welfare Association of Alberta and the Negro Political Association of Edmonton. Through these entities, African Canadians participated in



the city's political and economic domains and strategically established connections with mainstream authorities to ensure equitable treatment for community members. As well, the Coloured Canadian Industrial Association (Edmonton) and later in the mid-50s the Alberta Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (AAACP) in Calgary contributed to efforts to ensure that people of African descent were treated in an equitable manner.



photo: City of Edmonton archives (EA-275-744)

Members of the community organized themselves to protest specific situations such as the proposed ban that would have prohibited Blacks from using public swimming pools in Edmonton as well as rallying against racist displays and floats that were part of the Edmonton Exhibition. Collectively, these activities clearly imparted the message from the community that “Black Lives Matter.”



Section C. Key Concepts

These definitions are age-appropriate for students in Grades 9 – 12. For younger students, you can modify the definitions further. For more detailed definitions, see the glossaries provided by the [Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre \(ACLRC\)](#) and the [Canadian Race Relations Foundation \(CRRF\)](#), which also include useful terms that are not provided below.

A

Anti-Black racism arose from policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions, such as education, health care and justice, that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of African descent (CRRF).

B

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a Black-centered political movement founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman who brutally murdered 17-year-old Trayvon Martin as he was walking home (unarmed) from the store ([Black Lives Matter, “Herstory” Retrieved 8/14/20](#)) (ACLRC). The BLM movement demands that society recognize the significance of all Black lives and value the contributions and resiliency of Black citizens. It seeks to address anti-Black racism, spotlight racial injustice and advocate for changes that address individual and systemic racism.

C

Cultural appreciation occurs when we seek to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden our perspectives and connect with others cross-culturally.

Cultural appropriation occurs when “members of relatively privileged groups ‘raid’ the culture of marginalized groups, abstracting cultural practices or artifacts from their historically specific contexts” (ACLRC). Cultural appropriation is often used to make money or gain status by persons or groups who are outside the group of origin. The marginalized groups do not give permission or receive economic benefits.

D

Discrimination is a way of thinking or acting, often based on stereotypes and prejudices, that results in treating people differently because of their identity (race, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation and so on). Denial of rights, unequal treatment or individual actions that are harmful are all examples of discrimination. An individual may not know they are behaving or thinking in a discriminatory way. For example, White people may associate criminality with Black people without being consciously aware of their bias.

E

Ethnicity refers to the bonds that bring together social groups with common national or cultural traditions, beliefs and behaviours. The groups have common languages, histories, religions and geographies and may identify as having a common race or races.



H

Historical narratives are stories and recollections of past events told by those who experienced them. They may be handed down through oral traditions or be collections of writings, documents and/or photos.

Historical perspectives provide an understanding of the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional settings that shaped people's lives and actions in the past. Historical events or situations involve people who may have diverse perspectives when recalling the same event.

Historical significance refers to events that resulted in great change over long periods of time for large numbers of people.

Homesteaders were immigrants who agreed to meet specific conditions set by the government to establish farms in Canada's west. In the early 1900s, they paid a small fee of \$10 and cleared 160 acres of land in order to gain legal title to the property. Establishing settlements in western Canada became a way for the government to control territory it had recently taken from banished Indigenous peoples.

I

Implicit bias refers to the thoughts and feelings that direct our preferences or aversions. Often, we are not aware that we have these biases, which are usually based on stereotypes.

Intersectionality refers to the multiple ways an individual may experience oppression. Racism is built on prejudiced beliefs, stereotyping and discriminatory actions. However, racism can be even more complex for individuals who are oppressed due to other aspects of their identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, class or religion.

L
P

Legacy is the accumulated cultural wisdom, accomplishments, beliefs, traditions and sometimes artifacts that are forwarded from one generation to the next.

Pioneers to western Canada are considered the first European and American people to secure territory for the Canadian government. However, the Indigenous people of Turtle Island (the landmass of Canada and the United States is in the shape of a turtle) were the first inhabitants and thus the original "settlers" of the land we now call Canada. Respecting this fact, European and American people came as pioneers, initiated colonization and established permanent settlements to further develop western Canada. This resource uses the words pioneer and *settler* accordingly.

Power is the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others.

Privilege occurs when individuals or groups receive advantages and benefits because of their deemed superiority. Privilege is often a result of systematic targeting and/or marginalization of another group. Those with privilege often don't realize they have it; it is often invisible because it is simply the normal way of things.



R

Race is a social construct, not a biological one. This means that the small number of genes that determine physical differences among human bodies (most especially skin colour) are not intrinsically connected to character or cultural traits. Race is a socially constructed way of dividing people into distinct groups based on their physical characteristics, rather than an inherent aspect of who they are. That said, it is fair to say physical characteristics related to race are the foundation of racialized perceptions and the way people may think of race. For example, people who have darker or lighter skin colours may be perceived as belonging to a racial category (i.e., Black or White respectively).

Racialization is the process through which groups come to be socially constructed as races, based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, language, economics, religion, culture and politics (CRRF).

Racism is a form of oppression in which one racial group (oppressor) dominates another (oppressed) (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012), creating an imbalance of power and privilege between the two groups. Broadly speaking, people racialized as Black, experience acts of discrimination often based on negative stereotypes, implicit bias, prejudice and discriminatory laws.

- **Individual racism** refers to the specific beliefs, attitudes and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism, such as racist slurs and jokes, bullying or targeted violence against an individual or group. It assumes that one group is inherently superior to another, thereby justifying these actions by the oppressor.
- **Systemic racism** is found across institutions and society. It privileges the oppressor class and disadvantages various ethnic or racial minorities. It includes policies and practices that are entrenched in established institutions that are often invisible to those in privileged positions. For example, this occurs when people are regularly excluded from decision making, overlooked for workplace promotions or relegated to inferior schooling. No individual intent is necessary.

S

Social justice refers to ideas and actions taken to promote equity and justice based on respect for human rights and dignity.

Stereotyping ascribes qualities or characteristics of an individual to their perceived membership in a group. It assumes that everyone in the group shares common characteristics with others in the group regardless of individual differences.

Section D. Activities



When we engage students in meaningful learning activities, they begin to understand the nature and endurance of anti-Black racism in our province and country. The following activities can be used independently or in combinations to help students understand that anti-Black racism in Canada—and more specifically in Alberta—is rooted in history and is ongoing today. The learning activities, while generic in nature, can be adapted to any grade level. The lessons are grouped according to the five learning outcomes identified in the introduction. Most lesson ideas are tied to the documentary *Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues*.

Know your students

When dealing with the topic of racism in the classroom, be aware that some students, particularly those who are racialized as Black, may feel anxious or uncomfortable with the discussion. Knowing your students and approaching the topic with sensitivity is critical. Choose activities that you believe will generate respectful and open-minded discussions. Avoid singling out individuals, invite sharing and address any inappropriate language or gestures. Model the behaviour you expect from your students and undertake further research to better understand the historical context prior to starting. Don't forget to examine your own biases and reflect on how these might influence your delivery of these lessons.



Activities to Accompany Learning Outcome 1

“They put us in places where they thought we’d never succeed, in the small settlements, but in spite of that, we succeeded.”

-Deborah Dobbins, third generation Canadian, Johnson/Leffler families, Wildwood

Learning Outcome 1

To gain a thorough understanding of the history of African-American immigration to the Canadian prairies in the early 20th century

Preparation and Organization

After the optional visualization opener, the activities related to this outcome are divided into four themes:

1. Forces that Pushed and Pulled Immigrants to Canada’s west (Activities 1 – 3)
2. Homesteading Experiences (Activities 4 – 6)
3. Living and Working in Alberta’s Cities (Activity 7)
4. Legacy of Black Immigration (Activities 8 and 9)

Guiding Question

Why did African-Americans leave the southern United States (primarily Oklahoma) to settle in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the early 1900s?

Key Concepts

Homesteaders, Pioneers, Historical Perspective, Historical Narratives, Historical Significance



OPTIONAL OPENING ACTIVITY: Visualization Opener

Goal

Help students personalize the idea of immigration by asking them to think about how they might think and feel if they were to leave their own homes and establish a new life in another very different and distant place.

Some students may have experienced the immigration process and may provide some information and insights. Ensure that their recollections are shared voluntarily.

Directions

Ask students to close their eyes and visualize themselves in their mind's eye. Use the following suggested prompts to guide the visualization:

- Picture the place where you live. What does it look like, feel like, sound like?
- What are your favorite activities? Who do you do these with?
- Think about the people and pets who live in your home.
- Imagine that your parents or caregivers decide they need to move the family to another country where the climate is very different, your friends will be left behind and you have no idea what to expect. Picture yourself getting ready for the move. Consider your thoughts and feelings.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Other activities about leaving home can be found on the Aspen Foundation website. Under [Teaching Units](#), go to Grade 6 - *Citizens in Action: More Than Just Voters*, Lesson 6, page 57.

Debrief

- Would you want to leave?
- What would you miss the most?
- What would you take if belongings were limited?
- How would you feel about leaving your home and watching your parents or caregivers find work and set up a home for you in your new country?
- What would your first day of school be like? How would you be feeling on that day?
- Other questions?



THEME 1: Forces that Pushed and Pulled Immigrants to Canada west

ACTIVITY 1

“Last Best West” Poster Analysis

Overview

Many people from the United States and Europe were enticed to start new lives in Canada’s west. The government of Canada circulated posters to encourage immigration.

Guiding Question

Why were the “Last Best West” posters so effective in encouraging African-American immigration to Canada’s West?

Key Concepts

Homesteaders, Pioneers

Resources

[Canada’s History, “Selling the Prairies Good Life”](#)

[Canadian Museum of History](#) (select “Advertising in the United States 1900 – 1920”)

Directions

Select a number of posters from one of the websites listed above and ask students to examine them in detail. Analyze the posters using these prompts:

- What images were used to sell the notion of farming on the prairies as a golden opportunity to start a new life?
- What is your overall first impression of these posters?
- These posters were sent to Europe and the United States. Who do you think the posters were meant to attract? Why?



- Why do you think the government was so active in encouraging foreign immigration to the prairies?
- Why was this land “available”?
- What happened to the Indigenous people who had been living on the Canadian prairies?
- What graphic techniques are being used to create a feeling of opportunity?
- Would these posters seem enticing to African-Americans struggling to maintain their status and wealth and make a living in the southern United States? Might they see opportunities for starting over in Canada?
- What do you think would have been the main draw for them to come to the Canadian prairies?

Conclude by drawing generalizations that answer the guiding question.

ACTIVITY 2

Photo Analysis Activity: Separate but Equal ... Really

Overview

The United States implemented Jim Crow laws that essentially maintained the power and privilege of the White population even after the Civil War supposedly freed Black people. Explore the nature and philosophy of these laws to understand a force that helped “push” some African-Americans to move north. Review the Historical Overview section to prepare for this activity.

Guiding Question

When people are separated by race, is it possible for fairness and equal rights to prevail?

Key Concepts

Historical Perspectives



Directions

Make cards with various pictures of segregation (churches, schools, swimming pools, transportation, etc.) in the United States. Organize students into small groups, pass out the card packs and ask students to deal them out. Then, one at a time, ask a student to lay down a single card and describe what they see and how it makes them feel. Move around the group, asking each student to do the same thing. Variation: Students can do a similar analysis by going directly to the website.

Resources

Many pictures can be found on the internet. Search sites such as Segregation Pictures. The picture below shows how people could only access water fountains designated for their race (White or “Colored”).



photo: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/ Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives.



Debrief

When all the cards have been laid out, ask students to respond to these questions:

- What characteristics are common to most of the pictures?
- How are African-Americans (referred to as Coloreds) portrayed? How are Whites portrayed?
- What do you notice about the facilities for each race?
- If Jim Crow laws were being enacted in the United States after 1877, what effect might this have had on people who were former slaves? Why would this have been an impetus to leave the USA?
- What attitudes and beliefs allowed a “separate but equal” policy to be established? Consider various perspectives. Why would these laws have prevailed after the Civil War?
- The Jim Crow laws claimed that separating people by race was fair because it was based on the idea of “separate but equal.” Was separating by race fair? Equal? What evidence backs your thinking?
- How does “equality” relate to “equity”? Equality generally means that everyone is treated the same way regardless of differences. Equity acknowledges that people are different and in order to achieve the same goals, accommodations for difference must be allowed. Discuss the idea of equality versus equity.

End by discussing the concept of “separate but equal” as it pertains to Jim Crow laws. Is equality a real possibility given the historical circumstances of Blacks in America? What would have pushed African-Americans to leave this situation?



ACTIVITY 3

Additional Conditions Prompting Immigration

Overview

Conditions in the United States became increasingly challenging for African-Americans, pushing them to start new lives elsewhere.

Guiding Question

Despite knowing little about the Canadian West, African-Americans headed north. What additional forces drove them to Canada?

Key Concepts

Historical Perspectives, Historical Significance

Resources

- The documentary, *Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues*
- [The Black People in the Middle of Nowhere: The Lost Community of Amber Valley, AB](#) National Post, Tristan Hopper

Directions

Using evidence from Black Lives in Alberta, the Tristan Hopper article, previous activities and your own research, identify other conditions in the United States that likely motivated African-American immigration to the Canadian West.

Ask the students to consider the following:

- Do you think owning or maintaining property in the southern United States after the enactment of the Jim Crow laws was possible or fairly available?
- Many African-Americans enjoyed freedom, relative prosperity and owned property in the territory of what would become the state of Oklahoma. After Oklahoma became a state in 1907, Jim Crow laws were enacted. Many of the immigrants who came to Canada were from Oklahoma.
- Many White citizens reacted negatively to changes in the status of African-Americans after the Civil War.



- After the Civil War, there was increasing violence motivated by racist organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan. Lynchings, beatings and burnings intimidated and terrorized the Black population.

Debrief

Wrap up the activity by reinforcing the multiple reasons for immigration to the Canadian prairies. Throughout history (and we see it even today), the reaction to want to leave a place becomes a viable option. This occurs when people fear for their safety or feel that their chances to improve their lives in their home country is not possible due to their race. Can you think of other examples of this occurring in the past and now? Would this motivate you to want to leave and find a new home?

THEME 2: Homesteading Experiences on the Canadian Prairies

We know that African-American people from the United States entered Canada in 1905, but they were discouraged from immigrating in groups starting in 1912. In this section, students examine the reality of establishing farms and for some, living and working in cities by reflecting on the following questions.

- What were the realities of life for Black *settlers* in the early 1900s?
- Where did Black newcomers establish their farmsteads?
- How were the Black settlement experiences similar or different depending on the area where they settled?
- Were the experiences of Black newcomers similar or different from those people who immigrated from Europe at about the same time?

Guiding Question

What was life like for those who established homesteads on the Canadian prairies in the early 20th century?

Key Concepts

Historical Significance, Historical Narrative, Historical Perspectives



ACTIVITY 4

Visual Display of One of the Settlements in Alberta

Overview

Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice highlights the challenges faced by African-American immigrants who established communities in Alberta. The new settlers established churches, schools and post offices. They established rural communities in Amber Valley, Campsie, Wildwood and Breton. Some people immigrated to cities such as Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge where they found work or started their own businesses. (See Activity 7).

Directions

Divide students into small groups. Each group will make a poster, collage or banner providing basic information on one of the four Alberta settlements established by Black settlers in the early 1900s. Students will find out as much as possible about their assigned settlement and use pictures, short texts, diagrams or maps to create a visual display.

Use [Padlet](#) to create a gallery and/or have students give feedback by posting comments on virtual stickies.

ACTIVITY 5

Amber Valley Settlement Case Study

Directions

Search the internet and use the resources below to learn about the Amber Valley settlement. Create a slideshow of interesting facts, photos and anecdotes or stories. Consider using this as a model to create slideshows featuring Breton, Campsie or Wildwood.

Resources

- [Amber Valley](#), *The Canadian Encyclopedia*
- [The Black People in the Middle of Nowhere: The Lost Community of Amber Valley, AB](#)



- Dallard, W. (1978). [Memories of My Father, The Late Willis Bowen of Amber Valley](#)
- [Crossing Boundaries: Centuries of Black migration on the Canadian Prairies](#)
- [Canada Post Commemorates Amber Valley](#)



This stamp, being released by Canada Post in honour of Black History Month, features prominent members of Amber Valley, a forgotten Black community in Alberta. Canada Post hopes to educate Canadians about this important piece of history. (Supplied/Canada Post)

ACTIVITY 6

What's the Story?

Goal

Focus on learning about the early Black homesteader's personal experiences on the prairies.

Directions

Ask students to review one or more of the following audio or video sources and select one story that resonates for them. Ask them to put themselves in the homesteaders' shoes and describe a story that they found compelling. Briefly explain why it has meaning or interest for them. This activity can be done in small groups.

**Cooperative Jigsaw Variation:**

Divide the class into three large groups and assign each group one of the following three resources. For manageability, subdivide these larger groups into smaller groups of three or four students working on the same topic. (This is their Expert Group). Ask students to review their resource and share key ideas about the content and determine a way to promote their resource with others in their Expert Group (create a slogan, select a picture, make a poster and so on). Then assign students to a new group of four with one student representing each source. Take turns sharing their promotions and describe the content to the other three in this group. This way everyone will have a “taste” of all the resources.

Resources

- [Black on The Prairies](#) (CBC documentary): explores the past, present and future of Black Prairie life through the themes of migration, putting in work, Black and Indigenous relations, politics and resistance and Black to the future.
- [Secret Alberta': New documentary brings Amber Valley back to life](#) (13 minute video)
- Karina Vernon interview on [CBC Radio 1, Sunday Magazine](#). (starts at (9:30 - 1:16). The interview is based on stories from Karina Vernon's book titled, *The Black Prairie Archive: An Anthology*. WLU Press, 2020.



THEME 3: Living and Working in Alberta's Cities

While many African-Americans settled in rural areas, about one-third of them immigrated to cities such as Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge. In the cities, they found three main types of employment:

- Establishing their own businesses
- Menial employment in slaughterhouses, railroads and construction (men)
- Domestic work (women)

Despite the hardships they faced, Black immigrants established communities and churches such as Shiloh and Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal. Shiloh Baptist Church in Edmonton continues today, and members have been instrumental in preserving their history.



Chaney sisters outside their dad's business in Edmonton



ACTIVITY 7

Urban Jobs Research

Guiding Question

What was life like for Blacks who immigrated or migrated to cities in Alberta?

Directions

Use a variety of sources to highlight the occupations that urban Black people were most likely to have. Develop guiding questions to direct the research.

Resources

- The history of [railway porters](#) is especially interesting as it illustrates the efforts to unionize and improve working conditions and advance positions.
- Cecil Foster's book *They Call Me George: The Untold Story of The Black Train Porters*
- Other occupations and associations that provided a livelihood for Black urban people

THEME 4: The Legacy of Black Immigration to Alberta

Metaphorically, leaving a legacy is like planting seeds in a garden you never get to see. It is important that students recognize the contributions of Black citizens to the fabric of Alberta's society. There are many notable individuals and organizations from this community that qualify for special distinction. In this activity, students identify these people and organizations.

Guiding Question

What contributions have Black Albertans made to Alberta's culture and society? What seeds have they planted to leave as their legacy?

Key Concepts

Legacy



ACTIVITY 8

Comparing Experiences

Guiding Question

Were the experiences of Black *settlers* similar or different from those people who immigrated from Europe at about the same time?

Directions

Use a Venn diagram to compare Black homesteaders' experiences to the experiences of a different immigrating group. In central Alberta, many *settlers* came from Ukraine, Germany and Poland. Did discriminatory practices target other groups? Granted, life was challenging for all *settlers*. Provide evidence to show comparisons and contrasts.

RELATED ASPEN RESOURCES

Select any number of western Canadian-based resources to use in comparing the lives of Black *settlers* to immigrants from other countries. One place to start is the Aspen Foundation website, [Teaching Units](#). Go to Grade 4, Stories of People Working Together to Build Alberta, pages 44 - 75.

ACTIVITY 9

On-line Poster

Directions

To illustrate contributions of Black people to Alberta's society, find information, pictures, photos or graphics that feature individuals from the following categories:

1. Historical figures
2. Organizations
3. Community/church initiatives
4. Contributions to arts and culture
5. Sports
6. Business
7. Politics



Ask students to select a category that interests them and search for a Black person who has made notable accomplishments in that category. Develop mind maps to capture key ideas prior to making the poster. Ensure that the posters are shared and posted upon completion.

Examples of Notable Historical Figures



In 1954, **Gwen Hooks**, a teacher and descendent of the Oklahoma immigration in Keystone (now Breton), protested a play by the Breton Drama Club that negatively stereotyped and parodied Blacks and that used racial slurs and blackface. The incident ended in a court challenge. She was denied a transfer position by the Breton School Board as a result (*Under the Gaze*, p. 44). Hooks wrote the book [The Keystone Legacy: Reflections of a Black Pioneer](#).



[Judge Lionel Jones](#) **Lionel Locksley Jones**, '63 LLB, was among the earliest Black graduates of the University of Alberta Faculty of Law and went on to have a 37-year career. Notably, Locksley Jones became the first Canadian-born Black justice. He was appointed to the provincial bench in 1977 and then to the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in 1995, serving for six years before retiring in 2001.



Activities to Accompany Learning Outcome 2

“I think a lot of people want to say, ‘Oh, we’re not like the States, we don’t have racism here.’ But racism is happening here and the first thing that you can do to help is to acknowledge it and listen to the people that are telling you that it’s happening.”

-Destiny

Learning Outcome 2

To listen to the voices and experiences of descendants of the first African-American immigrants

Key Concepts

Implicit Bias, Prejudice, Stereotyping, Discrimination

In these activities, we examine the roots of anti-Black racism in Alberta as told through interviews with elders and younger descendants of the original Black settlers in *Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues*. These lessons ask students to consider their words to better understand experiences of anti-Black racist behaviours in the past and present.

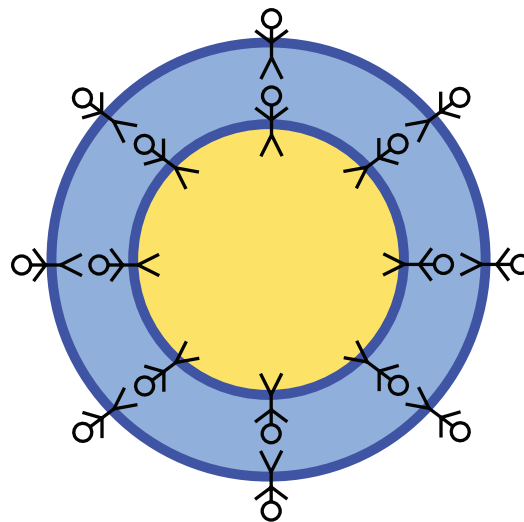
Guiding Question

What does it mean to identify as a Black Albertan? What evidence shows us that anti-Black racism is real and exists today, despite the perception by many that it is a thing of the past?



Note

You can use an Inside/Outside Circle approach for Activities 1 and 2. Divide the class into two groups and create a circle with one group. Have them face outward. With the other group, create another circle on the outside and ask each person to face someone on the inner circle. Ask a question from the list and provide a short time for discussion then rotate the outer circle so that each person has a new partner for each new question.



ACTIVITY 1

Apply Your Knowledge

Directions

Use the definitions in the Key Concepts section to review the following terms: implicit bias, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. Find examples of these behaviours in the stories shared by the interviewees in Black Lives in Alberta.

Ask students to note examples of each concept in a graphic organizer (chart, diagram etc.). Examples can take the form of quotations, stories, photos and so on.

Debrief

Review the chart you created to guide your response to the question: From the point of view of the interviewees, what is their perception of racism today?



ACTIVITY 2

Quotations: Black Youths' Experiences in their Own Words

Directions

Write down quotes on index cards (or similar) and post them on poster paper around the room. Invite students to do a gallery walk or to use an inside/outside circle activity to promote discussion. Any number of group discussion strategies will work. Provide prompts to explore the young interviewee's thoughts and perceptions of what it means to identify as Black in Alberta.

Resources

You can use the quotes below for this activity or ask students to provide quotes that they discovered when viewing the documentary.



"When you walk into a classroom and you're the only Black person, you notice this."

-Tallis



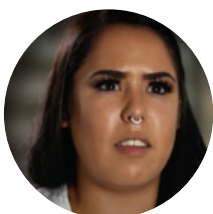
"You can't play basketball because you're not good at basketball, you're not Black, you're white."

-Chris



"Being the best is tied to race . . . I don't think you're ever going to change anybody's minds by yelling at them; you have to show them visually and make them feel things but it requires being better than people."

-Anthony



"If I would have had Black teachers or Indigenous teachers or teachers of colour, I think it would have made a huge change for me, especially as an adolescent . . . When you don't see teachers that look like you or people in positions of power that look like you, you get this background thought - oh, can I be that type of person?"

-Destiny



ACTIVITY 3

Comparing Experiences of Elders and Youth

Goal

Reinforce the meaning of the term individual racism: discriminatory acts carried out by individuals against others. Racist slurs and jokes, bullying or targeted violence against an individual or group are examples of individual racism.

Directions

Ask students to create a Venn diagram or slideshow that compares and contrasts the experiences of the two groups—elders and young Black Albertans—interviewed in *Black Lives in Alberta*. The Venn diagram answers these questions:

- How are their experiences of racism similar (the overlap area) and how do they differ?
- What generalizations can you make from this evidence about the experiences of the two generations? Has the experience of racism, for those who experience it, changed over time? What is your evidence?

Debrief

After viewing the Venn diagrams:

- What is your overall impression of Black citizens' contributions to Alberta?
- What has been the overall legacy of Black citizens in Alberta?
- How does it continue to occur?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before?

ACTIVITY 4

Significant Black People in Our History

Directions

Identify a historical or contemporary person that is significant in Black history. Find a picture of the person and create text bubbles around the picture with captions which highlight their thoughts and accomplishments. Post these pictures in the classroom or on the class website.



Activities to Accompany Learning Outcome 3

“There’s a lot of racism embedded in the history here. So, when you do walk around it’s something that you think about like every day pretty much.”

-Tallis

Learning Outcome 3

To recognize the inequities inherent in laws and policies that uphold systemic racism

Guiding Question

How did government policies, regulations and laws impact Black immigration and set the stage for systemic racism?

Key Concepts

Systemic Racism, Individual Racism

Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues provides examples of discriminatory actions experienced or impacted by the interviewees. Students are asked to understand the terms individual racism and systemic racism, identify examples of each and discuss the impacts of both types of racism on individuals. Activities addressing power and privilege are a good transition from the previous activity. This section ends with an examination of the origins of systemic anti-Black racism, looking at specific policies that were implemented to stop African-Americans from being fully accepted in their communities/society.

Organization

Following the opening activity, the remaining three activities focus on the ways power and privilege influence racism.



ACTIVITY 1

Systemic Racism vs Individual Racism: What's the Difference?

Goal

It is important for students to recognize that racist behaviour can take different forms. Two broad categories of racism are individual racism and systemic racism. Individual racism is usually more obvious, personal and includes actions that perpetuate racism on a personal level. Systemic racism is far less obvious because it is woven into the fabric of policies and laws that favor the advancement or dominance of one group over another. Systemic racism is so embedded in society that it's often normalized, especially to those who benefit most from maintaining it.

This activity has three steps.

Step 1: Define systemic racism

Directions: Explore the meaning of systemic racism to help understand its roots in history. Show the relevant video—elementary or secondary— to elaborate the concept.

Elementary: Systemic Racism Explained (4:32 min)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO_bdQ

Note: This is an American resource, so there are some discrepancies between the situations described in the video and the situation in Alberta. For example, school funding in Alberta is administered provincially, ensuring equitable distribution of funds to all students (with the exception of Indigenous students on reserve who are funded federally). Focus on the concept of systemic racism and explain the Canadian/American differences after viewing.

Warning: Please note the comments following this video are not intended to be viewed in class.

Secondary: What systemic racism in Canada looks like (9:55 min)

July 9, 2020. CBC News.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GmX5stT9rU&t=23s>

Note: This video may lead to some uncomfortable conversations. This is an opportunity to explore perspectives and raise more questions.



Step 2: Identify examples of systemic discrimination and individual discrimination

Goal

Ensure that students have a good understanding of individual and systemic racism. The examples are taken from the documentary [Black Lives in Alberta](#).

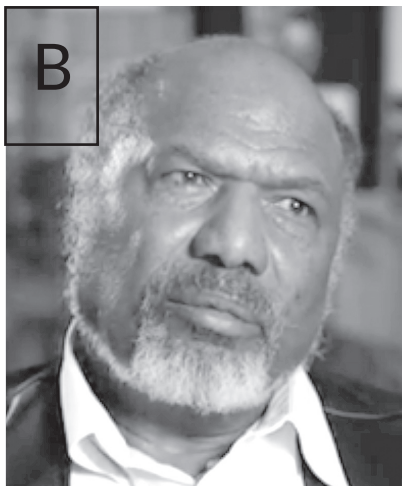
Directions: Make card sets of the following quotations and distribute the sets to small groups. Ask students to come to a consensus about whether the quotation is an example of individual racism or systemic racism. Some examples may be more challenging to categorize, and some may even fit in both categories.

A

In 1911, several mainstream groups in Edmonton who opposed Black immigration to the area petitioned the federal government stating, “It is a matter of common knowledge that it has been proved in the United States that negroes and whites cannot live in proximity without the occurrence of revolting lawlessness and the development of bitter race hatred, and that the most serious question facing the United States today is the negro problem.”

(Courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives)

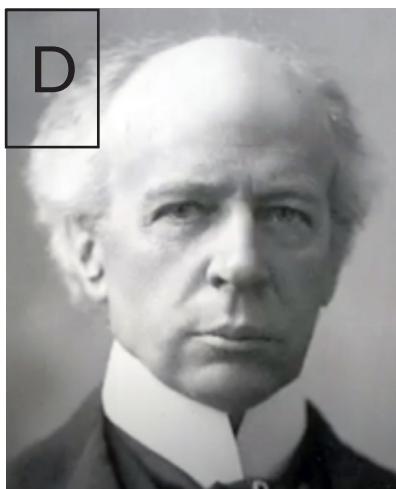
B



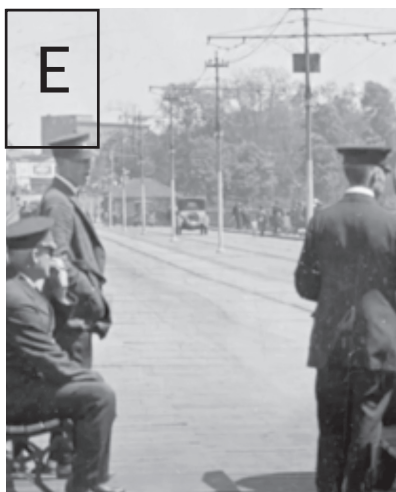
Obby Mayes told of his experience of being falsely accused of shooting a bobby pin that bounced in front of the teacher who had her back to the class. “The teacher said, ‘You get out of my class and go on down to the office and tell the principal you’ve been shooting stuff around the room.’ I said, ‘I didn’t do it. I didn’t want to rat on anybody, I just said, I didn’t do it.’ She says, ‘You get outta here.’ So, I jumped up, and I walked down the stairs. I was 15 years old and I got up and walked out of the side door and I never went back.”



In the newly formed state of Oklahoma (1907), Jim Crow laws were passed which made life increasingly difficult and dangerous for Black people living there. Lawrence Mayes recalls, “They introduced Jim Crow laws which took away the dignity of the Black person more or less because they couldn’t vote after that, they separated the races, they had separate schools, separate washrooms, separate drinking fountains, separate restaurants and so on. And so, the whole atmosphere changed.”



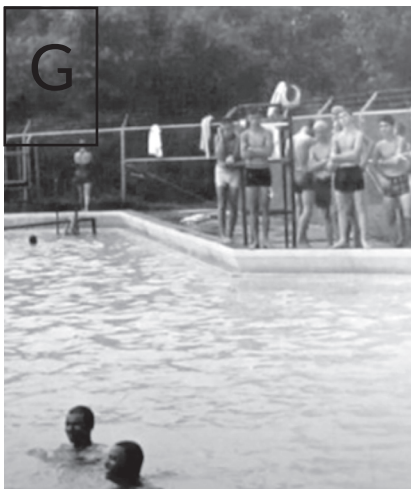
In the spring of 1911, in the city of Edmonton, concerns about the arrival of large numbers of African-Americans resulted in the Edmonton Board of Trade petitioning Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier to prohibit any further migration of Black people from the United States. Responding to the public’s concerns, the government of Canada passed an Order in Council banning Black people from entering Canada for a period of one year. Fortunately, the Order in Council was repealed before it became law. Other measures were used to discourage immigration.



The government’s efforts to prohibit the migration of African-Americans to Canada was combined with pressure at the U.S./Canada border. Border agents informed Black immigrants that the climate was unsuitable for them. In addition, they imposed financial conditions and implemented rigorous medical exams.



These actions effectively brought the migration wave to an end by 1912. But by then, 1,000 to 1,500 Black people had already made the move. Deborah Dobbins says, “We came anyway, we had the right amount of money, we had the skills, we had everything that they said on their checklist.”



In 1924, the city of Edmonton proposed a rule that would ban Black people from using city pools. The Black community protested to city council and convinced them not to go forward with the ban. The protests worked.



“I think a lot of schools have issues with pushing minorities into second streams in schools. My high school tried to force me into second streams. And instead of the 30-1 programs, they tried to put me not even in 30-2, they tried to put me in like 30-3. Unfortunately, in those streams, you can’t really get an education after that. So, it really impedes how you live your life after high school as well.”
–Destiny



There were racially offensive parade floats that were on display during the Edmonton Exhibition. Some of the floats featured Black men locked up in cages.



In 1922, Reverend George W. Slater, Jr. of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (EAME) church in Edmonton, wrote in the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Edmonton Bulletin* about petitions against the banning of Black students for the 5 to 7-year period in Campsie schools (Cui and Kelly, 2010, 261). As a result of Slater's efforts, schools were reopened to Black students.

—AME church congregation in early 1920's Edmonton.



Businesses in Edmonton routinely refused to offer work to Black men or women, resulting in extremely limited options for employment. Black men worked on the railway, in slaughterhouses or at other low-income jobs including construction work. Women worked as domestic housekeepers.

L

Lawrence Mayes, who went to school in Edmonton, recalled a teacher reading the story of *Little Black Sambo* in school. He said, “Then you go out in the school yard for recess and the other kids would have a great time taunting you because all of a sudden you became *Little Black Sambo*. There would be all kinds of names that they would use to, you know, rile you up.”

M



Agnes (nee Huston) Murphy described her experience in school as hideous at first. She was accused of stealing a book. Here is her story. “There was a girl at school who lost her book and the teachers said, ‘Oh, well where did you see it last?’ Well, she pointed to me. I said, I didn’t have her book, I didn’t see it. She said, ‘Are you sure?’ I said, ‘I am certain I haven’t touched her book. I haven’t seen it.’ But you know they came and searched my desk. I didn’t have it. But you think they’d leave me alone? They called the police and sent me home in the police car. My dad just about had a fit. He seen me sitting in the police car you know and they weren’t nice. No, she didn’t steal any books because we don’t have any books. I said, ‘I didn’t steal her book daddy, I didn’t even see it.’ But they accused me and they couldn’t find it so they had to leave.”

Step 3: Review

Resource: [Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues.](#)

Directions: Watch from 13:27–18:58 of the documentary. All of the young interviewees describe how racism has affected them in school and in their communities. This 5-minute portion of the film helps students understand the impacts of both individual and systemic racism.

Debrief:

- How are individual racism and systemic racism different? Which is more troubling (if either)? Why?
- Possible answers: Individual racism may be more blatant; it is perpetuated by individuals or groups. Systemic racism is literally built into society’s laws;



it is less obvious and often normalized to a greater extent. Both forms of racism are harmful and important to struggle against.

- What laws or policies continue today that foster systemic racism?
- What measures are being taken to address systemic racism now?



Theme: Power and Privilege

To fully understand systemic racism, it is important to become aware of the extent to which dominant groups exercise power in their own interest and maintain privileges as a result. The following three activities explore the issue of power and privilege.

ACTIVITY 2

The Danger of a Single Story

Guiding Question

Why is it important to hear multiple stories about people rather than rely on a single narrative?

Key Concepts

Power

Directions

Watch Chimamanda Adichie's Ted Talk *Danger of a Single Story* (18:34 min). The talk focuses on her experiences as she grappled with the reality of being a Nigerian juxtaposed against the common stereotypical narratives that characterize Africans as poor, uneducated and even backward or uncivilized. She describes how power is the driver of these stereotypical portrayals. Begin the discussion by reviewing the definition of stereotyping with the students; end by discussing the danger of only hearing one story or perspective about a culture or country.

Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- Why do we often only hear a single story about a group or nation and how does that story shape our perception of these people? Often, the single story is generalized to characterize everyone as they come to believe that it's the only story.
- What is the harm in reducing a person, group, country or even continent to a single story?
- What historical and political reasons does Adichie offer to explain why this happens and how it is so easy to be affected by the single story?
- Think about your life. Can you recall a time when you felt someone reduced you to a single story? How did it make you feel? Why is it important to find out multiple stories rather than rely on just one narrative?



ACTIVITY 3

Government Policies and Actions: Source Analysis

Overview

Canada's immigration policies have been used to filter and control the flow of immigrants to the country. At certain points in our history, certain racial or religious groups have been targeted as undesirable and not allowed into the country. While this practice officially ended in 1962, remnants of these policies can still be found today. This activity asks students to focus specifically on the policies that initially banned and later discouraged Blacks from entering Canada after 1912.

This activity has two steps.

Guiding Question

What actions were taken by the Canadian government to limit or discourage Black immigration?

Key Concepts

Historical Significance

Step 1: Define systemic racism

Preparation: Review the Roots of Anti-Black Racism segment of the historical overview at the beginning of this guide.

Directions: Create a short lecture or PowerPoint to highlight key ideas pertaining to immigration policies. As you present the PowerPoint, ask students to:

- Think about the specific attitudes and beliefs that dominated thinking about Black immigration to Canada.
- Be aware of the importance of debunking the stereotypes and misinformation while providing a glimpse into the history that reveals pervasive attitudes of the period.

Note: This video may lead to some uncomfortable conversations. This is an opportunity to explore perspectives and raise more questions.



Step 2: Policy Review

Preparation: Review [Canada's Immigration policies and actions](#) in the Canadian Encyclopedia.

Directions: Use the following questions to guide a discussion of immigration policies and how they influence a group's eligibility to come to Canada. Ask the following questions:

- What is the purpose of a country's immigration policy?
- In which time periods was White immigration most favored?
- The Point System, implemented in 1967, has been refined and updated reflecting new priorities in Canada's immigration policies. What criteria have been used to determine who gets in?
- What changes in Canadian values are reflected in our evolving immigration policies?

RELATED ASPEN RESOURCES

At various points in time, other racialized groups, such as Chinese, Southeast Asians and Jews, were barred from entering Canada. What was the thinking that justified limiting settlement to mainly people from European or other "White" countries?

Other examples of government policies designed to halt or discourage immigration to Canada can be found in Aspen Foundation [Teaching Units](#):

- [Stories of People Working Together to Build Alberta](#), Select Grade 4, Stories of Chinese workers who built Alberta, pages 15- 36.
- [Citizens in Action: More than Just Voters](#), Select Grade 6, pages 79 -80.



ACTIVITY 4

What's in a Name?

Overview

Many public institutions, including schools, are named after supporters of racist or exclusionary policies. Usually, the individuals were honoured this way because they contributed to their communities and the issue of race was either ignored or reflected norms of the time period.

Guiding Question

Should public buildings and institutions be named after prominent people?

Key Concepts

Legacy

Directions

Brainstorm or provide a list of contentious names, such as those found in Edmonton's top 20 most racist and problematic place names. Ask students to examine the list and do further research to ensure that the claims made on the list are accurate. If you live outside of Edmonton, do a search to find names of now contentious place names in your area.

Use the following questions to guide a discussion:

- Find out why the controversy exists. What did the individual accomplish that warranted the honor at the time it was given? What evidence exists that the person held racist opinions?
- Who should be honoured either by erecting a statue or having a public place named after them?
- What are the risks inherent in naming public places after people?
- Attitudes and beliefs change over time and fortunately racism and racist behaviours are being called out and blatantly opposed. What are ways to rectify the errors of history in the modern day? Cite examples from history in considering your answer.



Activities to Accompany Learning Outcome 4

I think by high school and the end of junior high people would be, 'You can't play basketball. You're not good at basketball because you're not Black, man, you're white.' Or it'd be, 'You're not Black, Chris. You're white. Come on, stop saying you're Black, you're white.' And I guess mentally, that kind of made me identify as white. But then, you know, my African friends are 'No man, you're Black. So, I just started to embrace that..'

-Chris

Learning Outcome 4

To personally reflect on one's thoughts, behaviours and perceptions of race and racism.

Acts of racism and discrimination occur daily for people racialized as Black. Keep in mind that these actions are often invisible to those who don't experience it themselves. Acknowledging that racism still exists and that we may be part of the problem is the first step to understanding its impact prior to developing ways to take action to address it.

Note: Keep in mind the sensitive nature of this aspect of the topic and gauge your students' maturity, backgrounds and understanding before engaging in these activities.

Guiding Question

How can I better understand the effects of racism on others and examine my own biases?

Key Concepts

Race, Racism, Implicit Bias



ACTIVITY 1

Private Reflection (for secondary students)

Guiding Question

We all have a racialized identity. How do we identify ourselves and others in respectful ways?

Key Concepts

Racial Identity, White Privilege, Racialized

Resource

Black Lives in Alberta (video)

The video documents the experiences of younger and older descendants of the original Black immigrants to Alberta. The younger descendants—Destiny, Tallis, Anthony and Chris—talk about their experiences in school, describing how they personally identify in terms of race and ethnicity. While race is a social construct, most people identify as belonging to one or more races and are often perceived by others as such.

Directions

Watch the section of BLiA [Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues](#) (13:40 – 15:17) in which Destiny and Tallis describe their racial identities. Determine a safe environment for your students before asking the following questions:

- What do you notice about how the young people are describing their own identities?
- How important is that identity to them?
- What experiences do you think are unique to them because of their racialized identities?
- Were there times when they struggled with their racialized identities? Why was that?
- What things give them confidence and pride in expressing who they are now?



Debrief

All people have racialized identities, which they may or may not acknowledge or even be aware of. For example, it is less likely that people racialized as White in our culture think about their race or feel that they are disadvantaged because of it. Use this idea to stimulate a respectful discussion or encourage private reflection. For more ways to approach the concept of White privilege, find Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" on the internet to access a questionnaire that brings these differences to light.

ACTIVITY 2

Perceptions of Race

Overview

This activity is designed to elicit points of view regarding perceptions of race and racism and to help students question some of their assumptions about their own and others' lived experiences.

Directions

Watch the section of BLiA [Black Lives in Alberta: Over a Century of Racial Injustice Continues](#) (13:40 – 15:17) in which Destiny and Tallis describe their racial identities. Then use a short questionnaire to explore issues of racism. You can use the questionnaire provided or develop your own.

Divide the students into small groups and ask them to share their rankings and discuss their reasoning. Are some answers more definitive than others?

Note: It is important to ensure students understand the point made in the documentary that racism is real and exists today despite the perception by many that it is a thing of the past.



Perceptions of Race Questionnaire

Directions: Rate your response to the statement from 1 to 5, with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 Strongly Agree.

1. It is common for people racialized as Black to experience racism on a daily basis.	1 2 3 4 5
2. People self-identify their own race in a variety of ways.	1 2 3 4 5
3. We all have biases and prejudices.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Anti-Black racism has its roots in historical events.	1 2 3 4 5
5. It is important for everyone to learn about the history of African-Americans who settled in Alberta in the early 20th Century.	1 2 3 4 5
6. The way teachers and other students respond to Black students can have lasting effects, both positive and negative.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Anti-Black racism exists in sports at most levels.	1 2 3 4 5



ACTIVITY 3

Equality/Equity - Inside/Outside Circle

Overview

It is not uncommon for people to think that treating all people *equally* (i.e., the same way) is fair and just. Others argue that we should not have the same rules and conditions for everyone because our needs and abilities differ. This is the idea of equity.

Resource

The documentary [Black Lives in Alberta](#) provides stories and anecdotes that illustrate the ideas of equality, inequality and equity.

Guiding Question

Which is fairer, treating people equally or equitably?

Key Concepts

Equality, Equity

Preparation

Review the definitions of the terms equality, inequality and equity. Then, identify instances from *Black Lives in Alberta* where Black people and their White neighbours are treated equally (e.g., school desegregation, initial laws and rules around immigrating, etc.) and where Blacks were treated unequally (e.g., segregated schools, immigrations requirements, etc.). Make a list of specific examples.

Directions

Divide the class into two groups and create a circle with one group. Have them face outward. With the other group, create another circle on the outside and ask each person to face someone on the inner circle. Ask a question from the list below and provide a short time for discussion then rotate the outer circle so that each person has a new partner for each new question.

**Questions:**

- Should all people be treated equitably? Why might this idea make sense? What is the reasoning behind it?
- What does it mean to be treated equitably? (Possible answer: To be treated equitably is to be treated differently based on needs, abilities and so on, with the goal of reaching the same level). What examples can you think of that might have leveled the playing field for African-American immigrants?
- Can you think of instances when you and your friends were treated differently so you were better able to succeed? Think back to sports like T-ball or soccer.



Activities to Accompany Learning Outcome 5

“Ignorance isn’t a lifelong sentence and it’s not something that needs to be punished. Ignorance is something that needs to be fixed through education.”

-Anthony

Learning Outcome 5

To take meaningful actions to address anti-Black racism

Guiding Question

What can we do to address anti-Black racism?

Now more than ever, issues relating to race are at the forefront of conversations, driven by the Black Lives Matter movement. Society is becoming more aware of the numerous injustices towards Black people. With this guide, our goal is to acknowledge that anti-Black racism exists and to find ways to fight the injustices that it causes.

After the opening activity, the exercises for this learning outcome are divided into three themes:

- Understanding Cultural Appropriation (Activities 2 – 4)
- Change Makers (Activities 5 – 7)
- Where Do We Go from Here? (Activity 8)



ACTIVITY 1

Terminology Card Sort

Overview

It is important to use appropriate terminology when discussing issues related to race and racism. When in doubt, ask those who are most affected by their usage to know what is appropriate in a particular context. The definitions in this activity have been tweaked for use in elementary settings. For secondary students use the definitions available in Key Concepts (Section B). You may add any other terms you deem appropriate.

Guiding Question

What terms or expressions will best engage conversations that address current issues of anti-Black racism?

Key Concepts

All of the terms in the activity

Directions

Invite students to assess their understanding of the terms listed below. Start by finding out which terms are already familiar to them.

Divide students into groups. Make one set of cards for each table group. (See chart next page). Ask participants to deal out the cards and sort them one-at-a-time, matching terms to definitions (14 cards in total—7 terms, 7 definitions, use different two colors for the card sets).

Alternative activity format: Write definitions on large chart paper and hang the chart paper around the room. Display the keywords on a screen or provide a master list to each student. Provide students or groups with stacks of sticky notes. Invite each participant or group to write each keyword on a sticky note. Invite each student or group to put each sticky note below the correct definition. Each group can use different coloured sticky notes to turn the activity into a short game.

After students have had the opportunity to match terms, share the answers, which have been included in the chart on the next page.



SOCIAL MOVEMENT

purposeful, organized groups working toward a common goal, attempting to create societal change

SOCIAL JUSTICE

actions to promote equity and justice based on respect for human rights and dignity

BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM)

a social movement that seeks to spotlight racial injustice towards Black people. It advocates for changes to address individual and systemic racism



RACISM

a form of oppression in which one racial group (oppressor) dominates others (oppressed)

POWER

the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others

PRIVILEGE

when individuals receive advantages and benefits because of the deemed superiority of their group



ANTI-BLACK RACISM

the discrimination
directed toward people
of African descent which
is rooted in their unique
history and experience
of enslavement and its
legacy

Debrief

Ask all or some of the following questions:

- Which terms were easy to identify?
- Which were confusing?
- What thoughts came up as you matched the definitions to the terms?

To follow up on this activity, consider providing information on the Black Lives Matter movement and discussing its relevance in a Canadian context.

TEACHER BACKGROUND:

THE RISE OF THE #BLM MOVEMENT

A resistance movement against structural racism is underway in the form of the Black Lives Matter movement. The murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida, USA in 2012 and the ensuing national protests that followed created a mass social movement—and #BlackLivesMatter was launched by three African-American women: Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi. Their demand that all Black lives have value was simple, yet visionary—especially in its call to highlight the most marginalized Black lives, including the LGBTQ community, women and Black immigrant lives. (Adapted from [Teaching for Black Lives.](#))

This anti-racism movement has caught on in other countries including Canada. In some places, the actions taken to address racism go beyond protests and include education, government policy changes and advocacy.



Theme: Power and Privilege

One way to address anti-Black racism is to consider the concept of cultural appropriation. Use the definition below as a starting point for understanding the concept. Reword to be age-appropriate for elementary students.

“Cultural appropriation refers to the process by which members of relatively privileged groups ‘raid’ the culture of marginalized groups, abstracting cultural practices or artifacts from their historically specific contexts.” ([Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre](#)). The marginalized groups do not give permission or get the economic benefits. Cultural appropriation is often used to make money or gain status by persons or groups who are outside the group of origin.

ACTIVITY 2

Cultural Appropriation Discussion

Guiding Question

How is cultural appropriation a form of racism?

Key Concepts

Cultural Appreciation, Cultural Appropriation

Directions

Use the following questions to lead a discussion on cultural appropriation. To provide context for the conversation, explain to students the difference between appreciating a culture and appropriating it.

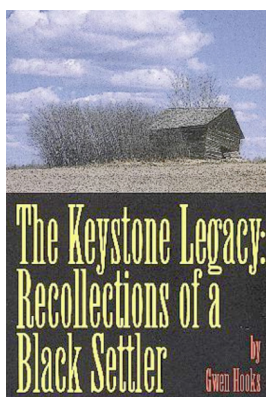
- What does the term cultural appropriation mean?
- How can using aspects of another’s culture without understanding what it truly means be harmful not only to those whose culture you are using but also to those with whom you share it. Why might that be?
- When and how do we borrow from other cultures? Where do you see cultural appropriation in the media (television, magazines, music, etc.)? Ask yourself, is what I am doing or wearing perpetuating any racial or religious stereotype? Am I reducing anyone or any culture to a caricature?



Deeper Discussions

- a. Discuss the notion of Blackface. There are many sources available to learn more about this offensive practice. Be sensitive to your student groups when discussing this topic.

Here is an interesting example of a reaction to the practice of using Blackface:



In 1954, Gwen Hooks, a teacher and descendent of the Oklahoma immigration in Keystone (now Breton), protested a play by the Breton Drama Club that negatively stereotyped and parodied Blacks by using racial slurs and blackface; the incident ended in a court challenge. She was denied a transfer position by the Breton School Board as a result (Under the Gaze, p. 44).

- b. Discuss the idea of appropriate Hallowe'en costumes. How might one feel when their deeply held cultural practices are taken and used in ways that would be unacceptable to the group of origin.

Resource

- [Cultural Appropriation: Why Your Pocahontas Costume Isn't Okay](#). TEDxYouth
- [My Culture Is NOT A Costume](#). You Tube.

Ways to Avoid Cultural Appropriation

When trying to decide if an act is cultural appropriation or appreciation, consider the following question and criteria:

- Does the action mock, make fun of or misrepresent a particular group of people in any way?
- Does it reinforce negative stereotypes of the group?
- Does it economically benefit the group that is being parodied or does someone else gain financially?



ACTIVITY 3

Research Project Ideas

Overview

Research projects provide students with a way to more fully understand and address anti-Black racism.

Directions

Encourage students to create their own research question, find information about the topic and come to an informed position. Discussions pertaining to cultural appropriation can be tied into the project. Students can choose to do a written paper, create a poster or use other means to show their understanding of the issues. When the projects are finished, share them using a gallery.

Possible research topics (or students can come up with their own):

a. The Fashion and Beauty Industry

Sometimes, fashion trends borrow from other cultures. Clothes and jewelry are worn as temporary fashion statements even when the original intent may have had important cultural or spiritual associations to the people who initially designed them.

Explore [The Fashion and Race Database](#) which includes a library of resources and examples of cultural objects that matter in fashion, challenging the misrepresentation in the fashion industry.

Resource: [Cultural Appropriation Was Always Inexcusable](#)

b. Hair Styles

“There were some boys behind me in class who used to throw bits of paper and stuff at my hair, hoping it would stick or something like that.”

-Tallis

Resource: [Braided: An American Hair Story](#) (19:20 min.)



c. Product Rebranding in the Food industry

Recently, the issue of renaming some popular food products has occurred because their names are based on stereotypical representations of Black people, for example Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben's. Find other food products that have been rebranded because their names and images promoted stereotypes of Black people.

Resources:

[Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben Deserve Retirement](#)
[The Cultural Appropriation of Food](#)

d. Anti-Black Racism in Sports

Over the decades, Black athletes have endured many racist acts such as micro-aggressions, marketing rejections and police encounters due to their perceived race. Start this project by reviewing the comments made by Destiny, Chris and Anthony in [Black Lives in Alberta](#) (19:00 – 22:16). Some quotations below may also stimulate your thinking on the topic of anti-Black racism in sports. Consider focusing on a sport of special interest to you.

"But the first time it [racist experience] happened was when I was a rookie and rookies tend to stay together. It's kinda the only way to survive. So, we're walking to the train one day and I remember this white kid said the N word and I was obviously very taken aback, right. I'm in a group of, like all Black kids, all from Calgary. And this one white kid from Calgary says the N-word and I remember being like don't say the N word very, very explicitly." Anthony, football player

"I think by high school and the end of junior high people would be, 'You can't play basketball. You're not good at basketball because you're not Black, man, you're white.' Or it'd be, 'You're not Black, Chris. You're white. Come on, stop saying you're Black, you're white.' And I guess mentally, that kind of made me identify as white. But then, you know, my African friends are 'No man, you're Black. So, I just started to embrace that.'" Chris, basketball player

"There's tons of underlying racism in hockey, unfortunately. And unfortunately, people of colour are treated subhuman during hockey, by the parents, by the coaches and it's kind of ingrained in the entire sport, which was a really unfortunate thing cause I loved hockey and I loved playing hockey. The things that people were allowed to get away with saying, it was just insane to me. And I think people are just like, it's hockey. Like that's just the way hockey is." Destiny, hockey player

**Resources:**

Article: [Canadian Athletes Detail Experiences With Racism In Sports](#)

Article: [Black Hockey Players On Loving a Sport That Doesn't Love Them Back](#)

Video: [Track and Field Olympians talk Racism | CBC Sports](#) (28:24 min)

Radio Documentary: [Soul on Ice](#) CBC (5:53 minutes)

Documentary Movie: [Soul On Ice: Past, Present, Future](#) (86 minutes)

ACTIVITY 4

Book or Film Review

Overview

Select a book or film that features stories of Black youth. Describe the basic story. Discuss aspects that “spoke” to you. What did you learn from reading or viewing? What did you learn about racism directed to those of African descent? How would you judge the book or film on a 5-star rating?

Suggested books:

- *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* by Angela Davis
- *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge
- *They Can't Kill Us All: Ferguson, Baltimore, And A New Era in America's Racial Justice Movement* by Wesley Lowery
- *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* by Audre Lorde
- *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo
- *How To Be An Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi

Suggested picture books:

- *Anti-Racist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers
- *Exquisite* by Suzanne Slade
- *Something Happened in Our Town* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins and Ann Hazzard

Suggested films:

- *The Hate U Give*
- *Dear White People*
- *Hidden Figures*
- *Remember the Titans*



OTHER TEACHING IDEAS

- [Anti-Racist Art Teachers](#) - Working towards removing biases, stereotypes, and false narratives in art education.
- [Not That Funny](#) Board Game - #MakeItAwkward presents Not That Funny, a tabletop game designed to uncover the damaging truths behind everyday jokes directed at many marginalized groups and individuals. We challenge people to call out discriminatory language and actions at all times.

Theme: Change Makers

These activities show young people taking action to change something that they feel is not fair. Stories like these can provide inspiration for your students, empowering them to identify and act on causes that are important to them.

Guiding Question

What actions can individuals, schools, communities and/or governments take to address racism?

Key Concepts

Social Movements, Social Justice, Resilience, Anti-Racism



ACTIVITY 5

Read Aloud Activity

Directions

Select one of the following books (or one with a similar focus) to illustrate the power of using your voice to make change and stand up to injustice:

- *Say Something* by Peter H. Reynold
- *Milo's Museum* by Zetta Elliott
- *The Rooster Who Would Not be Quiet* by Carmen Agra Deedy
- *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman

Debrief

Have students identify and share a cause that matters to them.

- What is an injustice?
- What does it mean to use your voice for a cause?
- Why is it important to stand up for what we believe in?
- What action(s) can you take to fight injustice?

ACTIVITY 6

Discovering Change Makers

Directions

Highlight the power of believing that you can make a difference through the following questions and activities:

- What does it mean to be an activist or change maker?
- How have children and youth fought for change in their communities in the past? In the present?
- Have your students research a black youth change maker and present their learnings in a Slideshow or Common Craft Video to the class. Research should address the following questions: What were these young change makers trying to fight, overcome or change? How exactly did they make a difference and create change?



POSSIBLE CHANGE MAKERS

The Black Teachers Association of Alberta has developed a series of posters representing Black Canadians who have made important contributions to their communities and to the country. Consider having your students develop similar posters reflecting significant members of their own Black community.

[Black Teachers Association Posters English](#)

[Black Teachers Association Posters French](#)

ACTIVITY 7

Poetry Analysis of “Still I Rise” and “The Hill We Climb”

Still I Rise

Directions: Ask students if they have ever heard of the poet Maya Angelou, a civil rights activist, poet and award-winning author. She explored the themes of economic and racial oppression.

Have students independently, or in small groups, read and analyze Maya Angelou’s poem [Still I Rise](#).

Discussion questions:

- What images in the poem stand out the most? Why?
- What lines show the themes of strength and resiliency?
- Which lines are the most significant to you?

The Hill We Climb

Ask students if they have ever heard of the poet Amanda Gorman. She is a spoken word poet and activist. Her work focuses on issues of oppression, feminism, race and marginalization. Gorman was the first person to be named National Youth Poet Laureate. She read her poem “The Hill We Climb” at the inauguration of U.S. President Joe Biden in 2021, where she had an international stage.

[Read](#) Amanda Gorman’s poem or [watch](#) her read it.



Discussion questions:

- What does it mean to be unified?
- What does it mean to “forge a union with purpose”?
- What “catastrophes” might Gorman be referencing in the poem?
- How have one or more of these catastrophes impacted you, your family and your community?
- Discuss the line: “So let us leave behind a country / better than the one we were left with.” What would it look like, sound like, and/or feel like if your generation were to leave behind a country that is better than the one you are inheriting?
- What specific actions can you take as part of Gorman’s call to action?

Ask students to respond to the following question in their journal: When your light shines brightest, what are you brave enough to see and what are you brave enough to be?

Other Resources

- [Amanda Gorman: Meet the First African-American Youth Poet Laureate | TODAY](#)
- [8 Things to Know About Amanda Gorman](#)



Theme: Where Do We Go from Here

Guiding Question

What can we do as individuals and as a school community to address anti-Black racism?

Key Concepts

Social Justice, Anti-Black Racism

Resources

The final section of the documentary [Black Lives in Alberta](#) (26:12 min – 30:38), which suggests actions that individuals and groups can take to address racism.

ACTIVITY 8

What Can I/We Do?

Directions

Listen to the calls to action posed by the interviewees at the end of the documentary. Write the ideas in a list. Determine which ones you could do as an individual and which might require group action. The discussion should address the following questions: What were these young change makers trying to fight, overcome or change? How exactly did they make a difference and create change?

Discussion questions

- Which suggestion for taking action makes the most sense to you?
- Which suggestion is one that you could do yourself or with your friends?
- What is one thing you will do differently or think differently about having viewed this video?



Follow-up research

Students can research ways they can

- Help change their community and shift the narrative from racism to anti-racism
- Engage in anti-racism work (i.e., informing themselves by reading or engaging with Black art, writing letters to local officials, supporting Black businesses)
- Become involved with anti-racism organizations. (See Appendix 1: Ally Organizations.)



Section E. Appendix

Appendix 1: Ally Organizations in Alberta

There are many ally organizations in Alberta. Check out those below and search the internet for others near you.

[Alberta Human Rights Commission](#)

[All of Us Are Related, Each of Us Is Unique](#)

[Calgary Anti-Racism Education](#)

[Calgary Centre for Global Community](#)

[Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)

[Canadian Human Rights Museum](#)

[Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation](#)

[Canadian Race Relations Foundation](#)

[Central Alberta Diversity Association](#)

[Centre for Race and Culture](#)

[The Historical Thinking Project](#)

[John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights](#)

[Racial Equity Tools](#)

[Stop Racism and Hate Collective](#)

[Teaching Tolerance](#)



Appendix 2: Alberta Social Studies Curriculum Connections

Grade 4: A Sense of the Land & the Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta

- 4.1.4 In what ways do the physical geography and natural resources of a region determine the establishment of communities?
- 4.2.1 Recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events.
- 4.2.2 How did the arrival of diverse groups of people determine the establishment and continued growth of rural and urban communities?
- 4.3.3 In what ways have music, art, narratives and literature contributed to the vitality of the culture, language and identity of diverse Alberta communities over time?

Grade 5: Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada

- 5.2.1 Recognize how an understanding of Canadian history and the stories of its peoples contributes to their sense of identity.
- 5.2.8 What do stories of the Underground Railroad tell us about the history and presence of Black communities in Canada?

Grade 6: Citizens Participating in Decision Making

- 6.1 Recognize the influence of historical events and legislation on democratic decision making in Canada.
- 6.S.9 Media literacy—examine and assess diverse perspectives regarding an issue presented in the media.

Grade 7: Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions

- 7.1.2 Appreciate the challenges of co-existence among peoples.
- 7.2.1 Recognize the positive and negative aspects of immigration and migration.
- 7.2.2 Recognize the positive and negative consequences of political decisions.
- 7.2.5 To what extent was agricultural activity a key factor in the population growth of western Canada?
- 7.2.5 How were the needs of varied populations considered through the creation of Alberta and of Saskatchewan?
- 7.2.6 How have Canadian immigration policies contributed to increased diversity and multiculturalism within the Canadian population?
- 7.S.2
 - Analyze historical issues to form or support an opinion.
 - Use historical and community resources to organize the sequence of historical events.
 - Explain the historical contexts of key events of a given time period.
 - Distinguish cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including the long and short-term causal relations of events.



Grade 9: Issues for Canadians: Governance and Rights

- 9.1.2 Appreciate the various effects of government policies on citizenship and on Canadian Society.
- 9.1.8 What factors influence immigration policies in Canada (i.e., economic, political, health, security)?
- 9.1.8 To what extent does Canada benefit from immigration?
- 9.S.2 Develop skills of historical thinking:
 - Analyze selected issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a context of time and place.
 - Distinguish cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events and issues, including the long- and short-term causal relations.
 - Use historical and community resources to organize the sequence of historical events.
 - Analyze the historical contexts of key events of a given time period.

Grade 10: 10-1 & 10-2

- 1.2 Appreciate why peoples in Canada and other locations strive to promote their cultures, languages and identities in a globalizing world. (Both)
- 1.4 Explore ways in which individuals and collectives express identities (traditions, language, religion, spirituality, the arts, attire, relationship to land, ideological beliefs, role modelling). (10-1)
- 1.4 Identify ways in which individuals and collectives express identities (traditions, language, religion, spirituality, the arts, attire, relationship to land, ideological beliefs, role modelling). (10-2)
- 4.2 Recognize and appreciate the importance of human rights in determining quality of life. (Both)

Grade 11: 20-1 & 20-2

- 1.5 Explore a range of expressions of nationalism (Both)
- 1.6 Develop understandings of nation and nationalism (relationship to land, geographic, collective, civic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political, spiritual, religious, patriotic). (Both)
- 1.11 Evaluate the importance of reconciling nationalism with contending non-nationalist loyalties (religion, region, culture, race, ideology, class, other contending loyalties). (Both)
- 4.2 Appreciate contrasting historical and contemporary narratives associated with national identity. (Both)



Grade 12: 30-1 & 30-2

- 1.1 Appreciate various perspectives regarding identity and ideology. (Both)
- 1.2 Appreciate various perspectives regarding the relationship between individualism and common good. (Both)
- 1.4 Examine historic and contemporary expressions of individualism and collectivism. (30-1)
- 1.4 Identify historic and contemporary expressions of individualism and collectivism. (30-2)

- 2.13 Evaluate the extent to which resistance to the principles of liberalism is justified. (Both)
- 2.9 Evaluate ideological systems that rejected principles of liberalism (communism in the Soviet Union, fascism in Nazi Germany). (30-1)
- 2.9 Analyze ideological systems that rejected principles of liberalism (Communism in the Soviet Union, fascism in Nazi Germany). (30-2)

- 3.6 Examine why government practices may not reflect values of liberalism (Canada, contemporary examples). (30-2)
- 3.7 Analyze why the practices of governments may not reflect principles of liberalism. (30-1)
- 3.8 Evaluate the extent to which the values of liberalism are viable in the context of contemporary issues (environment concerns, resource use and development, debt and poverty, racism, pandemics, terrorism, censorship). (30-2)
- 3.9 E valuate the extent to which the principles of liberalism are viable in the context of contemporary issues (environment concerns, resource use and development, debt and poverty, racism, pandemics, terrorism, censorship, illiberalism). (30-1)

- 4.9/4.10 Explore opportunities to demonstrate active and responsible citizenship through individual and collective action. (Both)



Appendix 3: Petitions Remonstrating Against Negro Immigration Are Circulated

In 1911, this petition was presented to the Government of Canada. The ensuing Order in Council “banning for a period of one year ... the landing in Canada ... immigrants belonging to the negro race” was repealed before it became law.

We, the undersigned residents of the city of Edmonton, respectfully urge upon your attention and upon that of the Government of which you are the head, the serious menace to the future welfare of a large portion of Western Canada, by reason of the alarming influx of negro settlers. This influx commenced about four years ago in a very small way, only four or five families coming in the first season, followed by thirty or forty families the next year. Last year several hundred negroes arrived in Edmonton and settled in surrounding territory. Already this season nearly three hundred have arrived; and the statement is made, both to these arrivals and by press dispatches, that these are but the advent of such negroes as are now here was most unfortunate for the country, and that further arrivals in large numbers would be disastrous. We cannot admit as any factors the argument that these people may be good farmers or good citizens. It is a matter of common knowledge that it has been proved in the United States that negroes and Whites cannot live in proximity without the occurrence of revolting lawlessness and the development of bitter race hatred, and that the most serious question facing the United States today is the negro problem. We are anxious that such a problem should not be introduced into this lawlessness as have developed in all sections in the United States where there is any considerable negro element. There is no reason to believe that we have here a higher order of civilization, or that the introduction of a negro problem here would have different results. We therefore respectfully urge that such steps immediately be taken by the Government of Canada as will prevent any further immigration of negroes into western Canada. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.
Edmonton Capital, April 25, 1911

Courtesy of the [City of Edmonton Archives](#)



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