

# Charting New Relationships: Black History and Anti-racism in Canada



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## A Shared History of Racism: Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour in Canada

Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour have a shared history of racism, of exclusion, and of marginalization, in Canada and in other nations. It is important to recognize the multi-faceted nature of racism in our land. While Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour have and continue to experience racism that is similar in many ways, in many other ways the racism experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada is unique. Colonialism, the *Indian Act*, and the residential school system, for example, have created a “dual track” of racism that is distinct among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.

### *Creating Racism-Free Schools through Critical/Courageous Conversations on Race*

The document [Creating Racism-Free Schools through Critical/Courageous Conversations on Race](#) supports school divisions, schools, teachers, parents, and students as they undertake critical and courageous conversations on racism to create inclusive and equitable classrooms and schools for First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Black students, as well as all other students. The document helps to inform and encourage educators, describes the levels and effects of racism, acknowledges our history of racism, stimulates dialogue through critical and courageous conversations, and works toward achieving the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.



### *Fostering Safe Spaces for Dialogue and Relationship-Building between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples*

The document [Fostering Safe Spaces for Dialogue and Relationship-Building between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples: Wise Practices for the Relationship-Building Process and Recommendations for the Development of an Orientation Toolkit](#) by Aliraza Alidina, Darrien Morton, and Jenna Wirch suggests ways to facilitate the relationship-building process between newcomers and Indigenous Peoples, as well as recommendations for the development of an orientation toolkit.

## The International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024)

The United Nations proclaimed 2015 to 2024 as the Decade for People of African Descent, recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be recognized, promoted, and protected. It estimates that approximately 200 million people in the Americas identify as being of African descent. Beyond Africa and the Americas, many millions more live in nations throughout the world.

The United Nations offers a number of related media resources including photos, videos, and graphics on the [website for the initiative](#).

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO in June of 2020 published [A Call to Mobilize Against Racism and Discrimination](#) that offers a number of resources related to taking action against racism and discrimination.

## Black History in Canada

Black history is Canadian history. It is an essential piece of the Canadian “story.” It gives us insights into and an understanding of how Canadian and North American societies were formed and how they “work” today. As Canadians work and struggle to build a better society, knowing and appreciating Black history is vitally important. Black history is played out every day in our local and national communities.

Black history is important because it is a history of resistance, resiliency, and hope even in the face of impossible odds. Black history is about social justice, freedom, and the love of humanity. Black history inspires us even when we are frustrated by what seems to be the slow and painful steps that progress takes.

## Black History in Manitoba

The Black community in Manitoba is diverse and composed of families and individuals who immigrated to Canada from the United States and other countries from the 1600s to the present, including recent immigrants with Caribbean, U.S.-American, African, and Latin American origins.

## Black History Resources

For a comprehensive list of resources and information on Black history and Black History Month, link to Manitoba Education’s [Diversity Education](#) web page.

## Black History in Manitoba’s Curricula

Manitoba Education recognizes the need for inclusive curricula to challenge discrimination and racism and to advance equity. It acknowledges the need to cover more fully and accurately the histories of marginalized groups such as Black Peoples, Indigenous Peoples, and Peoples of Colour. The web page [Elements Integrated into the Curriculum](#) was designed to ensure that diversity is addressed in the curriculum. This has influenced the development of the social studies, the arts education, and the new English language arts curricula, all of which provide opportunities to learn about diversity, social justice issues, and human rights education, including the histories and aspirations for justice of Black Peoples, Indigenous Peoples, and Peoples of Colour.

### Social Studies

Citizenship is a core concept in the social studies curricula, and the mandatory learning outcomes in human rights education are designed to develop knowledge of the diverse peoples of Canada and the world, and an understanding of our rights and responsibilities as citizens to celebrate our diversity.

Human rights, equality, and responsibilities of citizens, locally and globally, are featured prominently in the social studies curriculum. Following are some examples of learning that focuses on anti-bias/anti-racism approaches throughout the social studies curriculum:

[Kindergarten to Grade 8 Social Studies: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes](#) provides students with the opportunities to explore how Canadian society has developed, beginning with the Indigenous Peoples, through the colonial era, to present-day Canada. Students explore the diverse peoples and changing composition of Canadian society. The impact of slavery on North America and elsewhere is addressed in the curriculum and the impact of racism on Canada and the global community is a key aspect of the exploration of the active democratic citizenship component of the curriculum.



[Grade 9 Social Studies: Canada in the Contemporary World](#) focuses on diversity and pluralism in Canada, democracy and governance in Canada, and opportunities and challenges. The impact of racism and inequality in Canadian society is explored throughout the curriculum. The topics of building a just society and citizenship participation are explored in depth.

[Grade 11 History of Canada](#) emphasizes issues related to equity and diversity in a pluralistic society. It addresses the history of Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour and the effects of racism. Topics covered specifically with respect to Black history include Black United Empire Loyalists, immigration of Black people before and during the American Civil War, recent immigration from Africa and other nations, and the struggle for equity and human rights.

#### [Grade 12 Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability](#)

The *Grade 12 Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability* course has several areas of inquiry relevant to Black history, including the following:

- Modern Slavery
- Oppression and Genocide
- Poverty, Wealth, and Power
- Social Justice and Human Rights
- Indigenous Peoples, Global Issues, and Sustainability

#### [Grade 12: Cinema as a Witness to Modern History](#)

This course provides an excellent vehicle for exploring systemic racism in policing and in society in general through film. The course guide offers excellent suggestions on choosing topics and films. The theme of systemic racism in policing and more broadly in society in general aligns with the topics of oppression and resistance and social transformation.

### **Arts Education**

The [arts education](#) curricula (dance, dramatic arts, music, and visual arts education) offer unique, diverse, and powerful ways for learners to engage with, understand, and respond to their world. Research indicates that well-designed arts education contributes to learning engagement, self-efficacy, and a wide range of positive academic, social, and emotional effects.

Dance, dramatic arts, music, and visual arts education are important because they

- have intrinsic value
- develop creative, critical, and ethical thinking
- expand literacy choices for meaning making
- contribute to identity construction
- develop communication and collaboration competencies
- are essential for well-being
- support sustainable learning
- are transformative
- foster human flourishing



## English Language Arts

[English language arts](#) (ELA) learning plays an important role in diversity education. The ELA curriculum is relevant to exploring diversity, human rights, and countering prejudice and discrimination, and the curriculum is designed to explore issues and experiences. The curriculum seeks to help students develop critical thinking skills and develop an appreciation of and respect for those who have different perspectives, needs, life experiences, cultures, languages, and world views. Teachers are expected to help students engage in thinking critically about different perspectives and influences on their personal, cultural, and historical understandings and to encourage them to develop more complex concepts and participate in deeper reflections about these influences over the course of their schooling.

The ELA practice particularly relevant to diversity education is the practice of using language as power and agency, where students ask the following questions:

- How does what I hear, read, and view influence what I think?
- How do I use language to influence others when I write, represent, and speak?
- How do I decide what and whose stories to tell?

The practice of using language as power and agency includes the following elements:

- Recognize and analyze inequities, viewpoints, and bias in texts and ideas.
- Investigate complex moral and ethical issues and conflicts.
- Contemplate the actions that can be taken, consider alternative viewpoints, and contribute other perspectives.