

National study of elementary and secondary school curricula shows inconsistencies in content for Canadian Black history

Background

- In August 2023, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) will release **Black Canadians and Public Education: A scan of elementary and social studies curricula**. The study was launched in response to a [policy brief](#) developed in 2021 by CCUNESCO in partnership with the Global Centre for Pluralism, which outlined recommendations for addressing anti-Black racism in Canadian schools. The study and final report were commissioned to be conducted and written by Turner Consulting Group. *Black Canadians and Public Education: A scan of elementary and social studies curricula* is launching on August 31, 2023, the International Day for People of African Descent.
- The environmental scan explores Black representation, including Black history, within provincial and territorial K-12 social studies curricula in Canada. The report highlights best practices in the education sector and offers recommendations where gaps exist as a way to move forward.
- The scan consisted of a review of published and available curricular resources, with a focus on social studies, for all provinces and territories to identify:
 - Where and how Black people are included in elementary and secondary social studies curricular documents in Canada;
 - Where and how anti-Black racism is addressed;
 - Missed opportunities to address anti-Black racism and include Black representation in the curriculum;
- The scan also included consultations and interviews with Ministry of Education staff, educators, and community stakeholders.
- *Black Canadians and Public Education: A scan of elementary and social studies curricula* will be available to view and download in both official languages.

- more -

- The report will be used as a resource to support policy-makers, school boards, community organizations, and families as they head back to school for the 2023-2024 year.
- The findings of the report are intended to contribute to the work already being done within Ministries of Education, school districts and classrooms that are seeking to improve the representation of Black Canadians and Canadian Black history in the country's education curricula.
- CCUNESCO intends to further explore Black representation in French education curricula for Phase 2 of this project.

---30---

For media interviews and more information, please contact:

Natassia Morris

Project Manager, DAYO Media & Communications

647-901-5457

info@dayo.ca

Key findings from the report

- Each province and territory oversees its own educational curricula and employs different approaches to developing curricula expectations. As a result, there is no shared national mandate or expectation for teaching Black Canadian history.
- Often, Canadian curricula prioritize the Black experience from the United States, including the plight of slavery and their fight for civil rights, while failing to acknowledge parallel experiences of Black people in Canada.
- Educators may treat Black Canadian history as separate and distinct from Canadian history in part because they do not write or control the curricula. Many are also unfamiliar with the history themselves and therefore lack knowledge and comfort in teaching it in their classrooms. Having curriculum leaders lead the integration of the Black experience in education will ensure that educators in the classroom are more adequately resourced and supported.
- Negative stereotypes of Black people can affect how teachers and peers view Black students, which can affect Black students' self-esteem and opportunities for success. Including positive Black representation in the curriculum and equipping teachers to engage in classroom conversations about anti-Black racism reduces Black students' vulnerability to the effects of racial discrimination and contributes to better mental health and educational outcomes.
- Studies have found that Black students with increased exposure to Black representation in curricula demonstrate improved academic success, sometimes by as much as two letter grades.
- While some Black historical figures are included in individual provinces' curricular documents, not one single African Canadian is included in every provincial and territorial curriculum. For added context, of the listed African Canadians in the 'Persons of National Historic Significance in Canada,' not one of them can be found uniformly throughout all of the provincial and territorial curricular documents scanned for this report.
- Ontario and Nova Scotia are two provinces that are leading in their inclusion of Black history and Black Canadians in their respective curricula. However, both still fail to include Black people and historical events significant to other provinces. In addition, both provinces offer separate Black history courses, which sends a message that Black history is separate from Canadian history.