

Black History Month

Accomplishments of Black People

Black History Month was created in 1926 in the United States, when historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History announced the second week of February to be “Negro History Week”.

In December 1995 the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, The Honourable Jean Augustine. The House of Commons carried the motion unanimously.

In February 2008, Senator Donald Oliver, the first Black man appointed to the Senate, introduced the Motion to Recognize Contributions of Black Canadians and February as Black History Month. It received unanimous approval and was adopted on March 4, 2008. This week we will focus on some of the achievements and inventions in history which were created by Black people. Some of these things we take for granted and use every day.

- **Three-Light Traffic Light – Garrett Morgan** was the first Black person in Cleveland, Ohio to own a car. After he witnessed a severe accident at an intersection in the city he expanded the current traffic light by adding a yield component.
- **Refrigerated Truck – Frederick McKinley Jones**
- **Color IBM PC Monitor and Gigahertz Chip – Mark Dean**
- **Automatic Gear Shift – Richard Spikes** [\[1\]](#)
- **A device to lubricate a train's moving parts while the train was in motion, portable ironing boards, and more than 50 patents were developed by Elijah McCoy.** He was born to former slaves who escaped to Canada from the United States and he studied mechanical engineering in Scotland.[\[2\]](#)

In more recent times, we can also appreciate the hard work of the following Black activists:

- **Winston LaRose** – director of the oldest community organization in Toronto’s Jane-Finch neighbourhood.
- **Jean Augustine** – Educator, activist and politician, former principal, she was honoured by having a Brampton, ON secondary school named after her in 2016.
- **Rosemary Sadlier** – Order of Ontario recipient, former President of the Ontario Black History Society.
- **Dudley Law** – Former mechanic and welder, activist who rose to prominence during ‘70s and ‘80s as an outspoken critic of the Toronto police following the shooting of several Black men.
- **Michaëlle Jean** – first Black person to serve as Canada’s Governor General, former CBC journalist.

- **George Ethelbert Carter** – first Black Judge in Ontario Provincial Court – Judge in 1979, instrumental in establishing Legal Aid in Ontario, was named to the Order of Ontario in 2014. His parents were immigrants from Barbados [3]
- **Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré** was the first Black Canadian Dean of a Law Faculty, the University of Windsor. She is now a judge in Quebec, and is also the first Black Canadian to be appointed to the bench in that province[4]

To learn about other black Canadians who made major contributions to Canada's culture and legacy please check the reference below.[5]

As Black History Month draws to a close please consider:

- What new information did you learn?
- What was familiar?
- What was new?
- What surprised you?
- How has this information changed your understanding of Black Canadian History?

[1] <https://dailyhive.com/seattle/inventions-by-black-people>

[2] <https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/black-history-month/>

[3] <https://www.cbc.ca/cbcdocspov/features/5-black-canadian-leaders-who-inspired-a-generation>

[4] <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/black-history-month/black-canadians.html#s9>

[5] <https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/black-history-month/>