

Mapping Ontario's Black Archive: Building an Inventory Through Storytelling

Research Leads: Dr. Cheryl Thompson & Dr. Karen Cyrus

This project will create an inventory of Ontario's Black archives. Its objectives are:

- (1) to create a comprehensive inventory of Black Ontarian photographs and documents in archival collections;
- (2) to examine, using oral histories, the current state of existing archival collections by conducting semi-structured interviews with archivists, public historians, heritage and museum librarians, Black community-members, artists (i.e., visual, music, and performance) who have worked with these collections;
- (3) to evaluate, over a five-year period, how we can bridge the knowledge gap between Black Ontarian archival collections and Black history.

There is a long-standing challenge in Black Canadian Studies pertaining to archives that are scattered, hidden, incomplete, and inadequately catalogued. By creating an inventory of Black archives and developing a detailed framework for how to collect, describe, curate, and catalogue these collections, this study will create step-by-step guidelines that connect institutional and experiential knowledge about Black Ontarians.

Over the five years, this project will contribute to the training of six highly qualified personnel: one two-year postdoctoral fellow (Dr. Karen Cyrus), three PhD graduate research assistants and two MA graduate research assistants.

In addition to producing a manuscript proposal on Black archives in Ontario that will be submitted to a scholarly publisher, this project will conclude with a public exhibition that merges the findings of Ontario's Black archives with the storytelling about Ontario's Black archives from the creative and archival communities.

This research will contribute to the growing fields of Black Canadian studies, archival science, curatorial and museum studies. It will inform the creative industries in Ontario and be of tangible interest to community-based sectors and non-governmental organizations across municipalities, cities, and towns.