

January 24, 2023

Black History Month 2023: Celebrating Black Inventors and Scientists



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

During Black History Month, we celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Black Canadians and their communities who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada a culturally diverse and prosperous country. It is a time to reflect on the stories, experiences, and accomplishments of Canada's Black community for which there are many and recognize that Black History is Canadian History

Although Black Canadians have helped to shape our country's heritage and identity since the early 1600s, their history has been largely overlooked or ignored in our history textbooks. One area of many that has been particularly overlooked is the contributions made by Black

Canadians in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine.

A Black Canadian, Elijah McCoy, invented the automatic lubricant for locomotive steam engines to help prevent engine overheating. It is believed the term "the real McCoy" came into usage to distinguish his invention from those of imitators. He is credited as being the first Black Canadian inventor.

William Peyton Hubbard invented and patented a commercial baker's oven, the Hubbard Portable. In 1894, he became the first Black councilor in any major Canadian city when he was elected alderman in Toronto. He also co-founded the first publicly owned hydroelectric company in Ontario.

Anderson Ruffin Abbott became the first Canadian-born man of Black heritage to become a licensed physician in 1871. He was committed to education and integration and fought against racially segregated schools.

Many more have broken through the glass ceiling: Canadian-born Sophie Jones became the first Black faculty member at Spelman College in 1885. Dr. Douglas Salmon became Canada's first Black surgeon when he joined the Scarborough Centenary Hospital in 1967. Dr. June Marion James was the first Black woman admitted to the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine in the 1960s.

These are just a few of the extraordinary Black Canadians whose contributions have had an impact, not only in Canada, but around the world.

This Black History Month, we encourage all CUPW members to learn more about the history of Black Canadians in STEM and the great work they continue to do today. Below are some helpful resources:

<https://blackscientists.ca/>

<https://www.sciencerendezvous.ca/news/2022/02/18/black-canadian-contributions-to-stem/>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/browse/people/science-technology/minorities-in-stem>

<https://ingeniumcanada.org/channel/articles/honouring-black-canadians-in-science-and-technology>

<https://amherstburgfreedom.org/>

<https://blackloyalist.novascotia.ca/visit-us>

<https://bccns.com/>

<https://tctrail.ca/stories/5-canadian-heritage-sites-to-visit-during-black-history-month/>

I would like to invite members to celebrate Black History by seeking out and participating in the many events in your communities, whether it be panel discussions, theatre productions, seminars, poetry readings, spoken word or any other events in person or online.

I would also invite you to go beyond that by being curious about why Black History has been excluded from our history and take action to correct that omission in your life and community. If you are looking for a starting place, please look for Black History Societies in your regions.

Happy Black History Month to All.

In solidarity,



Jan Simpson
National President

2019-2023 / Bulletin # 431

/bk cope 225