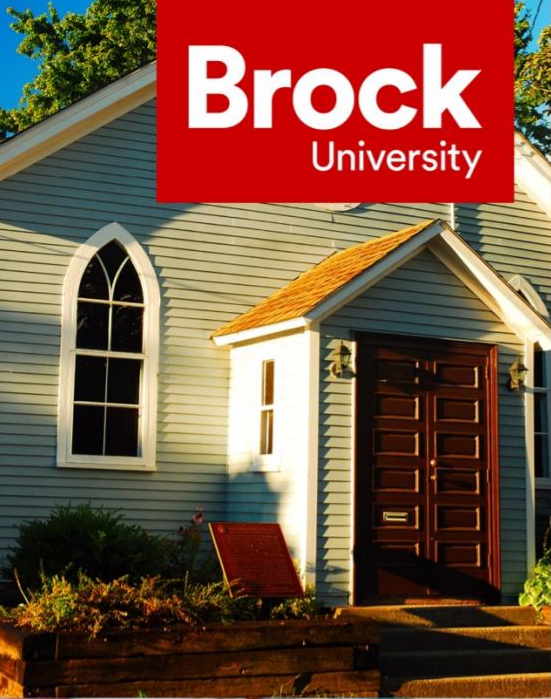




Brock
University



African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement

Brock University

Why is Brock University adopting an African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement?

The African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement is a voluntary recognition which can be offered by any university staff, faculty, or student wishing to use it in honour of people of African, Black, and Caribbean descent.

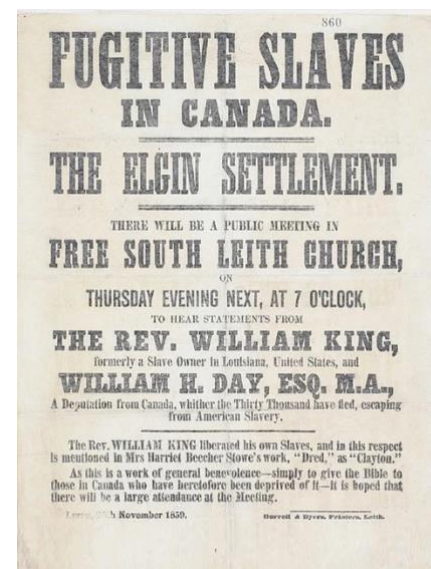
The purpose of the African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement (ACAA) is to:

- Honour the ancestors of African-descended peoples, who were forcibly displaced through the transatlantic slave trade (1501 – 1873).
- Recognize the lived experiences and ongoing contributions of African, Black, and Caribbean people.
- Demonstrate the university’s commitment to equity, inclusion, and confronting anti-Black racism as a signatory of The Scarborough Charter.

The Importance of the African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement

The ACAA is important because it:

- Acknowledges the historical trauma of slavery, colonialism, and systemic racism.
- Recognizes the resilience, brilliance, and contributions of African, Black, and Caribbean peoples locally, nationally, and globally.
- Grounds us in the history of the Niagara region, especially the Underground Railroad and Black Freedom Seekers.
- Reminds us of our shared responsibility to dismantle oppressive systems and to advance equity, justice, and belonging on campus.



Archival poster (1859) for a meeting at Free South Leith Church featuring Rev. William King and William H. Day. It promotes the Elgin Settlement as a refuge for people escaping slavery in America, a role Canada assumed following the 1834 abolition of its own history of enslavement.

How is the African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement different from the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement?

The ACAA is distinct and separate from the Indigenous Land acknowledgement. It can be used to complement, not replace, the university's Indigenous Land Acknowledgement, which should always be recognized first. This acknowledgement stands in solidarity with, and in addition to, the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement.

How the African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement can be used

- Immediately following the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement to open university events, ceremonies, gatherings, or meetings.
- In either its full, shortened, or adapted and personalized version, depending on the context.
- By speakers who are intentional, respectful, and mindful of the words they are delivering.
- In conjunction with ongoing commitments to anti-racism, equity, and inclusive practices (i.e., The Scarborough Charter) – serving as a living practice of change, not a symbolic gesture.

This acknowledgement should be offered authentically and with care, thoughtfully reflecting the lived experiences, cultures, histories, and heritage of Black people. Members of the university community who do not identify as people of African descent, but who wish to honour this acknowledgement, are welcome to adapt the language while keeping its intent and ensuring that it continues to respectfully recognize and centre Black voices, experiences, and contributions.

The African-Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement is both a tribute and a call to action, grounding us in history while guiding us toward a more just future. The intentions and values that ground this acknowledgement are to honour the gravity of this history with sincerity and conscious reflection, and to offer appreciation and gratitude for the continued struggle of people of African, Black, and Caribbean descent for freedom, justice, and collective flourishing.



A hand-colored lithograph of the Niagara Suspension Bridge, showing the Niagara Falls in the background, by Charles Parsons (1821-1910). Freedom Seekers on the Underground Railroad often reached freedom in Canada by crossing this bridge.

Brock University **African Canadian Ancestral Acknowledgement**

Full version

We acknowledge the ancestors of African-descended peoples who were forcibly and violently displaced and brought to these lands through the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement. From 1501 – 1873, their stolen labour, lives, and knowledge were exploited as part of the foundation of colonial wealth and systems that continue to shape our present.

We recognize that people of African, Black, and Caribbean descent hold a unique and complex relationship to these lands. Many were brought here involuntarily through enslavement and forced displacement, while others arrived through later migrations. Across generations, several have and continue to contribute profoundly to the fabric of our societies through their cultural knowledge, labour, leadership, creativity, and ongoing struggles for justice and liberation.

In this region, we honour the legacies of Black Freedom Seekers who came to Niagara via the Underground Railroad, and the generations of Black communities, farmers, and workers who have shaped and sustained these lands. We also acknowledge the contemporary challenges faced by Black Canadians, including anti-Black racism, systemic inequities, and ongoing forms of displacement and exploitation.

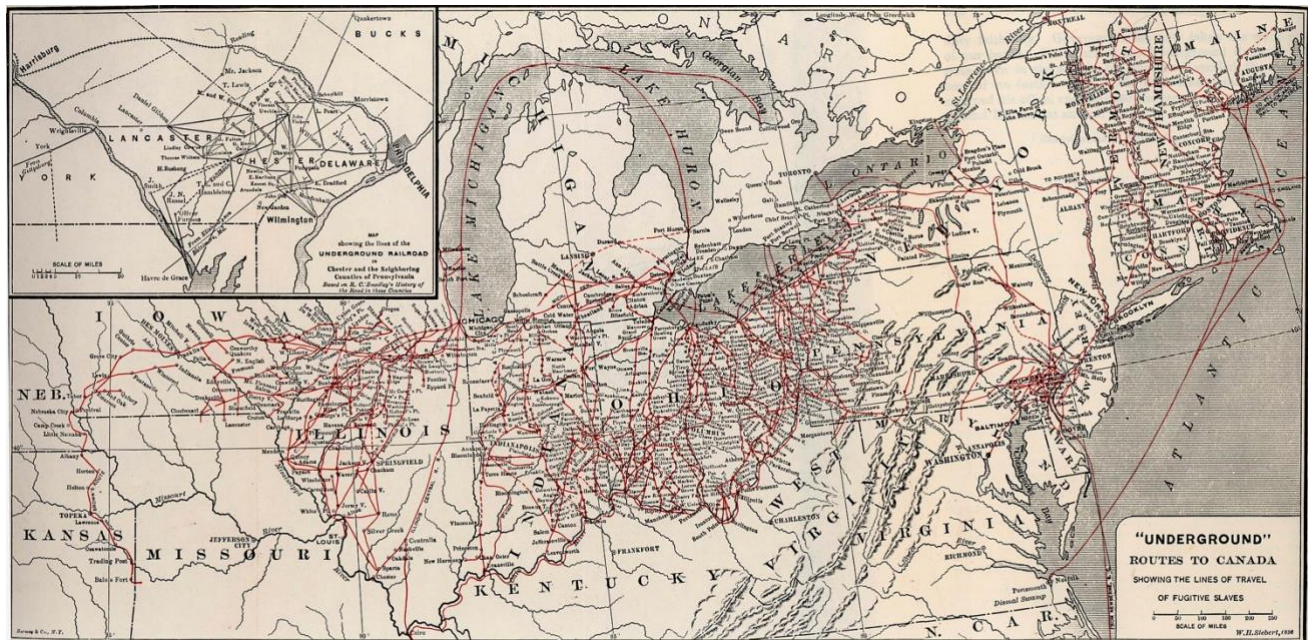
We affirm the enduring resistance, resilience, and brilliance of all African-diasporic peoples. Their struggles for freedom, equity, and belonging continue to inspire and guide efforts to dismantle oppressive systems and to build a more inclusive, just, and liberated future for all.

Short version

We honour the ancestors of African-descended peoples who were forcibly displaced through the transatlantic slave trade, and whose resilience and sacrifices continue to shape our present.

We recognize that Black, African, and Caribbean peoples hold a unique history on these lands — many brought here involuntarily. Several have made lasting contributions to our communities, including here in Niagara through the Underground Railroad and the legacy of Black Freedom Seekers.

We affirm the strength, brilliance, and ongoing struggles for justice of all African-diasporic peoples, whose pursuit of liberation continues to inspire us all.



Routes of the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe havens to help Freedom Seekers escape, illustration from The underground railroad from slavery to freedom by Wilbur Henry Siebert, 1898.

Additional references

City of Toronto

[African Ancestral Acknowledgement Guidance](#)

[The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#)

City of London

[Anti-Black Racism Action Plan](#)

Dalhousie University

[African Nova Scotian Acknowledgement](#)

The Scarborough Charter

[A national commitment to combat anti-Black racism in Canadian higher education.](#)