

Lesson Plan: **Saint John's Black Heroines**

New Brunswick Curriculum: Social Studies 9, Canadian History 122.

Materials

- Framed¹ Photographs of incredible black women from Saint Johns History² with their names and Birthdates.
- One Page sheets with a Biography told from the women's perspective

Learning Objective: To introduce students to some of the incredible black women who are part of New Brunswick's History. To create a sense of connection with black women's lives by reading from their perspective. To build an understanding of how the lives of black women changed over time, and create personal connections with moments in the timeline to anchor comprehension.

Activity: Students are seated around tables with one photo per student, up to a maximum of 6. Ask students to look at the photos of the women for a moment and see which ones interest them most. At this time ask questions: "Do you know who these women are?" "Have you seen their photos before?" Instruct students to choose a woman who they will represent by reading their story. They will be asked to organize the women by their chronological birthdates and put the photos in a line, so they are all visible to the group. Beginning from the earliest birthday in the line, students will read the biography of each woman. When they are reading their biography, the woman's photo will be moved closer to the students so they can look at her while listening to her story. When all of the stories have been told, the teacher will lead guided discussion:

- Why do you think there is no photo for Nancy Morton?
- Who do you think impacted history the most?

Follow up activity:

Students make a portrait in a media of their choice (collage, digital, etc.), from the women discussed, or another black woman from New Brunswick who they find most inspiring and write about why they admire them. (These can be displayed in the hallways of the school.)

¹ 5x7 or 8x10 frames can be found in thrift stores or Dollar Stores for a few dollars each. Because students won't be learning about Black Heroines from textbooks, showing these women in frames infuses a sense of their importance.

² Photographs and biographies found at the end of this lesson plan.

LENA O'REE Born 1914 Saint John, NB



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My name is Lena O'Ree and I was a leader in the fight against racial discrimination in New Brunswick. At the age of 17 years, in 1931 I hosted the first Black radio show in Canada. My love of piano and music made me want to share it with whoever listened. The radio station did not make it known I was a black woman. The color barrier did nothing to stop me. At the age of 22, in 1936, I went to the YWCA and tried to join. They turned me away and told me if I wanted to join, I would have to enroll five other black women. I returned the next day with ten black women. Nothing could hold me back when I put my mind to it. In the year of 1959, I was responsible, for having the color barrier lifted on the CP Hotels nationally. When people told me that I had to use the back door when going to work at the Admiral Beatty Hotel in Saint John, I did not listen. Instead, I became an active voice in Saint John as I fought for the equality of the black community. I encouraged black people to become involved in political life, and I was a founding member of Pride of Race through Unity, Dignity, and Education (PRUDE Inc.), an advocacy and service group for black, ethnic, and newcomer communities in Saint John.

DR. CONSTANCE A. TIMBERLAKE Born 1931 Saint John, NB



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I was born in Saint John, New Brunswick, and grew up on Spar Cove Road. I was one of nine children of Thelma and Gordon Hector, who provided their children with an abundance of love, pride, and a sense of high self-esteem. My Dad's goal was to make sure that all his children were well educated.

As a young girl, I was working at Simms's paintbrush manufacturer on Simms Corner and realized that I wanted more. I left my job and moved to the US and attended University to become a teacher, but I became so much more. I went on to become a professor, and a professor emeritus at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, and Director of Grants Development Research for a US congressman in New Jersey.

I led a demonstration as head of the Kansas City Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality on August 21, 1963. 16 Black and White protestors entered Fairyland Park, bought tickets for amusement rides, and then lay on the ground when seven police cars arrived. Black persons were not allowed routinely at the amusement park. "White patrons acted badly," said Constance Timerblake, "They threw stones at us. The language was frightening. And I'm being polite."

Police arrested me and my colleagues on charges of disturbing the peace and took us to jail. The demonstration came just a week before Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington.

Mary Matilda Winslow Born 1885 Woodstock, NB



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I was born in Woodstock New Brunswick and I was the first Black woman to attend and graduate from the University of New Brunswick, in Fredericton. At 16 I entered UNB in 1901. I graduated with a BA in Classics in 1905 with honors, ranking at the top of my class. I had to seek employment outside the province, being unable to obtain teaching positions in NB Schools. I found a teaching position in Nova Scotia but eventually moved to the United States where I married and became a music teacher and eventual Dean of the Normal Department at the all-female Central College in Alabama.

Anna Minerva Henderson Born 1887 Saint John, NB



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I was born in Saint John to William R. Henderson, an African American Civil War veteran who moved to New Brunswick, and Henrietta Leake, who was born at Kingsclear, York County, N. B. My Dad worked as a barber and my Mom was a school teacher. After obtaining my teaching certificate, I taught briefly in the Black community in Nova Scotia. In 1912, after completing a business program, I wrote the federal civil service exam for clerical workers and scored one of the top marks. This began a 33-year career in Ottawa, where I worked as a stenographer for the Dominion Land Branch of the Department of the Interior and later for the Immigration Board of the Department of Mines and Resources. At this time there were few visible minority people working for the federal government. During my years in Ontario I wrote poetry and contributed a column to the Ottawa Citizen newspaper. My poems were published in Canadian Poetry Magazine and an anthology of poetry from 1937 to 1939. I retired from the civil service in 1945 and worked in a law office in Saint John for three years before moving to Washington, D.C. where I was employed at the American University. In 1967, Canada's centennial year, I self published, at Fredericton, a small book 'Citadel' containing 22 poems. Citadel made both Canadian and New Brunswick literary history. At the time I was 80 years of age. I passed away in 1987 and was buried at Saint John's Fernhill cemetery, with my parents.

Miss Betty Riley Born 1931 Saint John, NB



Miss Betty Riley Born 1931 Saint John, NB

I was born an 8th generation Canadian. I was very much a pioneer, I was one of Canada's few women television producers in 1973. But I was more proud of the fact that I produced Canada's first and only black television program.

I grew up in Saint John and later moved to Montreal. When I visited Saint John in 1973 I was interviewed by the Evening Times Global. They asked if I was a crusader for women's rights because I was a woman working in a predominantly male field. But women's liberation is not my struggle, black women never fought for the right to work. They had no choice. They had to work.

I got my idea for the program '**Black Is**' when I was working as an office supervisor for Cable TV. Ltd. of Montreal. A lot was being said about other ethnic cultures but there were no programs about black people. I was sick and tired, and I don't mean this in a militant sense, but I was sick and tired of blacks being thought of as invisible people. We've got a history and culture." So I decided to do something about it. I was able to convince Cable TV. Ltd that a need existed for an all-black show and that was how '**Black Is**' came to be. I learned to be a producer the hard way, on the job.

My show ran 4 times a week in Montreal and tackled issues black people were dealing with. It was a show for and about black people. Issues like police harassment, discriminatory practices, and immigration policies. I was tired of hearing white people telling black peoples stories.

My shows went unedited, and I let the chips fall where they may. I was not trying to win a popularity contest. I had to report to my people and I wasn't concerned with what white people thought.

I ran a black youth TV workshop where I taught youth 16-18 the principles of television production. I want to help them succeed, as black people in the media you have to be better than average, I wanted to help them overcome that.

Nancy Morton Born 1762 Maryland Came to Saint John, NB in 1786



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I was a slave and Caleb Jones was my master. The Trial of Nancy Morton vs. Capt. Caleb Jones in 1800, played an important role in the abolition of slavery in New Brunswick. After escaping, I was brought to court in an attempt to gain my freedom. I was represented by very well recognized lawyers at the time. I was unsuccessful in gaining my freedom and forced back into slavery for fifteen years. Once my case was brought before the Supreme Court the decision was split. This marked the unofficial decline of slavery in New Brunswick.