

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

CANE Environmental Justice and Reconciliation Committee



Reflecting on Critical Justice

A KEY ASPECT TO ERASING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Black History Month is celebrated across Canada each February to honour the legacy and contributions of Black people in Canada and their communities. The 2026 theme for Black History Month is: **“30 Years of Black History Month: Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations — From Nation Builders to Tomorrow’s Visionaries.”**

For nurses, it’s also an opportunity to reflect on health inequities, understand the impact of systemic racism, and provide culturally safe care. Recognizing Black History Month helps us celebrate diversity, educate ourselves, and advocate for equity in our practice, all key steps toward better health outcomes for all patients.

Across Canada, Black communities have long stood at the forefront of environmental protection, often without recognition, yet with unwavering commitment, courage, and vision. This tribute honours Black people in Canada who work tirelessly to protect the land, air, water, and all living beings, carrying forward traditions of stewardship while confronting environmental injustice and building a more sustainable future for everyone.



Dr. Ingrid Waldron

"ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IS NOT AN ISOLATED ISSUE, IT'S A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH SHAPING DISEASE EXPOSURE AND ACCESS TO CARE." I. WALDRON

One of the most influential voices in Canada is Dr Ingrid Waldron, a sociologist whose groundbreaking research exposed environmental racism affecting Black and Indigenous communities, particularly in Nova Scotia. Through her work at Dalhousie University and the ENRICH Project (Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health), she documented how landfills, toxic industries, and polluting facilities are disproportionately located near marginalized communities. The ENRICH Project, a community-based research initiative that collaborates directly with affected populations. Rather than studying communities from a distance, ENRICH prioritizes local knowledge, lived experience, and participatory methods.

Environmental racism, as documented by Ingrid Waldron, represents a critical intersection of environmental science, social justice, and public health. Her research demonstrates that disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards contributes to chronic disease, psychological stress, and reduced life expectancy in marginalized communities. These findings align closely with Nightingale's Environmental Theory, contemporary social determinants of health frameworks, and emerging planetary health perspectives, all of which recognize the environment as foundational to well-being. For nursing professionals, addressing environmental injustice is therefore not peripheral but central to ethical, preventive, and population-focused practice.

Her scholarship helped inspire legislative action in Nova Scotia aimed at addressing environmental racism, demonstrating how research can drive policy change. For nurses, this insight is critical. Much of nursing practice focuses on treating conditions whose root causes lie outside the clinical setting. By illuminating how environmental hazards produce disease, Waldron shifts attention toward prevention and structural change.

Dr. Waldron's work on environmental racism illustrates how historical and ongoing policies locate toxic exposures and climate vulnerabilities in Black and Indigenous communities, directly shaping physical and mental health outcomes. Her work demonstrates that environmental injustices are not only ecological problems but health equity challenges, the kind planetary health frameworks seek to address. Beyond academia, she works directly with communities to support advocacy and policy change.

Dr Waldron is a sociologist and environmental justice scholar studying environmental racism, climate impacts, and social determinants of health.



Enrich Project
<https://www.enrichproject.org/>

Dr. Ingrid Waldron

RELEVANT PUBLICATION LINKS

Waldron, I. (2018). *There's Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing. <https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/there8217s-something-in-the-water>

This is a seminal Canadian text documenting environmental racism and community health impacts.

Waldron, I. (2020). *Environmental racism in Canada: The case of African Nova Scotian communities*. Prepared for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. <https://en.ccunesco.ca/-/media/Files/Unesco/Resources/2020/07/EnvironmentalRacismCanada.pdf>

This report provides case-based analysis useful for policy and health discussions.

Waldron, I. (2021). *Environmental racism and climate change: Determinants of health in Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities*. Canadian Climate Institute. <https://climateinstitute.ca/publications/environmental-racism-and-climate-change/>

This case study illustrates how structural determinants of health are interconnected with climate change vulnerability and environmental racism in two Nova Scotia communities: African Nova Scotians and Mi'kmaw.

Waldron, I. (2024). *From the Enlightenment to Black Lives Matter: Tracing the Impacts of Racial Trauma in Black Communities from the Colonial Era to the Present*. Emerald Publishing. <https://bookstore.emerald.com/from-the-enlightenment-to-black-lives-matter-hb-9781803824420.html>

This new book demonstrates how the politics of race and psychiatric diagnosis collide when diagnosing Black people and what this means for our current public health crisis.



Dr. Onye Nnorom

“SYSTEMIC ANTI-BLACK RACISM IS MAKING US SICK, BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY AS BLACK PEOPLE; RESISTANCE TO ANTI-BLACK RACISM CAN CONTRIBUTE TO WELLBEING; AND WE MUST VALUE AFRO-CENTRIC APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES, VALUES AND PRACTICES, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS.” - O. NNOROM

Dr. Onye Nnorom is a climate advocate who highlights how climate change disproportionately harms vulnerable populations such as Black and Indigenous peoples. Dr. Nnorom is a family physician with expertise in community health and anti-racism in medicine. She is a former president of the Black Physicians' Association of Ontario (BPAO). In 2025, she was appointed the Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, becoming the first Black person to hold the prestigious position. She is also affiliated with Dalla Lana School of Public Health, where her work focuses on population health, health equity, and the social determinants of health.



Her advocacy emphasizes that climate action is also a health equity issue. Her contributions are especially relevant to nursing, public health, and sustainable health-care audiences because she frames climate change not only as an environmental crisis but as a profound threat to human health, particularly for marginalized communities. Dr. Nnorom is the host of a podcast called Race, Health and Happiness where she interviews successful Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, providing wisdom on how to stay well in a “racialized world”.

Relevant Links

Dryden O, Nnorom O. Time to dismantle systemic anti-Black racism in medicine in Canada. CMAJ. 2021 Jan 11;193(2):E55-E57. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.201579. <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/193/2/e55>

Host, Race, Health and Happiness Podcast
<https://racehealthhappiness.buzzsprout.com/>

Black Physicians' Association of Ontario (BPAO)
<https://www.bpao.org/>

Her website: <https://www.dronnorom.com/>

Born in Montreal to parents of Nigerian and Trinidadian backgrounds, she learned at an early age the impact of social injustice and the power of community action.



Dr Roberta Timothy

“IN BLACK COMMUNITIES NO ONE IS IMMUNE FROM RACISM, FROM OUR UNBORN TO OUR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN TO OUR ELDERLY. CONSCIOUSLY AND UNCONSCIOUSLY OUR HEALTH BECOMES OBSTRUCTED.” R. TIMOTHY

Dr. Roberta Timothy, a co-founder of the Black Health Alliance, focuses on how social and environmental conditions shape health outcomes in Black communities. Her work addresses issues such as housing, neighbourhood environments, access to green space, and systemic inequities: factors that strongly influence vulnerability to climate change and pollution. Through research and community engagement, she advances solutions that build healthier, more resilient communities. Timothy is the principal investigator on the [Black Health Matters: National and Transnational COVID-19 Impact, Resistance and](#)

[Intervention Strategies Project](#), which studies the impacts of COVID-19 on African and Black individuals. She is also affiliated with Dalla Lana School of Public Health in Toronto, as an Associate Professor.

“My scholarship contributes to critical race theory by examining how factors such as Indigeneity, gender, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)ability, religion/spirituality, transgenerational connections, and historical and contemporary intersectional violence impact African/Black communities health and wellness, by centering community resistance through innovative decolonizing health practices, including art based practices.” [BIO](#)

Relevant Links

Timothy, R. K., & Umana Garcia, M. (2020). Anti-oppression psychotherapy: An emancipatory integration of intersectionality into psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia*, 8(2).
<https://doi.org/10.59158/001c.71085>

Black Health Matters
<https://blackhealthmatterscovid19.com/>



“I want to change the system. I want our communities to have access to health care that treats them well [and] doesn’t harm them!”



Other Resources

BLACK HISTORY MONTH LINKS

Austin, S. (2024). 'She's out here trailblazing': these 10 Black environmentalists are building community. *The Narwhal*. <https://thenarwhal.ca/black-environmentalists-canada-mentors/>

Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing. (2026). *Black History Month*. <https://www.casn.ca/2025/01/black-history-month/>

Canadian Museum of Health Care. (2026). *Black History Month Pioneers*. <https://www.museumofhealthcare.ca/blog/category/Black+History+Month>

Government of Canada. (2026). *February is Black History Month*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/black-history-month.html>

Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. (2026). *RNAO celebrates Black History Month*. <https://rnao.ca/news/rnao-celebrates-black-history-month>

Take our free Course!



AN INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM FOR NURSES

A 5-10 hour Online Heart, Arts, and Land-Based
Continuing Education Course for Nurses

This course is brought to you by CANE-ACIIE with deep gratitude to the H.E.A.L (Hearts-based Education and Anti-Colonial Learning) Healthcare Project for funding this course. The H.E.A.L. Healthcare Project is funded through the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH).

<https://cane-aiie.ca/environmental-racism-course/>