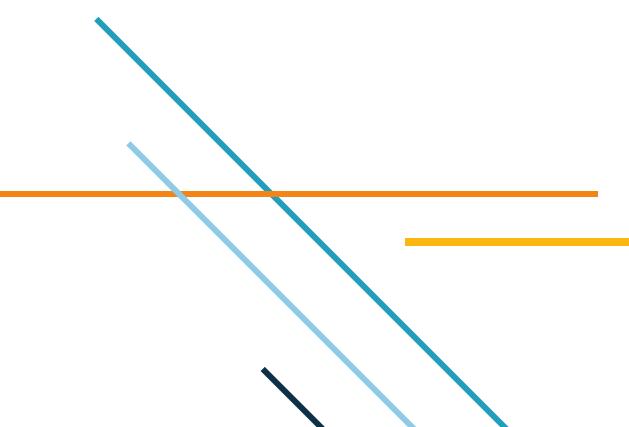


Still Here: Preserving Our Legacy



Exhibition Proposal

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1

Still Here:

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

"Still Here: Preserving Our Legacy" is an innovative multimedia exhibition of Black families who have been in Canada since the 1700s. It transcends regional boundaries, exploring universal themes of heritage, community, and identity through the lens of generational family stories.

Launching at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in July 2025 with a book by Goose Lane Editions, this project seeks to embark on a national journey, inviting audiences across Canada to connect with the collective narrative of their own histories.

This visionary exhibition utilizes a curated collection of contemporary photographs printed on reflective surfaces, allowing viewers to see their stories within the framework of the broader Canadian experience. The unique presentation technique engages the audience in a dialogue with the past but also emphasizes the continuity of history and the shared bonds that unite diverse communities across the nation.

A Canadian tour aims to ignite a nationwide conversation about the importance of family legacies, community roots, and the rich tapestry of stories that define our shared heritage. The integration of poetry and historical artifacts throughout the exhibit gives tangible weight to the narrative.

"Still Here: Preserving Our Legacy" champions the values of education and material heritage, advocating for the role of physical artifacts and family albums in preserving our cultural narratives. It invites all Canadians to reflect on their histories, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity that transcends regional boundaries, emphasizing that while the lens may be regional, the themes are undeniably national.

This exhibition is not only a showcase of history; it is a call to action, inspiring individuals and families to document their stories, contribute to our national mosaic, and participate in the ongoing creation of our collective memory.

By initiating this journey at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery with a nationally distributed book, we are laying the groundwork for a transformative cultural experience that will resonate with Canadians from all provinces and territories, celebrating our diverse, yet interconnected histories.



2

Still Here:

VISION

Our vision is to foster a profound connection within families by reigniting their awareness and appreciation of their heritage and stories. The project will celebrate and document the rich tapestry of Black New Brunswick history through the lens of 15 generational families, serving as a catalyst to revive the tradition of the family album.

We aim to transform how Canadian families engage with their history, seeing themselves as integral parts of a continuous narrative that bridges past, present, and future, emphasizing the power of shared heritage to unite and inspire.

The book and exhibition will be a vibrant homage to Canadian families, showcasing their smiles, successes, and enduring spirits, and underscoring the importance of each family's story in the broader Canadian historical landscape.

VALUES

1 Education

Emphasizing that Black history is an integral part of Canadian history, acknowledging that the stories of Black Canadian families are foundational to the nation's narrative. Dedicated to ensuring these stories are heard, recognized, and valued.

2 Heritage

Believing strongly in the power of the family photo album as a gateway to personal and communal history, where the act of sharing oral histories inspired by photos strengthens bonds and fosters a deeper understanding of one's roots.

3 Community

Upholding the principle that shared heritage and history forge stronger communities, advocating for the role of photos and poetry in maintaining and strengthening community ties.

4 Tangibility

Valuing physical manifestations of memories, like the traditional family album, as essential for connecting generations, echoing the human tradition of storytelling and shared experiences in a tangible format that digital mediums can't fully replicate.

5 Legacy Preservation

Committing to the preservation and celebration of family legacies, ensuring that the wealth of stories, traditions, and histories are not only preserved but also honored and passed down through generations.

GOALS

1 National Tour

To bring the exhibition to premier art galleries and museums across every Canadian province, highlighting the contributions and stories of Black Canadians as part of the national historical narrative.



2 Permanent Exhibition

To establish a lasting exhibition, ensuring ongoing accessibility to these important narratives and serving as a testament to the project's impact.



3 Educational Impact

To integrate the themes of the exhibition into broader educational content, highlighting the importance of Black Canadian history in understanding the country's past and shaping its future.

4 Inspiring Personal Archives

Through workshops and engagement, to inspire individuals to create their own family albums filled with photos, poetry, and stories, mirroring the project's approach but on a personal scale.



5 Motivation for Family Legacy

To inspire every Canadian family who visits the exhibition to take their family portraits, share stories, and place a renewed emphasis on capturing and organizing their heritage in tangible forms, recognizing the critical role these practices play in maintaining familial and cultural bonds.

GENERATIONAL FAMILIES

These are the families in the project who can trace their history back to the late 18th-century foundations of New Brunswick:



Halfkenny
Leslie / Drummond
Macpherson
McCarthy
Holmes / Hector
Dymond
Talbot
Hope
McGarvie / Roach / Young
Nash
McIntyre
Howe / Lawrence
Stewart / Tyler / Nash
McCarty
Blizzard / Skinner



Blizzard/Skinner Family Poem

By Thandiwe McCarthy

When we arrived at the Skinner family residence
there was a fresh plate of homemade cookies.
Baked just for us. Intended to be shared and celebrated.
But the cookies had to wait.

The cookies waited while we listened.
To the story of how a family member saved a boys life from drowning
A story that brought tears back to the mans eyes.

The cookies waited as we all listened
To a cassette tape of Paula's father
Singing the songs he used to sing to her as a child
This time my eyes found tears.

Those cookies waited during the stories.
Of how Paula's father held dinners and movie nights for his friends and family
Long before television. He set up a projector in his home.
Kids paid ten cents, adults twenty cents.

The cookies grew cold
As Paula showed us her quilts, told us how she made one for every member of her family
How she made handmade purses then sold them at the market.
Clearly her fathers business spirit and compassion was passed down.

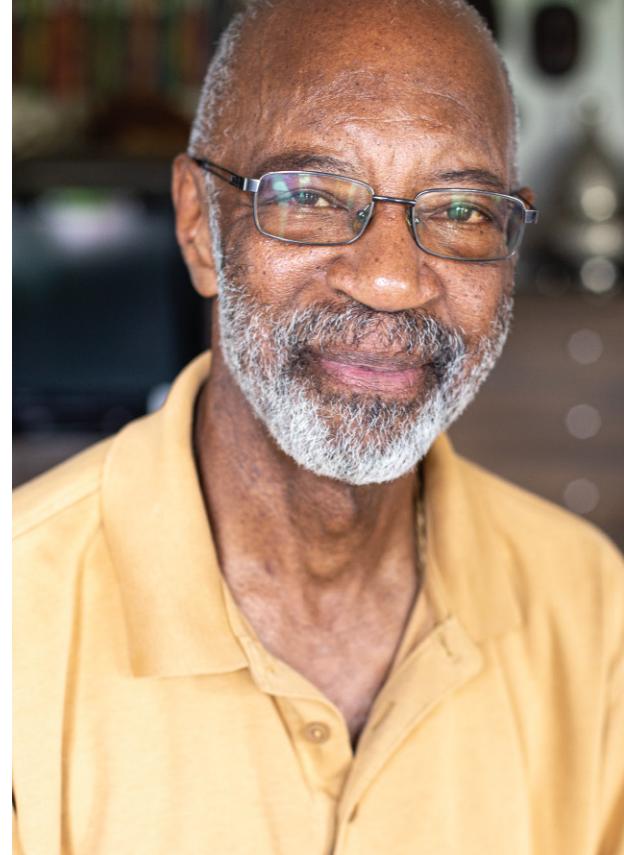
Oh those cookies waited until long after
The tears, laughter and hugs ended.
Until we remembered to pack the cold cookies up in a zip lock bag
Eating them on the long drive home

Then after the cookies were finished.
It was our turn. To wait.
Until we could see our wonderful friends
Again.

3

Still Here:

PROJECT GENESIS AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH



The inception of the "Still Here: Preserving Our Legacy" project was fueled by a profound commitment to address the overlooked or misunderstood aspects of Black history in New Brunswick.

Initially collaborating with the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, it became apparent that the archival records, while invaluable, showcased only fragments of the community's rich history, often emphasizing struggles or notable figures but not the everyday lives, accomplishments, and resilience of the Black population. This partial representation sparked a realization of the necessity to capture the broader and more intimate narratives directly from the descendants of these historically significant families.

Motivated by this gap in the historical record and driven by key beliefs that highlighted the absence of comprehensive narratives, the project's vision expanded. It aimed to transcend the conventional historical discourse, focusing instead on the deep-seated heritage and enduring family stories that resonate with themes of identity and continuity, which are central not only to the Black community in New Brunswick but also to the rest of Canada.

Securing funding from the Canada Council for the Arts marked a significant turning point, providing the resources needed to assemble a specialized team dedicated to realizing this vision. The primary objective engaged with 15 Black New Brunswick families whose lineages reach back to the early 1800s, ensuring the project was anchored in authentic, multifaceted, and historically significant narratives. This approach intended not just to preserve these stories but to celebrate the living heritage they represent, highlighting their relevance and impact on contemporary Canadian society and contributing to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of our collective history.

This foundational phase of the project documented the past but also creating a platform for these families to share their enduring legacies, fostering a richer, more nuanced portrayal of Black Canadian heritage that challenges prevailing misconceptions and celebrates the diverse tapestry of our national identity.

Still Here:

PROJECT GENESIS AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH (cont.d)

Initiation of the Project

The endeavor began with Dr. Mary McCarthy-Brandt's outreach, wherein she personally invited families to partake in this historic project. Her initial discussions, conducted via digital interviews, delved into each family's history, their ancestral ties, and the inspirational figures within their lineage. This foundational phase ensured that each participating family was represented by a delegate who shared their profound narratives, thereby laying the groundwork for the project's depth and authenticity.

Creative and Documentary Fusion

Gary Weekes played an integral role in bringing the visual dimension of the project to life. His family photoshoots were more than just photographic sessions; they were gatherings imbued with reminiscence and celebration, capturing the essence of familial bonds. Skillfully, he created a series of group portraits, individual shots, and documentary-style images that encapsulate the families' interactions, emotions, and the rich tapestry of their shared histories.



Poetic Reflections

Thandiwe McCarthy's provides thoughtful and inspiring poetry that enriches the visual narrative with its lyrical depth. This aspect involved delving into the rich historical context and personal stories encountered during the family photoshoots, transforming these insights into poignant poetic expressions. The poetry serves to enhance the storytelling, adding a reflective and emotive dimension to the historical and contemporary narratives captured through the photographs and archival documents.

McCarty Family Poem

By Thandiwe McCarthy

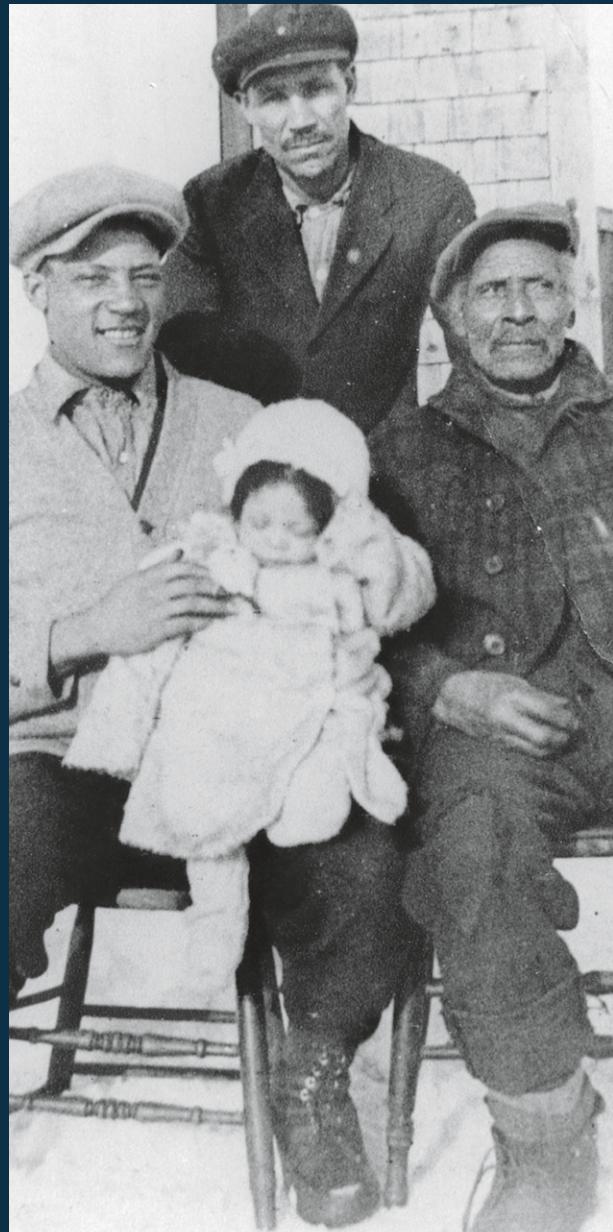
Four years ago
In the thick New Brunswick Forest, down by a lake.
Lies eleven acres of land.
Sold cheap as no roads led to it
Nor did any electricity reach it.
Yet here on this land a speaker powerfully claims things are
"Still DRE"

Today is a birthday party
Over a dozen people navigated the tiny road to the campground
A road so narrow that the trees brush against the sides of your vehicle
Until you're greeted by the large McCarty flag
Rosebud laughs and tells jokes as she introduces us to everyone.
Giving us the grand tour

The pathway to the water is sprinkled with colorful rocks.
At the end three kids and a dog enjoy the breeze off the lake
Playing on the dock they helped their family build.
Everything around us is intentional, comforting.

It took vision love and over a hundred pounds of crushed rock.
Yet the McCarty family has built something in the middle of nowhere.
Building on ancestral land, this family invested in
Tractors, chainsaws, trucks, and years of their lives
To build a sanctuary to their families continued success.

Sometimes history repeats itself in a wonderful way
Sometimes those disconnected can work their way back
Home.



Still Here:

EXHIBITION COMPONENTS

4

A comprehensive and in-depth portrayal of the featured families and their historical backdrop.

Visual Data

Over a dozen gigabytes of visual content, presenting a comprehensive and in-depth portrayal of the featured families and their historical backdrop.

Photographic Exhibition

A curated selection of over 300+ photographs of different sizes, encompassing group family photos, individual portraits, scanned black and white family photos, and documentary-style images. These photographs offer a window into the life and heritage of Black New Brunswickers, portraying a narrative of resilience, community, and identity.

Integrative Poetry

Poetry will be interwoven throughout the exhibition, with lines strategically placed among the photographs to guide the viewers' journey through the space. The poetry, derived from lines written about each of the 15 families, will create a narrative flow that connects the images, enhancing the storytelling aspect of the exhibition and enriching the overall experience.

Innovative Presentation

The photos will be printed on mirrored silver and gold substrates, a technique that not only enhances the visual impact but also embeds the concept of reflection—both literal and metaphorical—into the viewing experience. This innovative approach allows viewers to see themselves within the historical narrative, bridging past and present, and emphasizing the lasting significance of these families through the use of precious metals.

Individual Portraits

- 174 Portraits (showing every family member in the project).
- Printed on 8x10 inch sheets of mirrored silver and gold.
- Six holes in each panel allowing the pictures to be linked together with metal rings and to be suspended centrally from the ceiling.
- This is the centerpiece of the exhibition illustrating both the presence of Blackness in Canada and the links illustrate the connections between each individual from each family to represent one united family.

*Group
Family Poems*

*Documentary
Style Photos*

*Scanned Photos
From Families*

Still Here:

EXHIBITION COMPONENTS

(cont.d)

Spatial Arrangement

Inspired by the "Family of Man" exhibition, the photographs will be spread across the exhibition space to create an immersive experience. Like a hug this layout is designed to envelop the viewers, making them feel surrounded by the stories and histories of the depicted families. Photographs will also be at different distances from the wall to generate a sense of depth.



Historical Artifacts and Documentation

- Photos sourced from Provincial archives.
- Printed various sized.
- Artifacts sourced from Kings landing, placed under glass.

The exhibition will feature everyday items used by Black Loyalists in the 1800s, grounding the photographs in tangible historical context and offering viewers a direct connection to the past. There will also be framed historical documents one of which will be a unique graphic that compiled slavery ads from New Brunswick newspapers. This will be in a corner to show while it is part of the history it is a minor part.

Exhibition Intent

The intention is to create an environment where every glance is met with narratives of Canadian history through a Black New Brunswick lens, enabling a profound connection and engagement with the material. The exhibition aims to honor the heritage, struggles, and contributions of Black New Brunswickers, showcasing their place within the Canadian historical mosaic.

5

Still Here:

THE TEAM



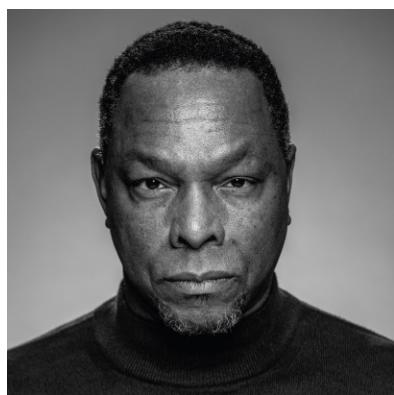
**Thandiwe
McCarthy**

A renowned spoken word poet and writer, Thandiwe brings a unique narrative style that interweaves the rich history of Black New Brunswick with contemporary experiences, emphasizing the significance of storytelling in preserving cultural heritage.



**Dr. Mary
McCarthy**

As a historian, with deep ties to New Brunswick and especially New Brunswick's Black community, her scholarly work provides a critical foundation for understanding the region's Black heritage and its implication for broader historical narratives in Canada.



**Gary
Weekes**

An acclaimed photographer whose work offers profound visual narratives of Black life in New Brunswick, Gary's recent recognition as a CBC Black Changemaker underscores his pivotal role in highlighting the community's vibrant culture and history.



**Jeannie
Rediker**

The project's administrator, Jeannie ensures the seamless coordination and organization of the exhibition, leveraging her skills to support the team's vision and the exhibition's successful execution.

6

Still Here:

EXHIBITION PARTNERS



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



KINGS LANDING



Musée des
beaux-arts
Beaverbrook
Art Gallery



Canada Council for the Arts

The Canada Council for the Arts has provided financial backing for this project and has featured it prominently on their website's front page, showcasing a national interest in the initiative. This spotlight emphasizes the project's relevance and appeal across Canada.

Kings Landing

Kings Landing contributes a tangible link to history by offering historical artifacts from actual Black Loyalists, dating back to the early 1800s. Their collaboration enriches the exhibition with a profound sense of realism and authenticity, enabling visitors to connect with the past in a meaningful and impactful way.

Beaverbrook Art Gallery

As the inaugural host of this art exhibition and the book launch venue in 2025, Beaverbrook Art Gallery is pivotal in introducing the project to the public. Their commitment to providing educational programming while the exhibition is displayed underscores the gallery's role in fostering historical understanding and appreciation.

The Arts Board New Brunswick

The Arts Board New Brunswick has provided financial backing for this project.

Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

The Provincial Archives have been instrumental in sourcing archival documents that highlight the enduring impact of Black New Brunswickers. Their dedication to ensuring that Black Canadian history is both told and preserved is crucial for the project's depth and educational value.

Goose Lane Editions

Committed to publishing the book version of this art exhibition, Goose Lane Editions ensures that attendees can take a piece of the experience home. The availability of the book at exhibition venues allows for an extended interaction with the project, offering attendees a lasting memento that encapsulates the essence of the exhibition.

7 Still Here: MEDIA



**Poems and History:
Thandiwe McCarthy
Reflects on Being Black
in New Brunswick**

November 21, 2023



**Poet strives to
show Black
history's place in
New Brunswick**

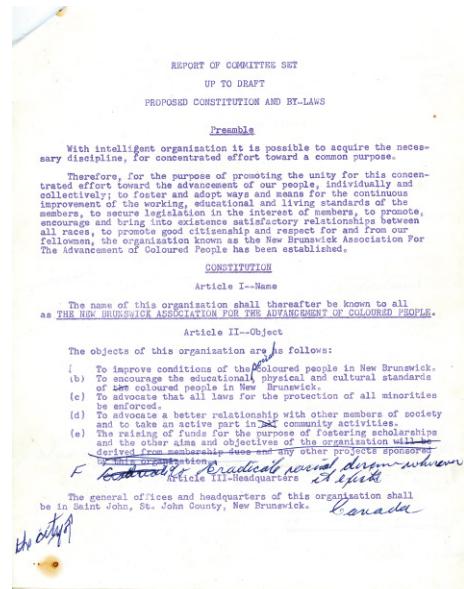
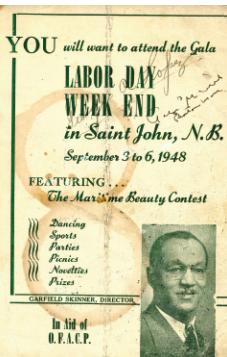
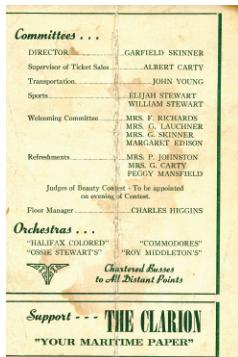
March 2023



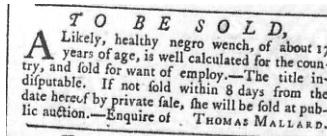
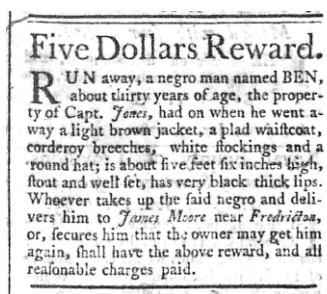
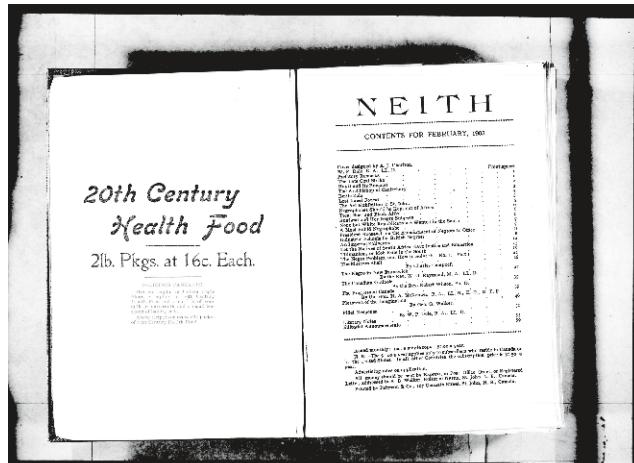
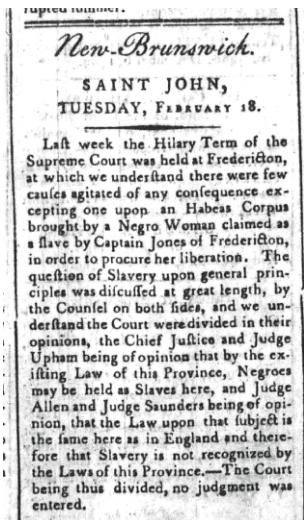
**The journey to
trace the roots of
Black people in
New Brunswick**

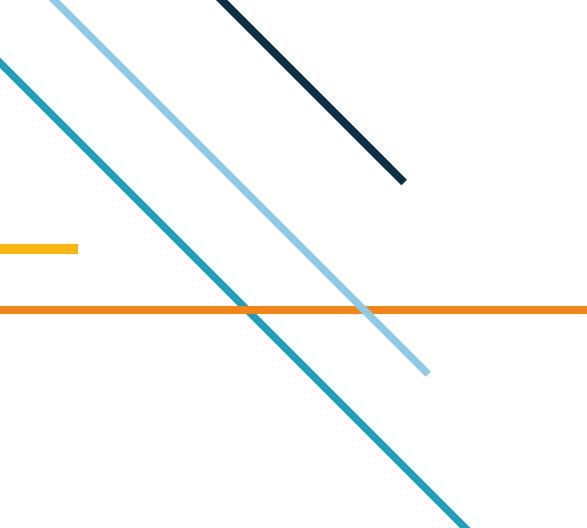
August 2024

BLACK FAMILIES ARCHIVES



HISTORICAL/PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES





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Still Here:
INITIATIVE

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2024