



# "AFRICVILLE"

BLACK UNION FT MAESTRO  
& KALEB SIMMONDS

## LESSON OBJECTIVE(S):

In this lesson, students will explore the history and legacy of gentrification experienced by the residents of Africville, Nova Scotia as communicated through the song "Africville" by Black Union featuring Maestro and Kaleb Simmonds.

English, Social Science, Geography, History, Visual Arts and Music-specific activities will enable students to identify and respond to the social issues of Anti-Black Racism, Oppression and Injustice.

## GRADE LEVEL:

7 - 12



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**ADVANCE**  
CANADA'S BLACK MUSIC BUSINESS COLLECTIVE

MusiCounts gratefully acknowledges ADVANCE, Canada's Black Music Business Collective and the Saskatchewan Music Educators Association for helping to make this resource possible.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover photo courtesy of Darren Hamilton.

Last Updated: February 3, 2022



# BACKGROUND

## THE HISTORY OF AFRICVILLE

Africville was an African-Canadian village founded in the mid-1700s by former American and British slaves. It was a vibrant community located north of Halifax, Nova Scotia by the shores of the Bedford Basin. In 1848 the first Black settlers bought land in Africville. In 1849, the residents built Seaview United Baptist Church which served as the community's spiritual and cultural centre.

Between the 1850s and 1950s, the residents of Africville experienced many forms of oppression and racism from the Halifax government which intentionally built a city prison, an infectious disease hospital, a slaughterhouse and a city dump in the community; while denying the residents of water and sewer services. In 1962, Halifax city council voted to relocate residents of Africville in the name of 'urban renewal'.

In 1967, the government demolished their landmark church overnight while residents were sleeping. The city of Halifax forced the residents out of Africville for economic development as it desired to build the A. Murray MacKay Bridge and the Port of Halifax facilities. In 2010, the government offered the residents and descendants of Africville a settlement and official apology. In 2011, the Africville Museum, a replica of Seaview United Baptist Church, was built. Seaview Memorial Park, named after the church, was also established as a national historical site of Canada.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS AND THE SONG

"Africville" was released in 2008 on Black Union's independent album entitled *Hate Crimes*. Black Union was a Canadian hip-hop group based out of Halifax, Nova Scotia. It is quite likely that they were an underground hip-hop group as very little information can be found about them online and it is not known if the group is still together. The song features the 'godfather' of Canadian hip-hop, Maestro, and Canadian Idol Season 2 runner up, Kaleb Simmonds. Simmonds' is a descendent of Africville as his mother was a resident of the community. "Africville" is a protest song that highlights the history of anti-Black racism in Canada experienced by the residents of the Nova Scotian community.



Seaview United Baptist Church (replica) / Africville Museum.  
Photo: Darren Hamilton



Still, "Africville" Official Music Video.  
Photo: YouTube



# SECTION 2: FOUNDATIONAL ACTIVITIES

## PRE-ACTIVITY

### 1. WATCH THE VIDEO (2:02)

[Africville: The Black community bulldozed by the city of Halifax](#)

### 2. WATCH THE VIDEO (7:48)

[Reflecting on the legacy of Africville | Your Morning](#)

### 3. REVIEW KEY VOCABULARY (10:00)

Review the Key Vocabulary List

Read through the lyrics to “Africville” (Appendix 1)

Re-read the lyrics again if needed

### 4. WATCH THE MUSIC VIDEO (3:51)

[Black Union’s “Africville”](#)



Still, “Africville” Official Music Video.  
Photo: YouTube

## KEY VOCABULARY

**Chauffeur:** a person employed to drive a motor vehicle

**Colony** (related to ‘colonial’): an area over which a foreign nation or state extends or maintains control

**Coma** (root word of ‘comatosing’): a state of profound unconsciousness caused by disease, injury, or poison; a state of mental or physical sluggishness

**Compensate:** to give money or something else of value to (someone) in return for something (such as work) or as payment for something lost, damaged, etc.

**Displace** (root word of ‘displacement’): to remove from the usual or proper place; to expel or force to flee from home or homeland

**Gentrification:** a process in which a poor area (as of a city) experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses and which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents

**Metaphor** (related to ‘metaphorically’): a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar; an object, activity, or idea that is used as a symbol of something else

**Rehabilitation:** the restoration of something damaged or deteriorated to a prior good condition

**Relocation:** to move to a new location

**Reminisce:** to talk, think, or write about things that happened in the past

**Reparation:** the act of making amends or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury

**Settlement:** an act of bestowing or giving possession under legal sanction

**Violate** (related to ‘violation’): to do harm to a person (or community)

**Vulture:** a rapacious or predatory person

*Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*



# DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

## ESTIMATED DURATION (20:00)

As a class or in small groups, discuss the following questions and share responses. Refer back to the lyrics and reflect on the pre-activity videos as needed while generating responses.

Note: Educators can select specific questions from the list provided to engage students in discussion. Possible student responses are also provided.

### QUESTIONS



Still, "Africville" Official Music Video.  
Photo: YouTube

**What is the purpose of the song “Africville”? Why do you think the artists recorded and released the song? What lyrics in the song provide evidence?**

(i.e. The purpose is to bring awareness to the history of racism and oppression experienced by the residents of Africville; The artists recorded and released the song in order to shed light on anti-Black racism in Canada and the ‘hidden history’ of Africville)

**The first pre-activity video begins with the phrase, “where the pavement ended, Africville began”. Considering your knowledge of Africville, what is the significance of ‘the pavement ending’? How does the phrase metaphorically reflect the experience of Africville residents?**

(i.e. The phrase is significant because the pavement represents the developed areas of Halifax, since it ended at Africville, the community was undeveloped; The ‘pavement ending’ represents the point at which the city of Halifax stop providing water and sewage services)



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**What is the impact of filming the music video for the song in Africville?**

(i.e. Filming the video in Africville allows viewers to visually see what is left of the once vibrant, now demolished community)

**What injustices did the residents of Africville experience?**

(i.e. The community was not provided with water and sewer services even though they paid taxes; The City demolished their church and homes and relocating the residents resulted in the community being separated)

**Consider the meaning of the word ‘gentrification’. In your view, did the residents of Africville experience gentrification?**

(i.e. answers may vary; Yes, because the City of Halifax forced the residents out to pursue industrial projects such as building the bridge and the port; No, because rich people didn't move into Africville and build property)

**In your view, has justice been served? Was the Halifax apology and settlement sufficient enough? Do you think more should be done? What would justice look like to you in this situation?**

(i.e. answers may vary; Yes, justice was served because the community received a large settlement and got to rebuild the church (museum); No, because what the community received as a settlement does not compare to what they have lost)



Still, "Africville" Official Music Video.  
Photo: YouTube



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**Consider the lyrics, “History don’t like to tell of it, discreet about its relevance”. Why do you think it’s so difficult to discuss issues of Anti-Black racism in Canada?**

(i.e. It is difficult to discuss these issues because, generally, Canadians want to believe that they are ‘nice’ or ‘nicer’ in comparison to other countries and that racism does not exist in Canada; It may be difficult to discuss because it is ‘past history’ and we don’t like bringing up the past)

**Consider the lyrics, “Our forefathers brought themselves from enslavement with rights to land ownership, I’m asking people how do you condone this ish”. How did the relocation impact the residents of Africville economically? How was the community’s ‘generational wealth’ impacted?**

(i.e. The residents of Africville were not adequately compensated by the government for the property they owned and they ended up having to rent in their new communities when forced to relocate; The opportunity for generational wealth was lost because the residents no longer owned property and land that they could pass on to their children as an inheritance)



'Protest Trailers' owned by Eddie Carvery, descendant of the Carvery family (one of the first settler families of Africville), parked close to Bedford Basin, located close to Africville Museum on Africville National Historical Site of Canada.  
Photo: Darren Hamilton



# SUBJECT-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

## MUSIC

- Review one of the following videos exploring how the Black community is impacted by anti-Black racism. After reflecting on the video you selected, write a hip-hop verse that draws attention to the social justice issue discussed in the video. Extending: Using YouTube, find a free hip-hop loop or beat that you can practice performing your created verse over. (60:00 - 120:00)

- [Anti-Black racism is making us sick | Lydia-Joi Marshal | TEDxToronto \(9:06\)](#)
- [Orlando Bowen describes his experience with racism \(3:07\)](#)
- [Parents, experts call for more teacher training to address anti-Black racism \(3:33\)](#)
- [Race Bias in Hiring: When Both Applicant and Employer Lose \(Podcast\) \(8:57\)](#)



Lydia-Joi Marshal, TEDxToronto.  
Photo: YouTube

## ENGLISH

- In groups of 2 or 3, examine the chorus or one verse from the song, “Africville” (Appendix 1). Write a 250-word response analysing the meaning of the chorus or the selected verse and discussing its effectiveness. (45:00)
- Write a 250-word response journal. Write your thoughts about any aspect of the song, “Africville”. Consider questions like: What lines stood out to you? What lines did not make sense? What does this song tell us about social justice issues? (60:00)



- Watch [Africville Book by Shauntay Grant](#) (Video) (2:05) - This is a children's book about Africville written by Shauntay Grant. You will notice the 'innocence' of the book, focusing on the joyful experiences of children living in Africville, rather than telling the story of the injustices that took place.
- Considering an audience of grade 7 to 12 students, write your version of an 'Africville' book as a short story that highlights the social injustices experienced by its residents. (60:00)

## SOCIAL SCIENCE

- In your own words, describe the concept of reparations. (10:00)
- Using research, identify three arguments for and against reparations for the victims of systemic anti-Black racism. Present your findings in a slideshow, Prezi or short oral presentation. (90:00)
- Consider the meaning of the word 'displacement'. Research other examples of individuals or communities in Canada that have been displaced, either, a) because of their Blackness? or b) because of their (non-Black) race? Present your findings in a slideshow, Prezi or short oral presentation. (90:00)

## GEOGRAPHY

- Visit the webpage, [Africville National Historic Site of Canada \(Google Maps\)](#) and select 'Satellite' view - This is what Africville looks like today.

- View the image, [Bird's Eye View of Africville, ca. 1965 \(Nova Scotia Archives\)](#) and respond to the following questions: (45:00)
  - What geographical landmarks from ca. 1965 are still present in Africville today?
  - What geographical landmarks from ca. 1965 no longer exist in Africville today?
  - Notice that the A. Murray MacKay bridge is not present in this photo - it opened in 1970 after the relocation of Africville residents.

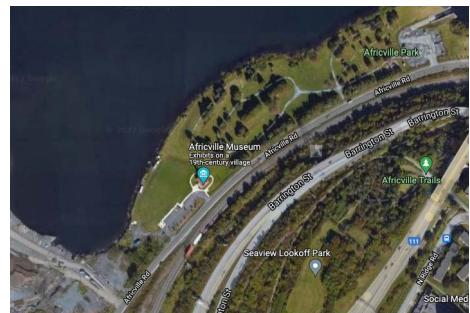


Bird's Eye View of Africville, ca. 1965.  
Photo: Nova Scotia Archives



- Revisit the Google Maps webpage of the Africville National Historic Site of Canada, locate the A. Murray MacKay bridge on the map and respond to the following questions:

- In your opinion, was it necessary to relocate the residents of Africville and demolish their community in order to build the A. Murray MacKay bridge?
- If Africville could be rebuilt today (i.e. houses, schools, stores, etc.), where would you build it? Be specific. Refer to other landmarks on the map to describe where you would place the community and explain why.



Africville National Historic Site.  
Photo: Google Maps

- View the [Africville National Historic Site of Canada](#) using the ‘street view’ feature.

- Take a ‘virtual tour’ along Africville Road - what key landmarks did you visit? Do you notice any landmarks that were seen in the “Africville” music video? (20:00)

## HISTORY

- Review the [CTV News Africville Historical Timeline](#) and the [Africville Museum Historical Timeline](#). (45:00)

- Identity the key dates and information that these sources have in common and the key dates and information they don’t have in common.
- Conduct your own online search for historical timelines of Africville’s history.
- Create your own Historical Timeline incorporating key dates and information from all the sources you have reviewed.
- Highlight and discuss 1 to 3 key historical facts about Africville that you found interesting - how do these facts connect to your understanding of social justice?



- Visit the [Africville Museum - Resource Links](#) webpage.  
(45:00 - 60:00)

- Select **one** of the articles underneath the “Recent news” heading.
- Read the article.
- Identify the points the article aims to get across.
- In 2 - 3 paragraphs, write a summary of the article - how does the information presented in the article connect to your understanding of social justice?

## VISUAL ARTS

- Watch [Africville Book by Shauntay Grant](#) (Video) (2:05) - This is a children’s book about Africville that is illustrated by Eva Campbell and written by Shauntay Grant.



Africville Book by Shauntay Grant.  
Photo: YouTube

- Consider the illustrations that accompany the short sentences on each page of the book. (20:00)
  - In your opinion, are they effective? Why or why not?
  - If so, what makes them effective?
  - If not, what makes them ineffective?
  - Record a short journal response to these questions.
- Think about 1 to 3 things you have learned about Africville  
(60:00 - 120:00)

- Using a technique of your choice (i.e., sketch, drawing, painting) create a visual art piece to represent what you have learned

- Review the lyrics for one of the verses in the song, “Africville”.  
(60:00 - 120:00)

- Consider an image that comes to mind when you read the verse.
- Using a technique of your choice (i.e., sketch, drawing, painting) create a visual art piece to represent the image that comes to mind from the verse.



# LESSON RESOURCES AND LINKS

## PRE-ACTIVITY

[Africville: The Black community bulldozed by the city of Halifax](#) (Video)

[Reflecting on the legacy of Africville | Your Morning](#) (Video)

[Black Union ft Maestro & Kaleb Simmonds - “Africville” - Official Music Video](#) (Video)

## MUSIC ACTIVITY

[Anti-Black racism is making us sick | Lydia-Joi Marshal | TEDxToronto](#) (Video)

[Orlando Bowen describes his experience with racism](#) (Video)

[Parents, experts call for more teacher training to address anti-Black racism](#) (Video)

[Race Bias in Hiring: When Both Applicant and Employer Lose](#) (Podcast)

## ENGLISH ACTIVITY

[Africville Book by Shauntay Grant](#) (Video)



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# LESSON RESOURCES AND LINKS (CONT'D)

## GEOGRAPHY ACTIVITY

[Africville National Historic Site of Canada](#) (Google Maps)

[Bird's Eye View of Africville, ca. 1965](#) (Nova Scotia Archives)

## HISTORY ACTIVITY

[CTV News Africville Historical Timeline](#)

[Africville Museum Historical Timeline](#)

[Africville Museum - Resource Links](#)

## VISUAL ARTS ACTIVITY

[Africville Book by Shauntay Grant](#) (Video)



# APPENDIX 1

## “AFRICVILLE” LYRICS

### CHORUS

You can't put a price on the lives that they ruined  
No reparations no nothing why would you do this?  
Divide my people to fight, out on the corners at night  
Oh Africville look what they've done to me

### VERSE 1

It's a part of our history they kept in the closet  
Professors never taught the lessons they neglect and forgot it  
They kept it underneath the table kept it under the surface  
Nervous that we would re-emerge as they dispersed us and jerked us  
Out in Africville Halifax is ill  
How can us Blacks rebuild when the facts revealed?  
The government left them comatosing younger and the older folks Black Nova Scotian souls are  
frozen many homes are broken  
Drugs started creeping in crime started seeping in  
The heaven got crushed when the demon started sneaking in  
A Black community lost and trampled  
Left out in shambles dismantled and it's still hard to handle

### CHORUS

### VERSE 2

Peep my word it's time to settle this as I reminisce about the settlement  
If you Black from Halifax I'm speaking bout your relatives  
History don't like to tell of it discreet about its relevance  
Cause a Black community was a disease to their development  
Therefore they had to change that  
Bulldozing the community that lay beside the train tracks  
Forced to make tax payments despite  
The lack of running water sewage flat pavement and lights  
Our forefathers bought themselves from enslavement with rights  
To land ownership I'm asking people how do you condone this ish  
See what happened to Africville it happens still  
They choose land over man to expand extract and kill



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**VERSE 3**

How can you compensate a lost culture?  
Especially when it's mashed up in a system of colonial vultures  
Africville they made a real life theatrical poster  
They moved Blacks off the base and using garbage trucks as chauffeurs  
It's pretty clever how they whisked thru the night  
Destroying Black history with no regard for human life  
Into the crack infested ghetto city lights Hundreds of Black children hating each other ready to fight  
There's no amount of reparations compensation rehabilitation  
Three day celebrations never change the situation  
Even though it's been ruled by the United Nations  
That the Africville relocation was a civil rights violation

**CHORUS**