
URO Showcase Presentation:

Canadian Midwives of Colour History Project

Midwifery Education Program
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Image source: Paolo Patrino, www.birthisadream.org

Abstract

To document and understand the history of midwives of colour in Canada's African diasporic communities during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Including:

- Enslaved peoples
- Fugitives/refugees of slavery
- Black pioneers/unsettlers
- Loyalists
- New immigrants

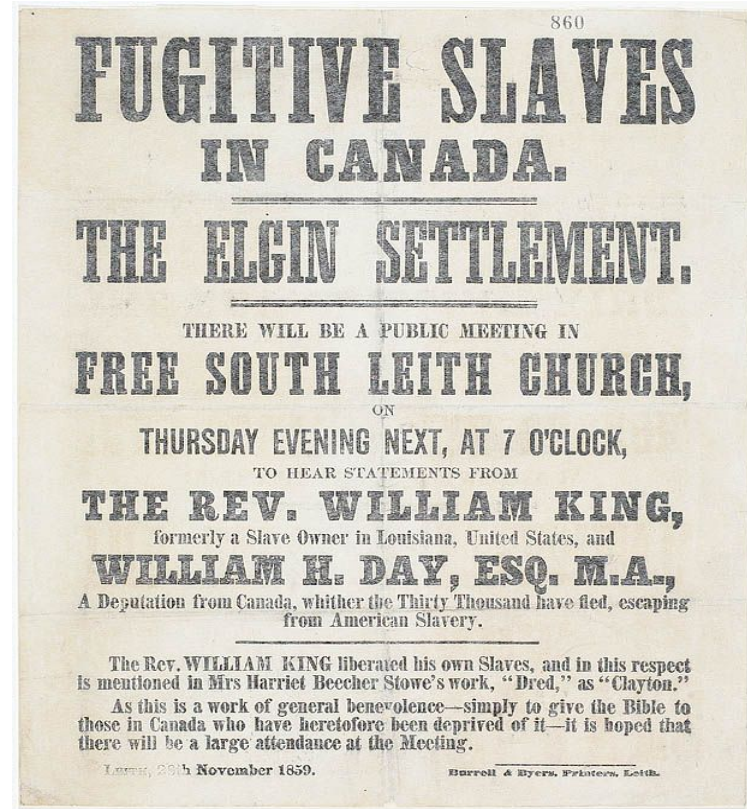


Image source:

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/fugitive-slave-act-of-1850>

Rationale

Currently, Canadian midwifery history describes primarily European immigrant midwives and the recent regulation of midwifery as a health profession (since 1993).

In the absence of well documented histories of racialized midwives, unearthing midwifery and childbirth histories can inform and positively disrupt the current constellation of midwifery.



Image source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/arts/television/call-the-midwife-to-premiere-on-pbs.html>

Sample Population:

Seniors who witnessed or hold stories of midwifery care by Black birth, labour and postpartum attendants in Canada

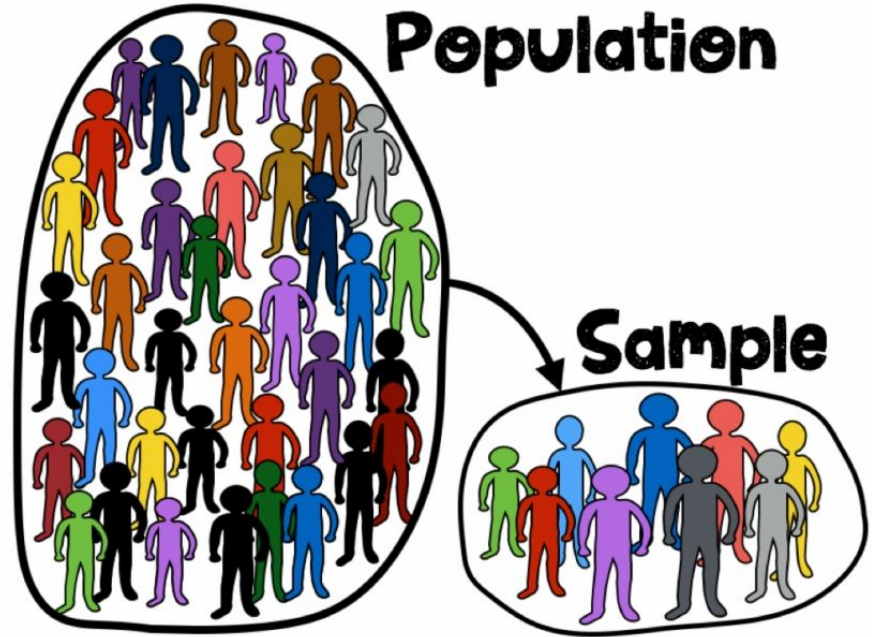


Image source:

https://www.trzcacak.rs/imgm/hmbRRwi_population-and-sample-population-sample/

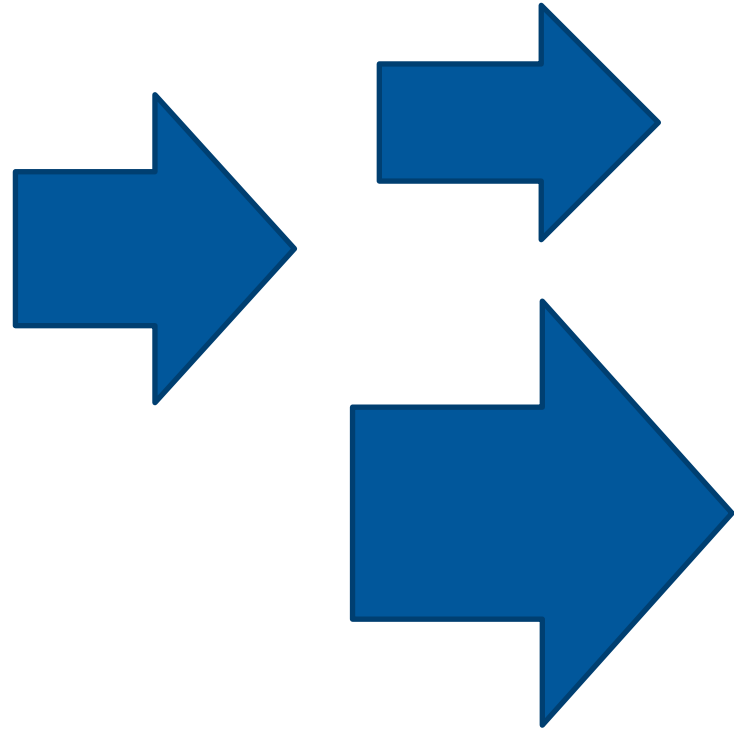
Methodology

Mixed methods study:

narrative oral history, informed by
critical social theory.

Sampling: Purposive and snowball

Analysis of the stories: critical
discourse analysis



“Black health care providers and
childbearing people in Canada remain
disenfranchised, due to long-term
systemic gendered racism and
colonization”

Stacy Lewis, 2018

Background

- Canada's first refugee midwives denied access to work due to the medicalization of birth
- Stripped of culture, community and kinship breaking the traditional roles as the keepers of healing knowledge

The lack of historical evidence to describe the birth attendants, birth customs and beliefs in the history of immigrants to Canada represents harmful erasure, intersecting oppressions and denial of legitimate citizenship and parenthood of racialized childbearing immigrants



Image source: [Mattie Mayes: Albertan Black Pioneer Midwife](https://blackthen.com/mattie-mayes-matriarch-shiloh-people-saskatchewan/)
<https://blackthen.com/mattie-mayes-matriarch-shiloh-people-saskatchewan/>

Preliminary Findings

Black Canadian Midwives were identified in historical black settlements:

- Alberta
- Amhurst, Nova Scotia
- Bruxton, Ontario
- Oakville, Ontario
- Orillia, Ontario



Image source:

http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/black_history/big/big_01_canadawest_map.aspx

“Black midwives working among Black communities have been guiding lights through adversity, advocating for their community’s human rights.”

Stacy Lewis, 2018

Acknowledgements



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