



FONDATION
michaëlle jean
FOUNDATION

THE NATIONAL BLACK CANADIANS SUMMIT

Winnipeg 2026 – “Moving Forward Together”



National Black
Canadians Summit

Sommet pancanadien des
communautés noires

Presented by



ABOUT THE MICHAËLLE JEAN FOUNDATION (FMJF)

The Michaëlle Jean Foundation was born out of the actions taken to focus specifically on youth-led civic initiatives across Canada by the Right Honorable Michaëlle Jean throughout her mandate as the 27th Governor-General of Canada in collaboration with the unwavering commitment of her partner, Jean-Daniel Lafond, philosopher-filmmaker and writer. The Foundation, created in 2011, is a national charitable organization that uses a unique model of intervention, based on social change, dialogue, innovation, education, creative and social entrepreneurship, to empower young Canadians across the country who are experiencing exclusion.



ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL BLACK CANADIANS SUMMIT

The National Black Canadians Summit (NBCS) emerged from the Foundation's early arts-based mobilization work, particularly the 4th Wall program: Making the invisible visible. These initiatives invited youth facing multiple barriers to gather in cultural spaces, such as museums and art galleries, to share their experiences and engage in dialogue about racism, invisibility, and social exclusion. In 2014 and 2015, two editions centered specifically on Black youth, hosted at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Gallery of Ontario. These programs created powerful moments of connection, visibility, and public awareness.

From these conversations, a clear call for something larger emerged: Black youth and Black artists expressed the urgent need for a permanent national platform where Black communities could gather, speak openly about their realities, learn from one another, and collectively shape the solutions needed in Canada. This call, combined with the momentum of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, gave birth to the first National Black Canadians Summit.



HISTORY OF THE SUMMIT: FROM DIALOGUE TO MOVEMENT

The first Summit: Making the multilateral Canadian, held in 2017, laid the groundwork for a new national movement with more than 400 participants in Toronto. What began as a gathering quickly grew into a multi-year, multi-city mobilization, bringing together Black communities, leaders, policymakers, educators, artists, and allies from across the country. The Summit became a catalyst for national conversations about anti-Black racism, justice, education, health, housing, and economic opportunity.



The 2nd edition: 4 days 4 nights : mapping our future in 2019 in the nation's capital, Ottawa, marked the next stage in the movement's growth. It brought together more than 700 people for four days of in-depth conversations, culminating in a delegation of community members presenting their insights to eight federal ministers. The recommendations shared during this Summit contributed to shaping the Canadian Strategic Action Plan for the International Decade for People of African Descent.

The 3rd edition:our time is now, in 2022, served as a pivotal platform for individuals of African descent across Canada, drawing more than 1,200 attendees in Halifax Nova Scotia, who left with a renewed sense of fulfillment, purpose, and commitment to advocacy. The Halifax Declaration: Manifesto for the Eradication of Racial Discrimination emerged from this gathering as our collective, unified call for recognition, justice, and development. It stands as a roadmap for real, systemic change, across every sector and within every community.



One of the most significant moments of the 2022 Summit was the proclamation of The Halifax Declaration. Its earliest form was a powerful artistic performance, blending spoken word, music, drumming, and dance to express the lived experiences and aspirations of Black communities. This creative expression later evolved into a formal written document. [Manifesto for the eradication of racial discrimination : Halifax Declaration](#)

Before finalizing and publishing the written Declaration, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation conducted a national survey to reaffirm the Summit's key themes and essential facts. This process strengthened the document's foundations, ensuring it accurately reflected the priorities raised during the Summit

The official launch celebration of The Halifax Declaration at the Light House Arts Centre in downtown Halifax marked a historic milestone in the Foundation's ongoing work with the African Nova Scotian community. Attended by approximately 100 community members, distinguished guests, and influential leaders, the event honored both the achievements and the aspirations embedded within the Declaration.



Following its launch, the Declaration was later presented at the United Nations Permanent Forum for People of African Descent, where it was recognized for its importance in advancing global efforts toward justice and equality. It was subsequently adopted and published as an official United Nations document, solidifying its place on the international stage and amplifying the voices of Black communities across Canada.

The Declaration is being issued to mark the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) and is grounded in its three foundational themes: recognition, justice, and development. These principles serve as both the moral and strategic framework guiding the Declaration's demands and vision.

Co-Founders, the Right Honorable Michaëlle Jean and Jean-Daniel Lafond, joined hundreds of participants at the Second Edition of the United Nations Permanent Forum for People of African Descent, where the Declaration was met with strong engagement and support. During the closing ceremony, the Halifax Declaration was formally submitted as an official document of the Forum, marking a historic moment in the global recognition of the work emerging from Black communities in Canada.

The 4th edition: action together, in Montréal carried forward the movement's national momentum by celebrating Black cultural brilliance, elevating intergenerational leadership, and reaffirming the urgency of addressing systemic inequities across Canada. Among its most impactful additions was the introduction of a dedicated Youth Day, a vibrant space designed to center, uplift, and amplify the voices of Black young people.

Youth Day brought together emerging leaders from across the country for workshops, artistic showcases, panels, and networking sessions, creating a platform where youth could learn, connect, and collaborate. It affirmed a truth long recognized by the Summit: "young people are not only the future; they are leading change right now".





This commitment to youth empowerment is deeply rooted in the Summit's legacy and is embodied in the Power of Youth initiative. Born from the vision of the National Black Canadians Summit and aligned with the goals of the Halifax Declaration, the Power of Youth: Community Projects is a national grant program that supports young Black changemakers in developing and implementing projects that strengthen their communities.

The initiative began with a simple but powerful idea: that young people must be equipped with the resources, mentorship, and visibility needed to turn their visions for justice, recognition, and development into real impact. Each project funded through the Power of Youth: Community projects bring the Halifax Declaration to life, treating it as a living document and action plan for racial equity.

At the 4th Summit, Power of Youth participants were invited to present their projects on a national stage. Their presentations showcased the innovation, determination, and leadership of Black youth across Canada demonstrating that the work of building a more equitable future is already underway through their creativity, courage, and commitment.



UNDERSTANDING THE SUMMIT AS A NATIONWIDE MOVEMENT

The National Black Canadians Summit is not simply a conference; it is a movement that continues between events. Relationships formed at the Summit often evolve into new programs, partnerships, and community networks. Recommendations arising from Summit discussions inform local, provincial, and federal strategies. Youth who participate in the Summit frequently go on to create new initiatives, businesses, research projects, and artistic works for more community impact.



Throughout the years, the Summit has played an essential role in shifting national conversations, elevating community research, enhancing the visibility of Black-led initiatives, and strengthening collective advocacy. It is a movement for recognition, justice, and development that continues to shape Canada's future long after each gathering concludes

The Summit addresses urgent and ongoing issues experienced by Black communities nationwide. These issues range from anti-Black racism in institutions and education, to disparities in health, migration pathways, policing, employment, housing access, mental health supports, and representation in leadership. The Summit creates a rare national platform for dialogue where these systemic challenges can be examined through lived experience, cultural expression, research, and intergenerational knowledge.

By bringing communities into direct conversation with policymakers, academics, artists, entrepreneurs, and community service providers, the Summit bridges worlds that rarely meet on equal footing. It elevates community expertise as a form of knowledge and ensures that policy and programs reflect realities on the ground.

WINNIPEG AS THE HOST CITY FOR THE SUMMIT

Winnipeg holds deep historical and cultural significance in Canada. Often called the heart of the nation, it is a city where diverse communities converge and where powerful movements have been born. Winnipeg has a long heritage of labor organizing, community activism, artistic creation, and civic engagement. It is a city that has shaped national conversations on justice, equity, and collective action.

Winnipeg is also home to one of the most dynamic and diverse Black communities in Canada. These communities have played important roles in cultural expression, civic leadership, entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, and social innovation. Their contributions enrich the city's identity and help build bridges between communities across Manitoba.



Just as importantly, Winnipeg has the largest urban Indigenous population in the country. Manitoba has the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples among all provinces. Hosting the Summit in Winnipeg provides a unique opportunity to deepen meaningful dialogue between Black and Indigenous communities. Both communities share parallel histories shaped by resistance, cultural strength, and the devastating legacy of colonialism. The 2026 Summit intends to create space for these communities to build new relationships, strengthen solidarity, and explore pathways for healing, justice, and collaboration.



WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE SUMMIT

Each edition of the National Black Canadians Summit creates a dynamic, immersive experience designed to bring people together, spark dialogue, and inspire new ideas for a better Canada. During the Summit, participants gather for plenary sessions where thought leaders, artists, elders, youth, policymakers, and community innovators discuss major themes affecting Black communities in Canada.



These sessions explore topics such as justice reform, education equity, health disparities, housing, entrepreneurship, migration, environmental justice, and cultural expression. Speakers share lived experiences, research, personal narratives, and visions for transformative change.

In addition to plenaries, the Summit features smaller breakout sessions where participants can engage in intimate conversations, ask questions, provide comments, ideas, and exchange strategies. Sessions are led by community educators, researchers, young leaders, artists, and experts from across the country. They allow for deep exploration of specific issues while offering practical tools and community-based solutions.

Arts and culture are central to every Summit in line with the foundation's belief in the transformative power of the arts to enact change. Through performances, film screenings, visual arts exhibitions, poetry, dance, theatre, and music, artists illuminate the joys, struggles, histories, and futures of Black communities. These artistic experiences are not only powerful—they are essential forms of knowledge that complement research and policy discussions.

Youth play a pivotal role throughout the Summit. Youth leadership showcases; creative labs, mentorship opportunities, and intergenerational dialogues ensure that young people's perspectives guide the movement. They contribute not only as participants, but as creators, facilitators, performers, solution-seekers, and decision-makers.



Community gatherings and networking spaces are woven throughout the Summit, creating opportunities for people to meet, build partnerships, and form lasting relationships. For many, the Summit becomes a place where they meet collaborators, mentors, and lifelong allies. It is a place where people share, learn, listen, connect and heal.

Finally, each Summit aims to generate collective insights and momentum that will continue long after the event. Ideas shared during the gathering often evolve into community initiatives, policy recommendations, artistic collaborations, or new programs.



The National Black Canadians Summit stands as one of the most important national movements for Black communities and allies in Canada. Rooted in creativity, lived experience, policy engagement, and intergenerational leadership, the Summit is reshaping how Canada understands its past, approaches its present, and envision its future. As the movement prepares to gather in Winnipeg in 2026, the spirit of “Moving Forward Together” invites all communities—Black, Indigenous, and allied—to walk into the future with unity, hope, and determination.