

Canadiana: The Black Oklahoman Farmer Migration

In this module, you are going to learn about a specific group of black people who moved to Canada and to Alberta. The Black Oklahoman Farmers migrated to Canada in the early 1900s to flee racism in America.

Here is a list of activities you will work on:

- KWL Chart
- Reading
- Listening / Video
- Answer Key

KWL Chart

| K | W | L |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What I know about the black Oklahoman farmer migration to <i>Canada</i> | What I want to know about the black Oklahoman farmer migration to <i>Canada</i> | What I learned about the black Oklahoman farmer migration to <i>Canada</i> |
| | | |

Reading

Black Oklahoman Farmer Migration to Canada ¹

African Americans faced racism in the United States. They complained of disenfranchisement - which means they were not allowed to vote in the United States. They also complained about their property being stolen and that they were not allowed in public spaces in the United States.

They heard about the available land in Canada, and they heard that every race in Canada had the right to vote and every man was free.

At the same time, the Canadian government was advertising heavily, trying to attract farmers from the Midwest and the Great Plains in the United States to move to Canada and increase farming in Canada. Black farmers saw an opportunity to escape racism in the United States and to get good agricultural land for themselves.

Between 1905 and 1912, around 1,500 African Americans arrived in western Canada and settled in small rural communities in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, African American farmers went to areas surrounding Edmonton. They settled in Breton, Lobstick Lake, Wildwood and Amber Valley.

What a surprise! The Canadian government had meant to attract only white farmers to Canada. Canadians in Western Canada were not very happy about the growing numbers of African American farmers trickling into Canada from Oklahoma. They successfully petitioned the federal government to stop the flow of black farmers to the Prairies. By late 1911, African American immigration from Oklahoma was ending.

¹ <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.afam.005>

Amber Valley²³



Figure 1: Glenbow Archives circa 1940. J. Edwards stands beside a grain field in Amber Valley, Alta. Retrieved 16 Dec 2017 from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/secret-alberta-new-documentary-brings-amber-valley-back-to-life-1.3968766>

Although few traces of it exist today, Amber Valley, which was about 170km north of Edmonton, was once a thriving settlement of about 300 black African American immigrants and their children.

This year in 2017, some people who were born in Amber Valley and some who are descendants of people who lived in Amber Valley came together and made a documentary called *Secret Alberta: The Former Life of Amber Valley*. These

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<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/secret-alberta-new-documentary-brings-amber-valley-back-to-life-1.3968766>

³ <http://plainhumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.afam.005>

people include Myrna Wisdom, who is a historian for that community, Cheryl Foggo, and Ronald Mapp.

Listening/Video and Activity

Watch the 14 minute documentary: Secret Alberta: The Former Life of Amber Valley on Youtube by following this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxXJubB2cPQ>

Activity

Fill in the blanks and answer the questions using information from the documentary:

- 1) The people who moved to Amber Valley were trying to escape: _____ , _____ and Jim Crow. (0:20)
- 2) There were _____ communities created by this African American migration...the largest and best known being Amber Valley. (1:59)
- 3) What sport did people from Amber Valley like to play and like to go watch? (5:43)
- 4) How many waves of African American immigration to Alberta were there in history? (7.:23)
- 5) Who did the Canadian government send to Southern USA to discourage more black farmers from coming to live in Canada? (8:52)
- 6) Why did some people start to move away from Amber Valley? Which city did they move to? (10:52 to 11:05).

References

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/secret-alberta-new-documentary-brings-amber-valley-back-to-life-1.3968766>

<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.afam.005>

Answer Key for Activity:

- 1) Racism; prejudice
- 2) Five
- 3) Baseball
- 4) One
- 5) A preacher
- 6) The farms were not big enough to support everyone; they wanted to get further education and get a job. They moved to Edmonton, Calgary and other places