



TEACHER'S GUIDE

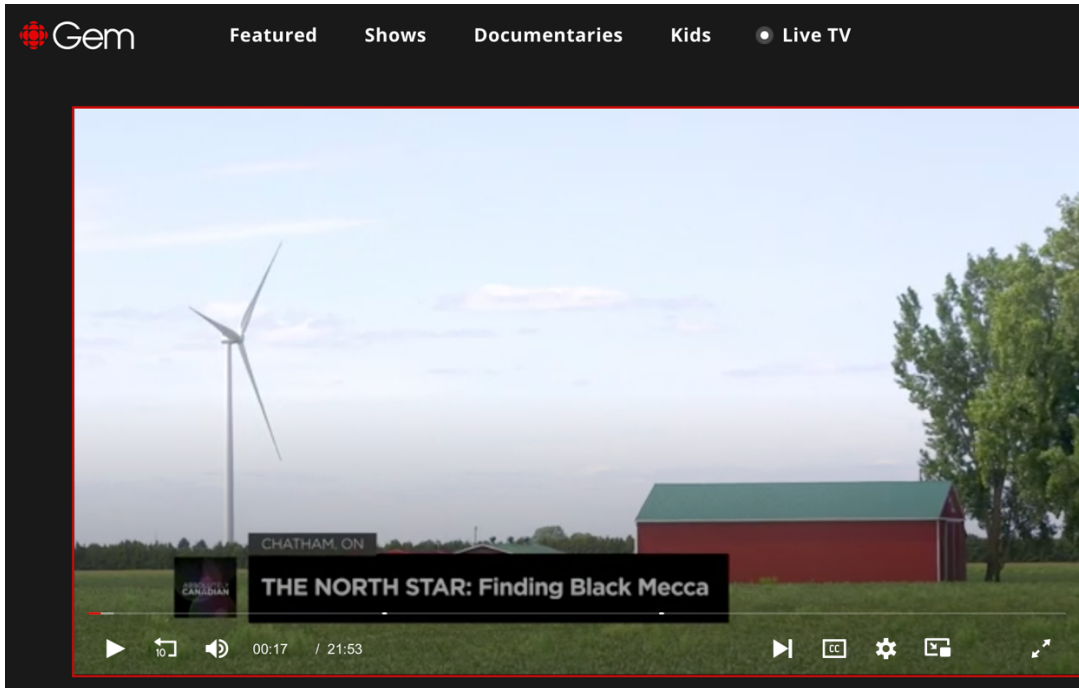
SAMANTHA MEREDITH

The Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society & Black Mecca Museum

The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca

Teacher's Guide

Online Access to the film in Canada: CBC Gem (until September 2024)



Documentary Short

Film Duration: 21m53s

Documentary Team: Angel Panag, Torrin Blades and Godfred Adjei

Documentary Cast: Adam Arenson, Gayle George, Deirdre McCorkindale, Samantha Meredith, Paul Mooney, Bryan Prince, Christopher Prince, Shannon Prince, Adrienne Shadd, Rev. David Tatsu and Dorothy Wallace.

The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca is an award winning 2021 Canadian documentary film about the Black communities of Chatham, Dresden and Buxton Ontario. The film is narrated by community members and academics who studied these settlements. The film highlights the local Black history, heritage and legacy of these communities including topics of: the National Unity Association, the Chatham Coloured All-Stars, Mary Ann Shadd and Fergie Jenkins.

Once called “The Black Mecca” and “A Colored Man’s Paris” – Chatham-Kent is a region in Canada with a long history of Black settlement. In spite of hardships, the community has thrived. The North Star is a film that documents the past and the present of a people who have helped shape this country, but are often left out of its textbooks.

This summary and additional film information can be found at the following online link:

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12490520/> .

Learning Activities

Here in this Teacher's Guide, you will find samples of learning activities that can be used in conjunction with the film to expand the students understanding and comprehension of *The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca*. With these additional learning activities students will learn more about, and better understand Black history in the Southwestern Ontario region and its impact nationwide.

1. Learning Activity: Discussion Questions and Research Assignments

Discussion Questions:

The following are some sample discussion questions you can provide students with either individually or use for a class discussion.

- The documentary discusses the racism and segregation many Black Canadians faced upon their arrival in the 1800's. When thinking about those stories, how far have we come, and how far do we still have to go?
- After watching the film, why do you think Chatham-Kent was historically known as the "Black Mecca"?
- Discuss and compare the differences between a historical documentary film and a historical adaptation film?

Research Questions:

The following are sample research questions that you can assign students individually or in pairs that correspond with the film and further expanding their knowledge of history and documentaries.

- *The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca* is a documentary that aims at sharing a hidden part of Canadian History that is often not in our school texts. What are some other hidden histories, locally or nationwide that we do not often learn about?
- Music is a common theme in the film, including the original song "Summer Night Songs" by Chudi Harris. (<https://music.apple.com/us/album/summer-night-songs-the-north-star-finding-black-mecca/1550414245>) If you had to pick a song or a score of songs to be the soundtrack to a documentary on yourself or your community, what would it/they be? Explain your reasoning.
- Photographs are used throughout the documentary to help share the story of Chatham-Kent's Black community. Students should select one older image from their family photograph collection and tell a story about the people, places and/or things in that picture. *Note: the photograph does not necessarily need to be 50+ years old, although that would be ideal, however giving students the range of 10+ years would be more attainable for some.*

Learning Outcomes:

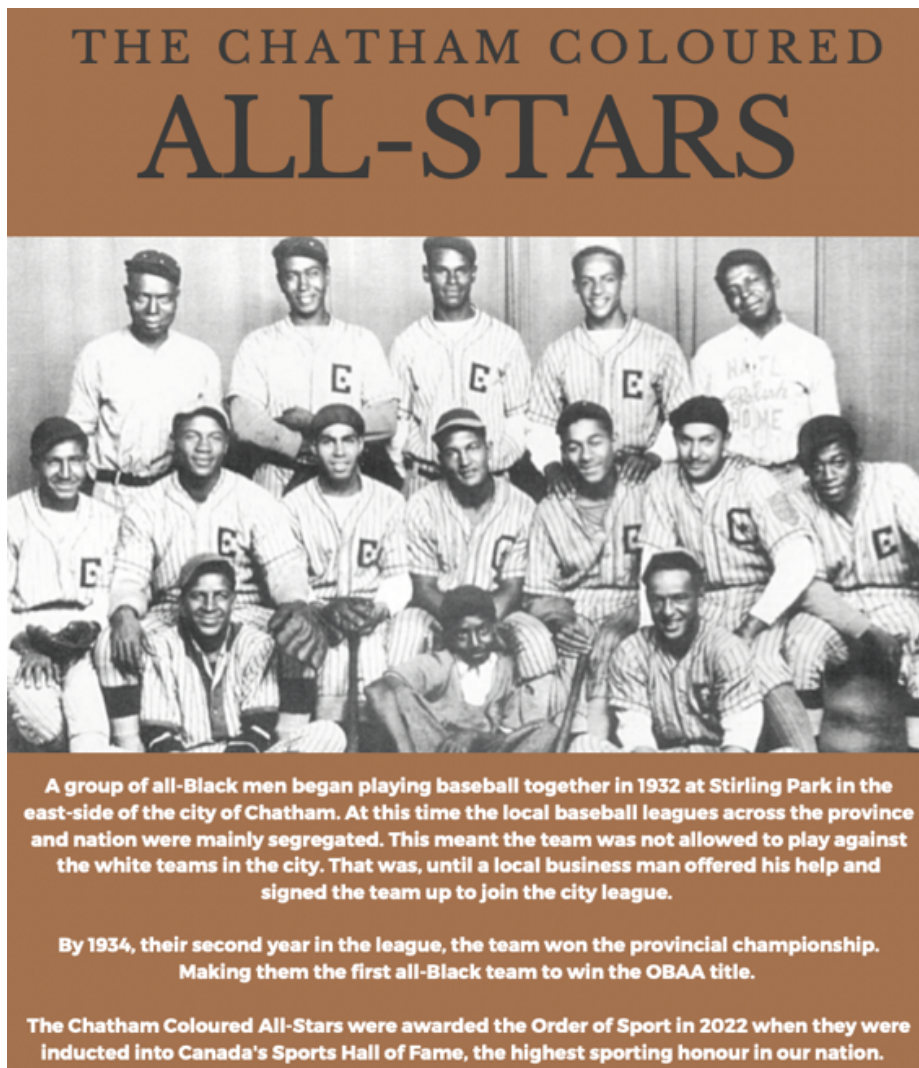
- Students will be able to argue and defend their responses.
- Students will discuss and explain what they just watched in the documentary.
- Students will draw connections by relating and comparing historical issues to present day issues.
- Students will develop research skills.
- Students will be able to draw connections between history and present day.
- Students will examine and interpret historical images.

2. Learning Activity: Poster Project:

Each student individually or in a pair should select one historical person or historical place from *The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca* and create an informative poster on that subject matter.

Students will have selected an image of their chosen subject and will then do research online. Students will next take their image and research materials to create an informative poster to display in the classroom or school.

SAMPLE: The Chatham Coloured All-Stars.



Learning outcomes:

- Students will select a subject that corresponds with what they just watched.
- Students will objectively decide if source material is accurate and relevant.
- Students will develop research skills.
- Students will draw historical connections from the film.
- Students will construct an informative poster.

3. Learning Activity: Oral History Activity:

Oral History is very important to keeping and protecting not only our family histories, but all history. The film, *The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca*, interviews community members, historical museum staff and academics. Each interviewee is sharing an oral history of Chatham-Kent's Black community.

For this activity students should interview a person of their choosing (young or old) to share a story, some history and traditions about themselves, their family and/or their community.

This can be done in video format or voice recording. Interviews can be presented in those formats or in a written assignment.

Students should develop 5-8 interview questions that they will have ready to ask their subject. These questions should be developed individually as their subject can change what questions might fit their interviews. As students conduct the interview other questions and follow-up questions should come naturally.

After the interview students can create videos, voice clips and biographical papers on their subject matter.

Students should be prepared with an introduction statement of who their subject matter is, why they have selected the person and an explanation of their chosen questions.

SAMPLE:

Subject: Great-Aunt, Susanna Robbins. Age 85. Born and raised in Chatham-Kent (please note: this is a fictionalized person used for sample purposes only)

Interview Questions

1. How long has your family been in the Chatham-Kent region?
2. Did your family come to Canada on the Underground Railroad? (If the answer is no, how did they come here?)
3. What was it like growing up for you?
4. Did you face any racism throughout your life? (Follow-up: if you don't mind sharing, could you share a story about it.)
5. Tell me about your first job or any other jobs you had throughout your life?
6. If you could tell your younger self something you know now, what would it be?
7. Do you have anything additional you'd like to add today.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop research questions.
- Students will organize their questions in an appropriate interview style order.
- Students will assemble the interview responses into a video, voice or written presentation.
- Students will be able to discuss and explain their subject matter and chosen questions.
- Students will recognize and understand the importance of oral histories.

Selected Resources

Here you will find additional resources to further understand, explore more in depth, and discover many of the hidden histories *The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca* touches on throughout the film.

- **The Buxton National Historic Site and Museum** shares the story of the Elgin Settlement, founded by Rev. William King in 1849. This settlement was the largest Black settlement and most successful in Ontario. The museum is home to many original artifacts, an 1850 log cabin and an 1861 school house. You can learn more about visits to the museum, virtual tours and resources on the Buxton Museum's website at the following link: <https://www.buxtonmuseum.com>
- **The Chatham Coloured All-Stars:**
 - The Chatham Coloured All-Stars story is shared in a comic book entitled, *All Stars: The true story of the 1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars* by Scott Chantler. This comic book also has a teacher's resource guide for use in the classroom at the following link: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=racesportsymposium>
 - The Chatham Coloured All-Stars story is also shared in an online database that features player biographies, oral history interviews, newspaper clippings and additional primary source documents. The database also features additional teaching guides for use in the classroom. It can be found at the following link: <http://cdigs.uwindsor.ca/BreakingColourBarrier/>
 - Through a project with OLG, MLB and the community a video called *Chatham Plays On* was created to honour the team and show gamers how to play as this historical team in MLB The Show. They put together a video with family members of players and team history which can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1VPlkEnWhM>
- **The Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society & Black Mecca Museum** shares the story of Chatham's Black community beginning at the end of the 18th century until present day. This museum features artifacts and genealogical information on the area's early Black community. You can learn more about visits to the museum, walking tours, virtual tours and other resources at the following link: <https://ckbhs.org>
- **The Josiah Henson Museum of African-Canadian History** celebrates the accomplishments of abolitionist Josiah Henson and Dresden's Black community. Their site is home to five-acres of land with an interpretive centre, gallery, theatre and historical buildings. For more information about the museum, tours, virtual tours and other resources you can visit them online at: <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/properties/josiah-henson-museum>
- **The National Unity Association:**
 - "Let us march on till victory is won" the *Struggle for Racial Equity in CK and Ontario* is an online exhibit and traveling exhibit produced by the Chatham-Kent Museum that traces the courageous story of the National Unity Association's crusade for justice, their determination to end practices of segregation within Chatham-Kent and Ontario, and the ongoing fight for equity in Canada. Online Exhibit can be found here: <https://vitacollections.ca/ckmuseums/620/exhibit>

- The National Film Board features, *Dresden Story*, 1954, “a film that goes to Dresden, Ontario to sample local attitudes towards racial discrimination against Black people that brought this town into the news. After a round-up of the opinions of individual citizens, white and Black, commentator Gordon Burwash joins two discussion panels, presenting opposite points of view. The rights and wrongs of the quarrel are left for the audience to decide”. The film can be streamed for free at the following link: https://www.nfb.ca/film/dresden_story/
- The OSSTF and Canadian Black Lives features history, articles and learning activities, entitled *Hugh Burnett and the National Unity Association: Fighting for Civil Rights in Dresden, Ontario*. The document can be downloaded at the following link: <https://www.osstf.on.ca/-/media/Provincial/Documents/Resource-Centre/Curriculum-Materials-and-Classroom-Supports/canadian-black-lives/activity-outlines/hugh-burnett.ashx?la=en-CA>

The following readings and audiovisual materials are resource suggestions to help enhance and further student understanding and learning of Black history, heritage and legacy in Canada. Some of these resource suggestions will also further student learning on racism across the Chatham-Kent region and Canada.

Additional Reading Materials:

- *On Account of Darkness: Shining Light on Race and Sport* by Ian Kennedy. “In many ways, Ontario’s Chatham-Kent region is a microcosm of Canadian multiculturalism. As a terminus of the Underground Railroad, it has long been home to a large Black community, Walpole Island and Delaware First Nations are nearby and many interned Japanese Canadians worked on local farms during World War II. The history of sport in the region is emblematic of the challenges that have confronted generations of non-white athletes nationwide. Each chapter uses the story of a local athlete – some famous, others more obscure – to illuminate one aspect of the evolving relationship between race and sport in North America.” Teacher’s resources for this book can be found at the following link: <https://www.tidewaterpress.ca/teachers-resources-on-account-of-darkness/?fbclid=IwAR0HCuaGfqCk9e4ihkjinBYGa9UZtGGBPjOm56ol13GoTVp0HW-PbqnJWLGg>
- *The Skin We’re In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power* by Desmond Cole. Chronicling just one year in the struggle against racism in this country, this book reveals in stark detail the injustices faced by Black Canadians on a daily basis: the devastating effects of racist policing, the hopelessness produced by an education system that fails Black children, the heartbreak of those separated from their families by discriminatory immigration laws, and more.

Additional Audiovisual Materials:

- *Beyond the Underground Railroad* episodes explore topics beyond the story of the underground railroad with special guests. These episodes are hosted by, Steven Cook from Josiah Henson Museum of African-Canadian History, Samantha Meredith from the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society & Black Mecca Museum and Shannon Prince of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
 - *Beyond the Underground Railroad: Black History in Chatham-Kent* features a conversation with creators and researchers from across the province. Discussion will spotlight the successes of museums and communities across Ontario in bringing Black stories and achievements to the forefront. This episode includes a conversation with *The North Star: Finding the Black Mecca*

producer, director and writer, Angel Panag.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw4HGWV9z6I>

- *Beyond the Underground Railroad*: Strategies for confronting anti-Black racism features conversations on anti-Black racism in education and workplaces and what we can do to combat this issue. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKe7fUsXk2s>

- *Black Liberators WWII* explores Black Canadian soldiers recounting the trials and triumphs of fighting for Canada during the Second World War. Included in this documentary is Chatham's WWII veteran, John Olbey. This documentary film can be accessed on the Global TV site at:

<https://watch.globaltv.com/series/HIST0056520800000000>

Or on Reel Canada at the following link: <https://reelcanada.ca/film/black-liberators-wwii/>

- *Heritage Minutes* a collection of Canadian 60-second short films, each depicting a significant person, event or story in Canadian history, has a collection of Canadian Black History and Heritage Videos including:

- Chloe Cooley: <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/chloe-cooley>
- Oscar Peterson: <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/oscar-peterson>
- Viola Desmond: <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/viola-desmond>

- *The Skin We're In: Pulling back the curtain on racism in Canada – CBC Docs*. Urgent, controversial, and undeniably honest, *The Skin We're In* is a wake-up call to complacent Canadians. Racism is here. It is everywhere. It is us and we are it. Following celebrated journalist Desmond Cole as he researches his hotly anticipated book, this documentary from acclaimed director Charles Officer pulls back the curtain on racism in Canada. The film can be viewed on YouTube and at Reel Canada at the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msoBTIv1VqM> or <https://reelcanada.ca/film/the-skin-were-in/>

Teacher's Resource Guide: http://assets.hotdocs.ca/doc/DFS17_THESKINWEREIN.pdf

- *We Will Do Better* – From *Beyond the Win* Education Programs presented by Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. Develop racism awareness and spark conversations about racism by listening to the stories of how Hall of Famers overcame the challenges of racism in their sporting career. These videos created by Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in partnership with TSN and Quantum Media House share these stories.

<https://beyondthewin.ca/course/we-will-do-better>