

being seen

Directives for creating authentic
and inclusive content

“

“At the Canadian or Quebec level there is not enough representation. We’re not focusing enough on the different ways of being Black. You can be Black of African descent, Caribbean descent, etc., even if history says we’re all from Africa. We also have to differentiate between Black Americans and Black Canadians.”

”

DIRECTIVES - BLACK COMMUNITY

Based on the thoughts shared by participants, the following Directives were developed to provide guidance in creating and commissioning more authentic and representative screen-based content that engages with Black community(ies).

- + There is no universal Black Canadian community or identity and Black Canadians are not the same as Black Americans. Understand who your characters are and research the community that they belong to. Ensure that it accurately reflects the region in Canada where the story takes place. For example, Jamaican-Canadians are not only in Toronto, but a story about a Jamaican-Canadian in Halifax or Vancouver will be a very different story than if they were in Toronto.
- + Understand the physical appearance of different Black communities and ensure that casting reflects those differences.
- + Recognize that there are Black Canadians across the country and that should be reflected in stories and casting and not limited to major urban centres.

- + Centre more stories on Black Canadians and do not limit them to 'best friend' or other secondary roles.
- + Understand the business case for more stories that centre Black Canadians and Black experiences as underrepresented audiences look to the US and the UK when they cannot find stories that reflect them on Canadian screens.
- + Are the characters stereotypes? Can those stereotypes be subverted or do they need to be thrown out?
- + If you come from outside the community, and depending on the community this could mean not being Black or not being from a specific Black community such as Haitian or Nigerian, consider whether your story could be 'off limits' by that community and if so - don't do it. Ask yourself why you are the right person to tell this story.
- + While stories of slavery and Black oppression were universally considered off limits to non-Black creators and producers, other stories were considered more subjective and would depend on the research and engagement done and the perspective taken. Review the Directives contained in the Core Themes Report for guidance on research and engagement when telling a story from outside your community.
- + Ensure that authentic representation extends to equal treatment of Black performers so that they have hair and makeup artists trained in Black hair and skin tones.

Quick Fact

In 2016 the Black population was 3.5% of Canada's total population and is projected to increase to 5 - 5.6% by 2036. 43.6% of Black Canadians were born in Canada. - 2016 Canadian Census

Further Reading

[Black Representation in film and TV: The challenges and impact of increasing diversity](#),
McKinsey and Co., 2021

<http://www.bso-ben.ca/beingseen>

Financial Contributors

