

Rose-Eva: Hello and welcome to Unheard Youth, a podcast created by the Centre for Race and Culture, focusing on newcomer youth voices all across Canada. I'm your host, Rose-Eva Forgues-Jenkins. The title for this episode is "Migration Stories." I wanted to focus on the topic of migration and gain a deeper understanding of immigration within a Canadian context.

To help me understand more about this topic, I invited guests Noelle Jaipaul and Jamelie Baachalani. You might remember them from the last episode where we defined terms like "immigrant" and "refugee" and what they mean to us. On this episode, we're going to hear the second part of that conversation. Noelle and Jamelie sat down with me to share their own migration stories and what immigration policy in Canada has looked like throughout the year. Here is that conversation.

Noelle: I'm Noelle Jaipaul. Thanks so much for having me on the podcast. I'm excited to chat with you both today.

For my migration story, I am a Treaty 6 settler, so I was born and raised in Edmonton, spent a bit of my youth in Red Deer, Alberta, then moved back to Edmonton for you know, to get away from the small-town vibe and to go to school and all that good stuff.

My parents are both immigrants from Guyana, a country that is considered though West Indies in south America, just kind of north of Brazil. They actually met on the plane immigrating to Canada, which is adorable. And they came to Canada at a time when the Canadian government was really pulling from English-speaking and British-educated colonies from around the world, so the West Indies were a good source of, as we call, you know, intellectual resources and labor resources to come to Canada and settle.

So they made their home in Edmonton and that's where they brought their families to migrate as well. And they are still in Edmonton.

Jamelie: My name is Jamelie Baachalani and I was born and raised in Edmonton, as well. I've never left Edmonton. I've never even actually left the country yet. My mother was born in Canada. She's Ukrainian and German. And then my father immigrated from Lebanon in the late seventies. So, it was kind of interesting growing up like the early nineties as like a half-brown, half white kid. And I'm still figuring out more about like their history, so it's been interesting preparing for this episode.

Rose-Eva: In terms of my own migration story – because my name is Rose-Eva Forgues-Jenkins. Forgues is a French word coming from "forgeron" which means "blacksmith." So, that side of my family came to Canada in the 1600s and settled around the Montreal area. And then the English side of my family, which is Jenkins, very Welsh and British name, came to Edmonton in the 1920s. And I grew up here in Edmonton and spent two years in London, UK.

So, thank you very much for sharing your migration story. That's why I want to have this conversation, because I want to think about these migration stories that almost all Canadians have and how these stories are echoed in what the youth have to say later on in the podcast.

So, First Nations folks are the only people that are not settlers on this territory, and I think that it's important for all settlers to think about how we came to this land and who was on this land before us. So, for example, I was always hazy on my own family history and just knew some general things until I attended Noelle's session on the history of migration. I had to do some research. So, Noelle, maybe you could explain the session that you gave and what that kind of looks like?

Noelle: Right. So, earlier this year, maybe in about March or so, we did a session together on migration history of Canada and it really is an opportunity to think about the way that Canada frames itself as welcoming, pluralistic, multicultural, and while those things might be true for many of us, in a lot of ways, Canada hasn't always had the best track record of being welcoming and inclusive, and it's important for us to acknowledge those histories and those realities for so many people around the world - for so many people who were already in Canada and so many who were trying to settle in Canada.

While I was doing my research and Rose-Eva, you touched on this a bit, but I found really a lot of info on Canadian immigration policy but none of my research was contextualized within Indigenous peoples and their migration across the Canadian land or Turtle Island as it would have been called by a lot of Indigenous folks. So, we need to really take these migration histories within that context that those Indigenous stories have been erased from Canadian migration history. I'm not an Indigenous historian, I am not an Indigenous scholar, and those aren't my stories to tell. And I know that with the podcast you will be going into some of those stories in more detail.

But just a bit of a disclaimer that while we talk about this migration history and immigration policy in Canada throughout the centuries, really, that that is a story, the Indigenous story and stories of many different peoples are not included in the statistics and the data that we often talk about.

The session that we did earlier this year and the reason why I like to ask people about their migration history is because we all have a migration history unless we were First Nations on this land. And we often find that some people get asked about their migration story much more frequently than others. So, for white folks in Edmonton often don't get as much of the "but where are you really from?" and this sort of micro aggression that can be quite innocuous on one-off circumstances but for someone like me, who's racialized, all of those instances of "where are you from?" "But where are you really from?" every time you meet someone new, those add up and they become very othering. It becomes difficult to understand your own identity in terms of Canadian multiculturalism when you perpetually are made to feel like maybe you're not really Canadian. So, by asking people their migration histories and their migration stories, it reminds us that we all have come from somewhere. Most of us are settlers on Canadian land. And that we need to keep in mind our own personal histories. We need to connect with our ancestries and understand how those affect our Canadian identity in this so-called "multicultural landscape" and what that means for us as people on this land.

Rose-Eva: Yes. So, as part of our podcast we also wanted a visual component where we have a timeline of Canada and we talk about those dates specifically and so we thought we'd put some dates in there so that we can contextualize what migration Canada looks like.

Noelle: Great. So do either of you know when Canada became a country?

Voices: *[laughter]*

Noelle: We just celebrated our sesquicentennial.

Jamelie: So, is that 1867?

Noelle: Yes. 1867. So, in 1876 is when Treaty 6 was signed, so the territory that we're on now, that treaty came into being in 1876.

1906 is kind of when the Immigration Act came into being. There were forms of immigration acts before this, for sure, but that's where we're going to start our story. That's when immigration as we kind of conceive of it today in Canada really started to take off.

So, Frank Oliver, who's well known in the Edmonton community, we have a neighborhood named after him, Oliver. He was actually Minister of the Interior. So, that was the name of essentially the immigration body at the Federal level. So, the Act was put in place to help the government control immigration and deal with "undesirable immigrants" is what he called them. The Immigration Act had prohibited immigrant categories and a list of offences that people could be deported for. And these included some interesting things like insanity, infirmity, disease, committing crimes of quote "moral turpitude" and people who were blind, deaf, insane, epileptic, feeble-minded or poor. So, these were all categories under which people could be deported or denied entry from Canada.

Frank Oliver was also really instrumental in policies that aimed to take away lands from First Nations people, so he got that dubious honor as well. And he was passionate about building Canada in a way that was very homogenous, so he was adamant in saying that Ukrainians and other Eastern Europeans or "Slavs" as he called them, could not be citizens of Canada, and he wanted to restrict Japanese and Chinese immigration because he said that he didn't want other Canadian men to live among the Japanese and Chinese, who were men who lived "like pigs." That's his quote.

Carrying on with the Asian racism that was rife across Canada at the time, in 1907 the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed in Vancouver, so there was many, many Chinese and Japanese immigrants living and working and contributing and being part of that community in Vancouver, but the Asiatic Exclusion League aimed to keep "Oriental immigrants" out of B.C.

In 1907, thousands of League members publicly rioted in Chinatown and Japantown and they destroyed homes and businesses and assaulted Chinese and Japanese people. They went into Chinatown first and were throwing rocks, hitting people with boards, all of these kinds of things. They destroyed many homes, injured many people, but word actually got out to Japantown

before the Asiatic Exclusion League members made it to Japantown, so members living in Japantown were actually able to defend themselves a little more. They lost a little bit less property than in Chinatown, but all of them were involved and lots of injuries in both Chinatown and Japantown.

In 1908, another interesting Federal jurisdictional note. So, in our Federal system, the way of making laws that we learn about in school, is you know, through the Bill process. There's three readings of a Bill, then it goes to Senate, then it's voted, then it has Governor General assent and all of these great steps. But we also have another process to form Canadian law called Order in Council and these are for laws that are deemed kind of secondary or they're more regulations. They help define the bigger laws. And those just pass through Order in Council, so it's a much quicker process and it doesn't go through a full vote in the Parliament. So, a lot of these are used all the time, and they're usually pretty innocuous. They usually don't do a whole lot. They're just regulations. But in immigration policy, they've been pretty big, actually.

So, for instance, in 1908 an Order in Council was issued on the Continuous Journey Rule. So, that meant that people could only immigrate if they came directly from the country that they were coming from - their country of origin. So, how do you get from India to Canada without stopping on a boat? How do you get from China to Canada without stopping on a boat in 1908? We didn't have the transcontinental flights that we do now, so this was essentially a law that prohibited Japanese, Chinese, Indian immigrants from being able to land in Canada under this Continuous Journey Rule.

Rose-Eva: I want to share something that I saw today in the Metro Morning News, the free newspaper. So, I saw a headline that said, "Irregular Migration Costs Likely to Spike" and so, seeing that today, "irregular migration" makes you think what is - what do we imagine migration to look like? Is there one system that we imagine is the "right" way to migrate and there's the "wrong" way to migrate?

And that made me think of your - this policy specifically about how the Continuous Journey that it seems like they wanted to enforce the right kind of migration, the right kind of migrants to have a certain type of journey and if you didn't take that "right" type of journey, you weren't the "right" type of migrant, then you wouldn't be allowed access. So, it seems like a really - a way of picking and choosing.

Noelle: Absolutely. And it essentially was just saying we only want the British and the French to come to Canada. And it also excluded anybody who had been in Britain or France as immigrants first. So, if you were an Indian immigrant to Britain, you still couldn't come to Canada. You still couldn't immigrate to Canada even if you had been in Britain for almost your entire life. These were rules that were meant to be racist without sounding racist.

So, a couple other interesting things in the early 1900s, another Order in Council was proposed to curb black immigration. In 1911, there was another Order in Council that banned quote, "any immigrants belonging to the N*gro race which is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada." End quote.

So, this really was around making sure that there weren't people coming up from the United States who were either freed slaves or the children of slaves or escaping that context in the States. There were black Oklahoman farmers, especially who were interested in coming to Canada due to an increase in racism that they were experiencing in the States. But the government even sent their agents down to Oklahoma to dissuade black Americans, African-Americans from immigrating, saying they wouldn't like Canada, that it wouldn't be a suitable destination for them, and to warn of the perils that living in Canada would bring to them.

So, there was active non-recruitment of black Americans coming to Canada, but, all that being said, there still were black Oklahoman farmers who were migrating to Canada and especially, to Alberta. So Amber Valley is located in northern Alberta, near Athabasca, and between 1905 and 1912, over 1,000 African-Americans settled in Amber Valley and areas around Edmonton. And they were farming the land, they were raising animals, they were working with their Ukrainian neighbor farmers to build these communities. They were establishing churches and a sense of community in those places.

And again, it gets back to this idea of asking people, "Well, where are you really from?" Well, some of the black settlers in Alberta, in particular, have been here longer than those Ukrainian farmers and Polish farmers that we consider, you know, old stock Canadians. We've had a legacy of black families and black communities in Alberta for even longer.

Jamelie: A new fact that I learned today was that in 1938, the first mosque in Canada was actually built in Edmonton. Which is interesting because a lot of that history isn't taught to children. I never knew about that. And that's something interesting to me with someone who has Muslim relatives living in Canada, is that's a part of not technically my own history, because I am not Muslim, but it is part of my family's history.

Noelle: Talking about more about the contributions of black communities in Canada and how thriving they have been and how long they've been here for, Africville is a really good example of how black Canadians have been making communities only to have them demolished or erased by the white majority or the mainstream Canadian culture.

So, Africville was a little settlement or homestead just to the north of Halifax. So, Halifax itself was essentially founded in 1749 after African-American slaves or I guess just African slaves either escaped or were freed and came north. And they built the roads in much of the city in Halifax. And they lived in the settlement of Africville.

It wasn't for another 100 years that there was the first black land ownership in Africville, so it was 100 years later, in 1848, that the first – I believe it was two black men – actually, purchased land. The City of Halifax collected taxes from people in Africville but provided no services like paved roads, running water, sewers, all of that good stuff. In the 1960s, the City of Halifax essentially demolished Africville in what was widely considered an act of racism. So, this is in our current history. This was not long ago. An apology was then issued in 2010 and it's interesting talking to folks, to black Canadians from Africville, because their legacy is literally beyond the founding of Canada as a country. They were some of the first people to settle in that

area of Canada and often black Canadians will get the questions of, “Well, where are you from? Where is your ancestry?” Their ancestry is here.

Rose-Eva: Another point on the timeline I wanted to put out there because you actually brought this up when I was talking to youth in Edmonton. They brought up this piece of history, which I thought was really fascinating and also makes me very grateful to them really looking into their history and finding these great moments of resistance. So, an example of that is in 1988 there was the establishment of the Black Action Defense Committee by Kingsley Gilliam, Dudley Laws, Charles Roach, Lennox Farrell, and Sharona Hall. So, the Black Action Defense Committee began as a watchdog for how the police and justice system treated black people, and it was a very strong community organization as well, helping out folks in that community.

So, what happened was they ended the previous policy where if there was a police shooting, the people who’d investigate the shooting were the police themselves. So, when the police are investigating the police themselves, obviously, that’s very biased. But, instead, the Black Action Defense Committee created the Ontario Special Investigations Unit, so that was a more impartial way of investigating police brutality.

Noelle: And it’s interesting talking about these forms of resistance and the white being out of specific stories like the stories of black Canadians and their contributions because Rose-Eva, both you and I were trying to find more information on the Defense League and it was impossible. It was like there was no real record of how this group came to be, the things that they were working on, the impacts that they had with their communities. And it just – it goes to show that really “history is held in the hands that write the textbooks.” That’s a quote from a song but I don’t know [*laughs*] I didn’t make it up.

Rose-Eva: No, but I think that’s true. I got this information from Wikipedia and it was a very, very short Wikipedia article. And Wikipedia is seen as a democratic process because anyone can write an article. But when anyone can write it, then who’s the majority and who are the folks that are writing it and what do they focus on? That’s again where a lot of the contributions of minority groups fall through the cracks.

Jamelie: When you grow up and you don’t learn about these things in Canadian school systems, it can be very isolating to learn about European history and how German settlers came here and Ukrainian settlers came here but not to know that there were black settlers or that there have been like Jewish and Muslim communities in Canada for maybe not just as long but they have deep roots here, too.

Noelle: After the First World War, so kind of 1919 to 1923, Canada kind of realized, hey, we have no good economy. We have like no people to do the jobs that we need them to do. Maybe it’s time to start opening our doors. And they did this very cautiously. So, they created a list of preferred countries and non-preferred countries. So, I think we might be able to guess what the preferred countries were. They included the UK, the US, Newfoundland because it wasn’t yet a Canadian – it wasn’t a part of Canada – Australia and New Zealand, and then a lot of western and northern European countries. So, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, France, Germany,

and a few others. But Eastern Europeans were treated very harshly and all other nations around the world were essentially restricted. You essentially just could not come from those countries.

Rose-Eva: Yeah, and I think that's an interesting place to say that's where my family came in. So, my family, the Jenkins, one side was Welsh and one side was British, and that came to Edmonton around the 1920s. They were both allowed in at that time because yeah, they would have had that privilege to come through. And that's when we settled on Treaty 6 territory, which is in Edmonton, home to Nêhiyaw, Saulteaux, Niitsitapi, Metis, Dene, and Nakota folks. And then I also want to talk about the French side of my family which came through in the 1600s. And racism was definitely a huge part of them coming, as well. The ancestor that came from France in 1665 was 28-year-old Jean-Pierre Forgues and that was specifically because the French king wanted soldiers to come fight the Iroquois at the time. So, I found that in my French history books. It says "Un régiment de soldats français de la région de Carignan en France, qui avait gagné plusieurs batailles dans une de ses guerres, fut désigné pour venir travailler en Nouvelle-France afin de protéger les colons des Indiens iroquois et de fournir de nouveaux colons. Il fallait trouver un moyen d'amener des femmes blanches à la colonie afin d'éviter que les colons et les soldats aient des enfants avec des femmes amérindiennes, ce qui aurait fait une génération de race mixte". So, what I think is really interesting in that translation is that they say that how my ancestor got a family. Was that they specifically brought over women who were called les Filles du Roi, which were women to make sure they didn't have a – create a mixed race of Indigenous people and white people.

So that even back in the 1600s there was still that migration was happening and it was specifically so that there wasn't that interbreeding and that racism was very much a part of that. And to acknowledge the folks that my French family and where their land is still on, the land of the Huron-Wendat, the Mohawk, which are called the Kanien'kehá:ka and also the St. Lawrence Iroquois. The word Iroquois I think is interesting to get into. As with a lot of First Nations, the term that might be commonly known or commonly used for them is not actually the term that they want to have used.

So, this also happened with the Haudenosaunee. So, I went on the Peace Council.net website and looked up the term Haudenosaunee. [*spells Haudenosaunee*] So, now I'm going to quote what it says on the website.

"Haudenosaunee is the general term we use to refer to ourselves instead of Iroquois. The term "Iroquois" is not a Haudenosaunee word. It is derived from a French version of a Huron Indian name that was applied to our ancestors and it was considered derogatory, meaning 'black snakes.' Haudenosaunee means 'people building an extended house' or more commonly referred to as 'people of the longhouse.'"

Some etymology on those words and where that comes from.

So, now we can go back to our timeline and talk about some more dates with Noelle.

Noelle: Thanks so much for sharing that. So interesting. And it's so neat that you can go back and see your ancestry on this land that long ago, but with the context of yeah, and they might have been kind of awful in the way that they approached people who were already living here. That's – I think that's a really good way to understand your relationship to the land.

So, let's jump to the Second World War when antisemitism was going around the world. Canada was not immune by any means. And actually, in 1939 a ship from Germany came to Canada with 930 Jewish refugees on board. It was turned away and the ship went back to Europe. No one is positive who those 930 people were or what happened to them but it is assumed that many of them died as they returned to Nazi-occupied territory.

Following Pearl Harbor and the attack, the Canadian government really wanted to clamp down on Japanese citizens in Canada. The Royal Canadian Navy actually impounded all of the Japanese shipping – the Japanese owned fishing boats in the Vancouver harbor. Politicians were trying to determine what to do. They closed Japanese schools, Japanese churches, gathering places. This all despite the RCMP Major General stating that they did not constitute the slightest menace to national security.

Even so, 22,000 Japanese-Canadians, so these were folks who were citizens and some of them many who were actually born in Canada, were expelled from 100 miles of the Pacific. So, they were just not allowed to live at a coastline in Canada at all. Many were sent to interior camps in B.C. or to beet farms in Alberta and other prairie provinces. And it wasn't until 1988 that a formal apology was made.

So, after all of that pretty grim history, in 1946, kind of after the Second World War, that's when we kind of started changing the rhetoric and the narrative of immigration policy within Canada. So, we went from this idea of exclusion and keeping people out to a bit more around growing the population of Canada. And this was done through Prime Minister McKenzie King in and around 1946. But even though we wanted to promote this idea of fostering the growth of the population through Canada, it was still made very clear that entering Canada was a privilege not a right, and discrimination still existed on not wanting to change, you know, the values of Canada, people were excluded based on problems of character and so on and so forth.

It wasn't really until the 60s that actions were really taken to take racial bias and discrimination out of immigration policy. So, 1962 to 1967 we saw different regulations go into the immigration policy. And in 1967, the point system that for all intents and purposes, we still currently use, was introduced. So, it was an objective rating system for admission to Canada and it limited the discretionary powers of immigration officers.

So, what that means is it made the entire process more objective, more unbiased, more fair, and limited the individual power of a person who worked in the Department of Immigration to just say, "No" based on their own personal bias. We, at this point, 1967, hadn't yet signed the 1951 Convention on Refugees and Canada actually wouldn't become a signatory until 1969, so well after that Geneva Convention was brought into effect.

In 1978, we essentially formed a new Immigration Act that we still, to a large degree, follow today. And there were three goals of immigration policy. The first was to facilitate reunification. The second was to fulfill legal obligations with respect to refugees and uphold Canada's humanitarian traditions. And the third was to develop a strong economy.

So, there was definitely a shift more towards humanitarian principles. This was in the area of Canada beginning to speak about multiculturalism, pluralism, building this fabric of Canada that was strengthened by diversity. So, we did actually see all of that rhetoric reflected in immigration policy in a way that we had never seen that reflected before. And I think that is about where we've landed today. I think the needle is maybe shifting a bit more to a more restrictive immigration policy, but by no means are we seeing the number of refugees that we accept dropping in any significant way. We still really need immigration to help us develop our economy, to fill jobs, and to pay into things like pensions for our Baby Boomer population.

So, we – I think that's the point where we're at in Canadian history now, where we see and acknowledge and respect the benefits that immigration brings to us today but amidst that, I think, it's really important for us to keep in mind this historical exclusion and when we're talking about systemic racism throughout the podcast, I think these – these things were built into our law. This was Canadian policy. And the after-effects of that, we still feel. And to hear, you know, some of these things that were put in place, we only received apologies from the – from politicians within the past, you know, twenty years. And so, the apologies are good because it reflects that we're owning up to our histories. We're being open and transparent about them, and trying to find ways to have redress for that and to build trust and build a form of reconciliation with the folks who have been disenfranchised at the hands of those policies.

Rose-Eva: Mm-hmm. Yeah. One thing that I didn't mention that maybe would be a good time to talk about now is, yeah, like I talked about my ancestor who came in the 1600s to fight for the French army. That would have 100 percent contributed to the genocide against Indigenous people. And I think it's really interesting the fact that we still don't use the term "genocide" to talk about what happened to Indigenous people.

And yeah, when in this discussion we're specifically talking about other groups who are immigrating, but we still need to remember what is our government doing in terms of reconciliation for people who were already here and the terms that we use?

Jamelie: I think the fact that a lot of this history has been wiped out. I didn't learn about residential schools growing up at all. And the fact that the last one closed in 1996. I was only three years old and growing up as someone who wasn't white, like, racism was still alive and well and that affected me more than I knew it did, but if you don't understand like these policies and if you don't learn about them, I think, as children, when you're an adult you don't realize like the significance of them. So, you don't realize how important reconciliation is.

And a lot of people dismiss reconciliation. Like, they don't see that it's necessary or they don't think that they had any impact on what Indigenous people went through. Because they might not know like their family history. They might not know that women and their family were sent here

to keep men from mixing races. Like that is – if you don't know that, you don't really know the impact that you had in shaping Canada to what it is now, so –

Jamelie: My name is Jamelie Baachalani and this has been our discussion on migration history.

Noelle: And I'm Noelle Jaipaul. Thanks again for letting me talk about nerdy history stuff.

Rose-Eva (hosting): I've been your host, Rose-Eva Forgues-Jenkins.

And that's it for this episode on migration stories in Canada. I really appreciate the opportunity for me to share my story on this podcast. As the host of this podcast, I wanted to place my history in the same context as others. I want folks to understand where I'm coming from and not see me as someone who speaks from a place of authority without having to share their own story.

I have a lot of privilege due to my migration story and family history, so I wanted to be upfront about that. I want to be just as vulnerable with my own story as the youth have been with theirs. So thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share. I want to thank my guests for this episode, Noelle Jaipul and Jamelie Baachalani. Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge and your stories.

We would also like to give a big thank you to Chivengi for providing the music featured on the podcast. Definitely make sure to check out their work on Sound Cloud.

We would also like to thank our friends and partners at CJSR 88.5 FM and the Edmonton Community Foundation. This project has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada. Ce Project a été rendu possible en partie grâce au gouvernement du Canada. And don't forget to check us out on social media. Let us know your thoughts by commenting on our Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our username is Unheard Youth Podcast.

This episode was produced by me, Rose-Eva Forgues-Jenkins. We produced this show at the Centre for Race and Culture in Edmonton, Alberta, Amiskwaskihikan. The Centre for Race and Culture acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 Territory, traditional homelands for many Indigenous peoples including the Nêhiyaw, Saulteaux, Niitsitapi, Metis, Dene, and Nakota. We pay our respects to the ancestors past and present who call this land home.