



Looking east on King St. E., 1846. Image: John A. Sanders and Toronto Public Library.

HERITAGE TORONTO

TRACING TORONTO'S FOOTSTEPS

Explore sites of Toronto's diverse history on this self-guided tour

Discover sites of Indigenous heritage, Toronto's role in Confederation, and stories of newcomer communities that shaped our city. From Chief Wabakinine to Jean Lumb to George Brown, uncover Toronto's people, places, and communities.

Start Point: Northeast corner Front St. E. and Jarvis St.

End Point: Allan Gardens, 160 Gerrard St. E.

Distance: 4.8km

STOP 1: Indigenous-Settler Relations in Early Canada

Heritage Toronto Plaque, Northeast corner of Front St. E. and Jarvis St.

E. Chief Wabakinine (d. 1796) was Head Chief of the Mississaugas of Western Lake Ontario, whose traditional territory includes Toronto. Under his leadership, the Mississaugas had a prosperous friendship with the British. However, in 1796, Chief Wabakinine's sister was assaulted by British soldier Charles McCuen. On this site, Chief Wabakinine and his wife were killed trying to defend her. Their deaths broke the Mississaugas' trust in the British, setting the tone for the difficult relationship that followed between the colonial government and the Indigenous peoples of the area.

STOP 2: Abolition and Confederation

George Brown College, St. James Campus, 200 King St. E.

Built in 1874 as a biscuit factory, this building is part of George Brown College, named for a key figure in Toronto's history. A strong advocate for public education, George Brown (1818-1880) was a Father of Confederation as well as the founder and editor of the *Toronto Globe* newspaper (whose offices were nearby at 30 King St.). In 1851, Brown co-founded the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, promoting the global abolition of slavery.

STOP 3: A Place for Change

St. Lawrence Hall, 157 King St. E.

Built in 1850, St. Lawrence Hall has been a site for political action and change in Canada. In 1851, the North American Convention of Coloured Freemen held a convention at this site to discuss abolitionism, particularly how to help enslaved Black people escape into Ontario. Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) and Mary Ann Shadd (1823-1893) attended, bolstering the Underground Railroad and the movement to aid freedom-seekers in the U.S. In 1859, the Hall hosted speeches on Canada's Confederation, forging Canada's future within its walls.

STOP 4: Activism and the Arts

Courthouse Square, 10 Court St.

Between 1826 and 1838, numerous religious and political gatherings were held in this square, located behind the former Adelaide Courthouse. Supporters of Toronto's first Mayor, William Lyon Mackenzie (1795-1861), rallied here during the 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion. The Quaker sect "Children of Peace" held assemblies at this site to advocate for responsible local government. Members of the Group of Seven could be found nearby in the early 20th century, when the Courthouse building was home to the Arts and Letters Club.



STOP 5: Black Leaders in Early Canada

Osgoode Hall, 130 Queen St. W.

Black Americans escaping enslavement established a community in this area around 1845. Once known as Macaulaytown, this area was also near the City ward of William Peyton Hubbard (1842-1935), the first elected Black politician in Toronto. Lincoln Alexander (1922-2012), the first Black Member of Parliament in the House of Commons attended Osgoode Hall Law School near this site in the 1950s.

STOP 6: Newcomer Communities in the Ward

Downtown Diversity Garden, 89 Elizabeth St.

This site was once the centre of the Ward neighbourhood, a hub of newcomer communities in Toronto. A densely packed and low-income area from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, many social services opened to support the local community. In 1890, Ida Siegel (1885-1982) formed the first free Jewish medical dispensary in Toronto – the forerunner to Mount Sinai Hospital. Siegel helped found the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, one of many social supports for newcomer communities.

STOP 7: A Community Advocate

126 Elizabeth St.

Jean Lumb's Kwong Chow Restaurant was once a stalwart of this neighbourhood, often known as Toronto's first Chinatown. Lumb (1919-2002) was a Chinese-Canadian woman who worked to prevent the demolition of Chinese

businesses along Dundas Street in the 1960s. Her work had national effects: preserving Chinese communities from Vancouver to Calgary. Lumb was instrumental in dismantling the discriminatory Chinese Exclusion Act (1923). She successfully lobbied the government to repeal race-based immigration restrictions, which were removed from Canadian law in 1967.

STOP 8: A Lasting Legacy: Canada's Residential Schools

50 Gould St.

The current namesake of this university, Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882), played a significant role in Canada's education system. His legacy also includes the development of the residential school system, through which many Indigenous children were taken from their parents and forcibly assimilated into European settler culture. Under this system, which lasted for over one hundred years, many Indigenous students suffered abuse, causing intergenerational trauma and an unknown number of deaths. The recent discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves at residential school sites has further exposed the horrors of this system and the pain inflicted on Indigenous communities across Canada. The ongoing effects of residential schools are a grim product of Canada's creation, highlighting the crucial importance of reconciliation today.

At this stop, we ask you to pause for a moment of silence and reflect on what actions you will take to advance truth, reconciliation, and justice.

STOP 9: For Love of the Game

Arena Gardens, 78 Mutual St.

From 1912 to 1989, this was the location of Arena Gardens, seating 7,500 and billed as the largest arena in Canada. Home to the hockey team that would become the Toronto Maple Leafs, Arena Gardens also hosted political, religious, and social gatherings. Norman Albert (d. 1974) gave the first radio broadcast of an NHL hockey game here in February 1923. In 1962 the arena was renovated to include curling rinks and served the local community until its demolition in 1989.

STOP 10: Indigenous Resilience in Canada

Allan Gardens, 160 Gerrard St. E.

Examples of Indigenous resilience are everywhere in the city. Allan Gardens has been a frequent site for events and art installations commemorating Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. To the east is Doctor O Lane, which commemorates the Mohawk physician, soldier and statesman Dr. Oronhyatekha (1841-1907). A champion for the rights of women, children, and underprivileged communities, Doctor O lived nearby at 209 Carlton St. The perseverance of Indigenous peoples in fighting colonial legacies is a testament to their past and present stewardship of their land and cultures.