Diverse African Canadian Families
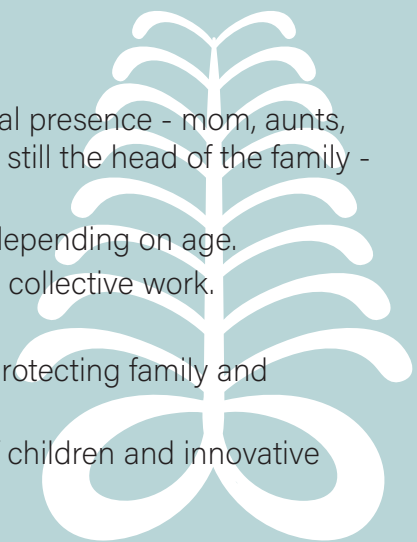
Values and Traditions

- Religious and spiritual centre is the core of most Black families. But a number of others are non-religious or loosely faith-based.
- High value placed on respect for Elders.
- Reverence for community Ancestors and beloved family members who have passed on. Revelations in dreams, visions and healers' pronouncements are often taken very seriously.
- High value placed on education as a pathway out of poverty and deprivation.
- Consistent reinforcement of need to be extra prepared, vigilant and accomplished because of the realities of anti-Black racism and related barriers in school, employment, criminal justice, etc.
- Family meals are a central feature of family connectedness, resolving disputes, celebrations, etc.
- Respect for professionals and accomplished individuals (e.g. teachers, lawyers, doctors, businesspeople, politicians, etc.).
- Generally deferential to authority.
- Strong value placed on the importance of family.
- Strong sense of pride in deportment, cleanliness, appearance and pro-Black assertion and confidence.
- Resourcefulness and resilience.
- Honoring/defending family name and legacy is important.
- Early sibling family responsibility.
- Shared sense of community (collective responsibility, shared labour, common protection and support and child discipline where appropriate).

Relationships and Roles

- Parents and adult hierarchy - fathers and father figures. Strong matriarchal presence - mom, aunts, grandmothers. Strong extended family structure and familial bonds. Men still the head of the family - fluid and contextual.
- Siblings often play important care-giving roles to other family members depending on age.
- Strong sense of communal values, expectations, support, child discipline, collective work. Community members have implicit permission to parent and protect.
- Pastor or Imam, religious leaders, have influential role in promoting and protecting family and community values.
- Matriarchal roles include mediator, family counselling, healer, protector of children and innovative breadwinner.
- Elders stay within family circle. Old age homes are a last resort.

Cultural Practices, Taboos and Customs

Cultural Practices

- Importance of Kin, Kith and community.
- Importance of Faith.
- Importance of good manners and mannerisms.
- Emphasis on cleanliness and physical care, awareness of projecting out positive images of family
- Cultural socialization.
- Racial socialization - early childhood preparation for a racist world, racial pride and confidence, equipping for success.
- Notions of respect and honour very strong.
- Clear gender roles. Hypermascunility still generally a sign of strength.

Taboos

- Don't talk to/are suspicious of government/"high society" authority.
- Mental illness still has a strong spiritual connection in many parts of the community and generally remains a source of shame and embarrassment.
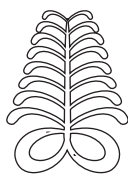- Heteronormativity and homophobia still a significant reality.

Customs

- Hierarchy of birth order important.
- Deep faith related customs (prayers at every turn-on awaking, before meals, before bed, atc.).
- Important family celebrations respected anniversary of deaths, commemoration of noteworthy community achievments as well as Independence pride celebrations.
- Oral tradition-storytelling, family history and genealogy, spoken word recitations.

Hye Wonhye
"what which cannot be burnt"
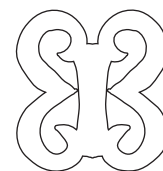the symbol for imperishability
and endurance

Aya
"Determination and durability"

Gye Nyame
"Nothing before God"

Nkonsonsonson
"chain link": the symbol for unity
and human relations