

Trailblazers The Media Kit

The Book

Trailblazers: The Black Pioneers Who Have Shaped Canada is a children's book that introduces readers to Canada's Black history through the under-told stories of over forty incredible Black change makers.

Some of these trailblazers, such as Josiah Henson, have saved lives through their bravery. Some, such as Viola Desmond have improved laws through their advocacy. Others, such as Albert Jackson have broken down barriers by being the first in their fields. With each short story written in poetic form and accompanied by beautiful illustrations, this tribute brings complex topics and historical facts to life.

The Why

Our history is more than what we have been taught. Canada has a rich Black history filled with interesting stories of resilience, advocacy and innovation. We believe that all children should learn about Canada's Black history. We believe that all children deserve to see themselves in the books that they are reading. We believe that Canada's Black stories deserve to be told.

The Journey

After several years of intentionally learning and unlearning about Canada's history, Tiyahna began writing Trailblazers in 2017. By 2019, she had connected with illustrator, Merryl-Royce, and submitted the completed manuscript to eight different Canadian book publishers. Unfortunately, only one publisher expressed interest. The others never responded.

Tiyahna began working with the interested publisher but quickly found the process to be disempowering. She was asked to make so many changes that the book became unrecognizable. Finally, when Tiyahna was asked to sign a contract stating that she would not be consulted in the final iteration of the book, she made the difficult decision to explore other options.

Following the tragic death of George Floyd and the ensuing conversations about anti-Black racism, more publishers began reaching out to Tiyahna, however nothing felt right.

In August 2020, alongside Merryl-Royce, the illustrator of Trailblazers, Tiyahna launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise the \$10,000 minimum funding they needed to self-publish their book. The pair were shocked when they met their \$10,000 goal in just 10 hours. By the end of their 40-day campaign, Trailblazers had raised nearly \$50,000 with the support of over 700 supporters.

Two weeks before the books were scheduled to go to print, Tiyahna and Merryl-Royce were approached by Indigo Press - the retailer's Canadian publishing arm. Unlike the other offers that they had received, Indigo Press promised the creators a fair deal and creative control - an offer that few new authors, especially authors of colour, are afforded. Thanks to the power of community support, Tiyahna and Merryl-Royce were able to reclaim power in an industry where publishers have historically acted as gate keepers to which stories get to be told, how and by whom.

Trailblazers was published by Indigo Press on November 10th and is now an Indigo children's book bestseller. [The book can be purchased here.](#)

TRAILBLAZERS
THE BLACK PIONEERS WHO HAVE SHAPED CANADA

WRITTEN BY TIYAHNA RIDLEY-PADMORE
ILLUSTRATED BY MERRYL ROYCE NDEMA-MOUSSA



The Creators

Tiyahna Ridley-Padmore, Author

Born in Montreal and currently living in Toronto, Tiyahna is a lifelong bookworm and the author of Trailblazers. As an Equity and Inclusion Strategist, Tiyahna believes in the transformative power of inclusive representation and intersectional story-telling.

Merryl-Royce Ndema-Moussa, Illustrator

Merryl-Royce is a passionate, self-taught artist living in Ottawa and the illustrator of Trailblazers. As a new father, Merryl-Royce hopes to leverage his artistic skill set to foster a more equitable world for the next generation.



The Assets

High resolution images of the assets included in this document and more can be [accessed here](#).

