

Tracing Tamil Canadian Histories

Asians Against Racism and Hate



Chinese Canadian National Council
Toronto Chapter

Ontario 

Tamil Migrants Pre-1983:

Earliest known arrivals of Tamils to Canada point to the 1940s and 1950s. These Tamil migrants were most likely educated and wealthy.



- Several of these individuals were reportedly Tamils with student visas looking for better jobs and education.



- However, it is believed that there were very few Tamils who migrated to Canada at this time.



Post-1983 Tamil migration

- Black July was an anti-Tamil pogrom that occurred in Sri Lanka during July 1983.

- This marked a time when Tamil refugees began fleeing Sri Lanka in large numbers.

Black July was an Anti-Tamil pogrom in Sri Lanka. During this time, Sinhalese mobs, armed with voter registration lists, took at least 3,000 Tamils lives, destroyed 5,000 shops, and displaced over 150,000 Tamils. It prompted the first large exodus of Tamils: 500,000 fled the island, giving seed to a global Tamil diaspora.¹

- Several Tamils settled in Canada because it's immigration policy was sympathetic, allowing Tamil refugees to bypass stages of the hearing process.
- Between 1989 -88, Eelam Tamil refugees seeking asylum had an average acceptance rate to Canada of 85%.²



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1. People for Equality and Relief in Lanka, *Black July: A Tamil Genocide*
2. Yogarajah, M. 2020. *When memory outlives*

The Early 1990s



A third wave of Tamil migrants arrived in Canada, thanks to family reunification programs for refugees.

Many of these Tamil immigrants arrived in Canada, choosing to settle in large cities like Toronto and Montreal.

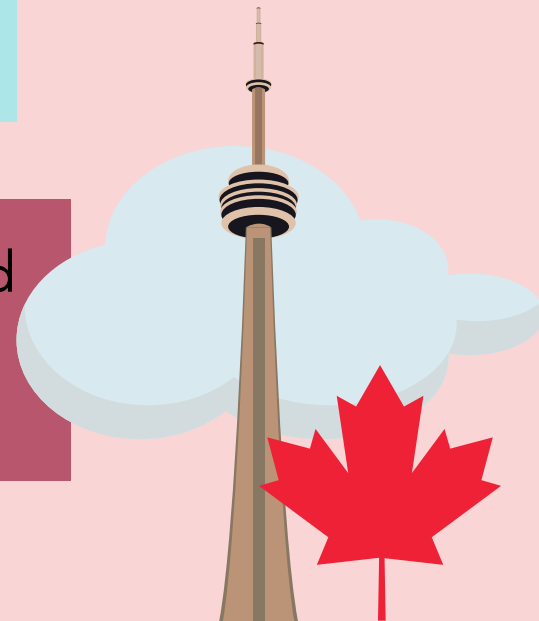


In the 1990s, Tamils were the largest growing visible minority group in Canada. ³

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3. Yogarajah, M. 2020. *When memory outlives*

Gang Violence and Police Surveillance

Several young Tamil men were killed as a result of gang violence.



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“For some young Tamil men, the gangs served as a family at a time when Tamil families were fragmented across oceans and within the same homes because of intergenerational trauma.” ⁴

Toronto police responded to the increase in gang violence by creating the “Tamil Task Force.” However, **this did little to tackle the root social cause of gang violence and instead heightened the stigma around the Tamil community.**



Canadian Tamil Youth Development (CanTYD) was created in 1997 to prevent gang violence and provide Tamil youth with social support and role models.

2009 Gardiner Protests



Several thousand Tamils protested on the Gardiner Expressway, demanding the Canadian Government intervene in the Tamil Genocide.

This was a crucial moment in unifying and solidifying the Canadian Tamil political identity.

In 2009 and 2010, the Ocean Lady and MV Sun Sea arrived in B.C. with 568 Tamil refugees fleeing the genocidal Sri Lankan Government.

Check out a few Ontario-based community organizations engaging Tamil communities on Instagram:

- **Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre**

[@cantyd](#) The primary objective of CanTYD is to improve the lives of Tamil youth by

working with educational institutions, parents, and young professionals to promote student achievements, reduce dropout rates, reduce youth violence, and prepare for global competitiveness.

- **Tamils in Public Service** [@tamilsinps](#) TiPS is a non-partisan network with a dual mandate: actively supporting the growth of the Canadian Tamil public service professionals and building bridges between the government and the Canadian Tamil community by increasing civic engagement.

- **Tamil Rights Group** [@tamilrightsgroup](#) TRG seeks to further strengthen advocacy efforts for transitional justice and universal jurisdiction for Eelam Tamils through leveraging international law, expanding global diplomacy, and defending their civil liberties within Sri Lanka.

- **Canadian Tamil Youth Alliance (CTYA)**

[@cantamilyouth](#)

CTYA is a federally registered non-profit organization which strives to empower Tamil youth to become outstanding leaders and contributing citizens of our community.

Stay in touch with Tamil Civic Action!

The Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action, a non-profit organization working towards the success of all Tamil Canadians in various spheres of Canada through education, engagement, training, research, and collaboration.

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