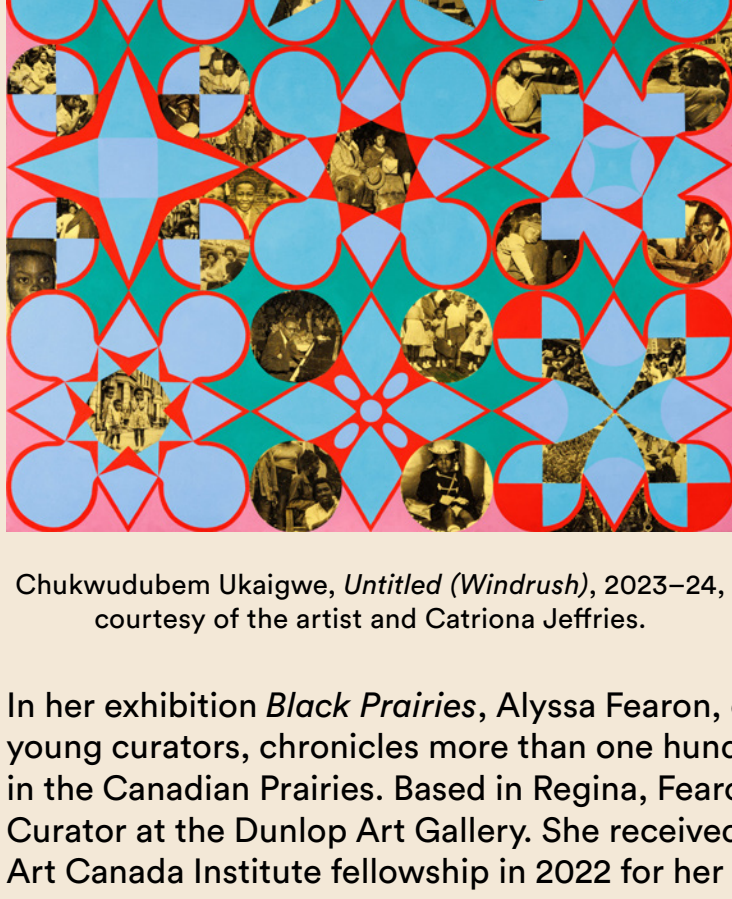


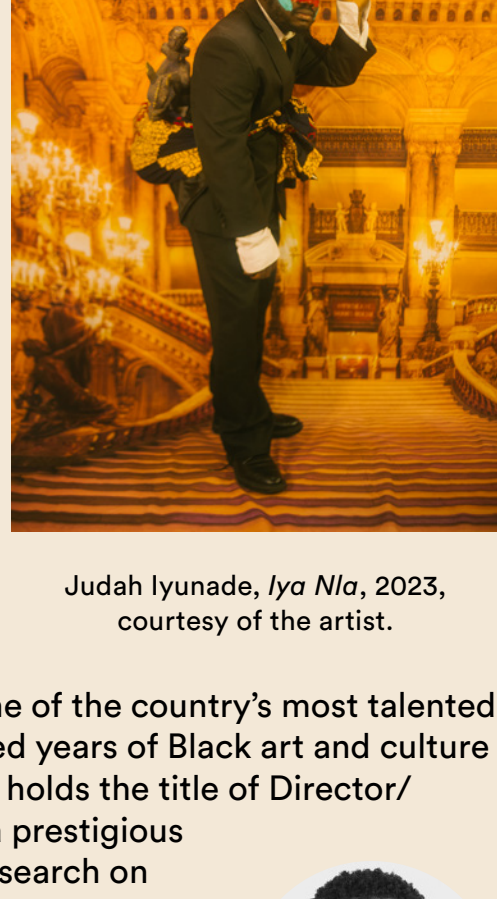
FEBRUARY 7, 2025

BLACK PRAIRIES ART AND ARTISTS THE LANDMARK EXHIBITION NOW ON IN REGINA

*A tour through curator Alyssa Fearon's groundbreaking show
Black Prairies at the Dunlop Art Gallery.*



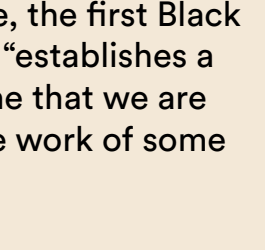
Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, *Untitled (Windrush)*, 2023–24, courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries.



Judah Iyunade, *Iya Nla*, 2023, courtesy of the artist.

In her exhibition *Black Prairies*, Alyssa Fearon, one of the country's most talented young curators, chronicles more than one hundred years of Black art and culture in the Canadian Prairies. Based in Regina, Fearon holds the title of Director/Curator at the Dunlop Art Gallery. She received a prestigious Art Canada Institute fellowship in 2022 for her research on Massachusetts-born Black photographer William "Billy" Beal (1874–1968), who documented homesteading life after moving to rural Manitoba in 1906.

Fearon's scholarship on Beal became central to her celebrated travelling exhibition *Black Prairies*, which opened at the Dunlop Art Gallery at the end of January, following its installation at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba in Brandon last September. Foregrounding photography and media art, the exhibition puts historical artists like Beal in dialogue with contemporary artists, including filmmaker Cheryl Foggo (b.1956), who investigates the history of the Shiloh People, the first Black community in Saskatchewan. As Fearon explains, the exhibition "establishes a continuum of African-Canadian presence in the Prairies." It is one that we are proud to spotlight in this week's newsletter, which highlights the work of some of the artists in Fearon's important exhibition.



Alyssa Fearon,
Director/Curator,
Dunlop Art
Gallery, Regina

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

WILLIAM "BILLY" BEAL

1874–1968



William S.A. Beal, self-portrait, c.1918, courtesy of Alyssa Fearon.



William S.A. Beal, *Portrait of Lillian Elizabeth Henderson*, n.d., courtesy of Alyssa Fearon.

William "Billy" Beal (1874–1968) (above left) and his photographs, including *Portrait of Lillian Elizabeth Henderson*, n.d. (above right), were the genesis of Fearon's exhibition and her research on Black cultural production in the Prairies. At the turn of the twentieth century, when Beal arrived in the Swan River Valley of western Manitoba, the Canadian government was settling the Prairies. Forty photographic plates of Beal's have survived, including this self-portrait from about 1918. It offers us a unique glimpse into the artist's experimentation with photographic techniques, including the halo around his head. Meanwhile, Beal's intimate undated portrait of Henderson, posed within massive ferns and dense underbrush, stands out for its evocative composition.

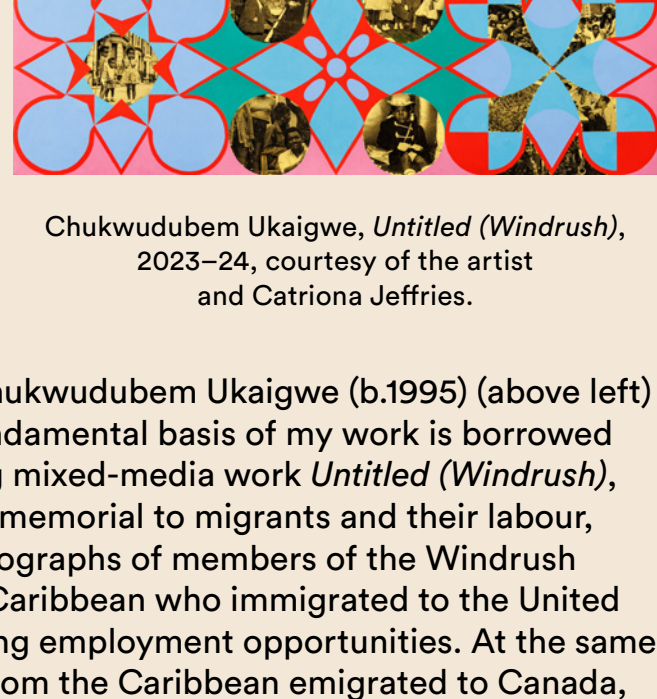
Learn more about [William "Billy" Beal](#)

CHUKWUDUBEM UKAIGWE

b.1995



Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, n.d., photographer unknown.



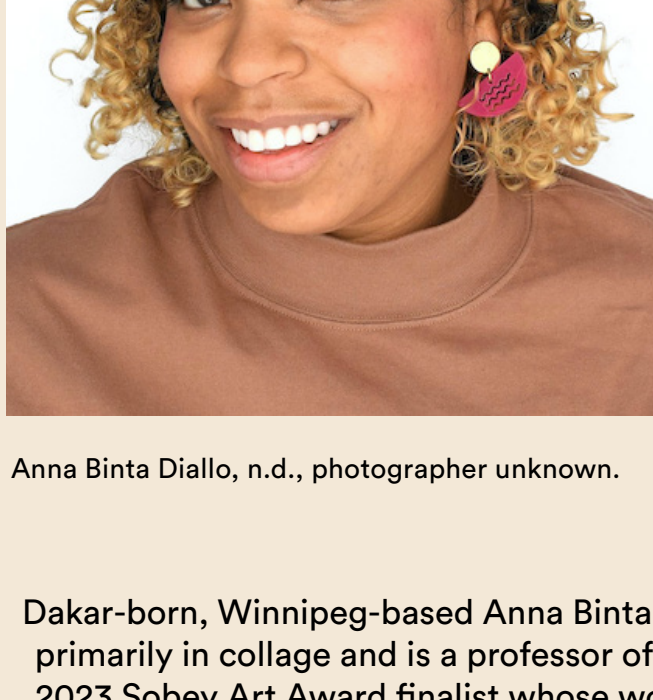
Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, *Untitled (Windrush)*, 2023–24, courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries.

Lagos-born, Winnipeg-based artist Chukwudubem Ukaigwe (b.1995) (above left) once told *Toned* magazine, "The fundamental basis of my work is borrowed from jazz music." In his eye-popping mixed-media work *Untitled (Windrush)*, 2023–24 (above right), a quilt-like memorial to migrants and their labour, Ukaigwe incorporates stock photographs of members of the Windrush Generation; Black people from the Caribbean who immigrated to the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 1960s seeking employment opportunities. At the same time, approximately 3,000 women from the Caribbean emigrated to Canada, where they faced racism and hardship, as part of the West Indian Domestic Scheme. In Ukaigwe's work, faces appear woven into a painted, abstract geometric pattern, evoking the generation's indispensable role in society.

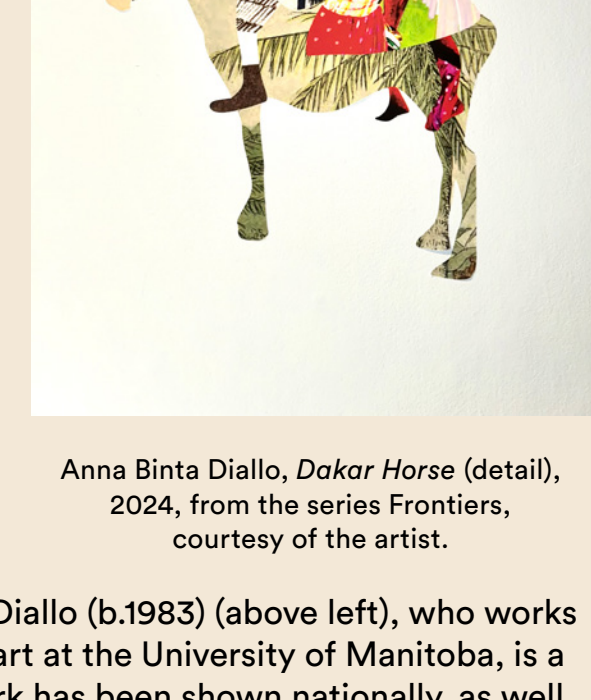
Learn more about [Chukwudubem Ukaigwe](#)

ANNA BINTA DIALLO

b.1983



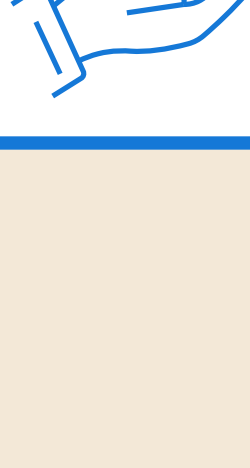
Anna Binta Diallo, n.d., photographer unknown.



Anna Binta Diallo, *Dakar Horse* (detail), 2024, from the series Frontiers, courtesy of the artist.

Dakar-born, Winnipeg-based Anna Binta Diallo (b.1983) (above left), who works primarily in collage and is a professor of art at the University of Manitoba, is a 2023 Sobey Art Award finalist whose work has been shown nationally, as well as internationally in Finland, Taiwan, and Germany. With *Dakar Horse*, 2024, from the *Frontiers* series (above right), Diallo explores some of the key themes of *Black Prairies* on a grand scale, namely individual and collective experiences of migration and diaspora. *Frontiers* is inspired by Diallo's father, who claimed in the 1990s to be the first Senegalese man in Winnipeg. Diallo expertly combines textiles, with patterns such as tartan and zebra print, with imagery from the Old West—genre comic books that would have shaped her father's image of the Prairies and North America from Senegal.

Learn more about [Anna Binta Diallo](#)



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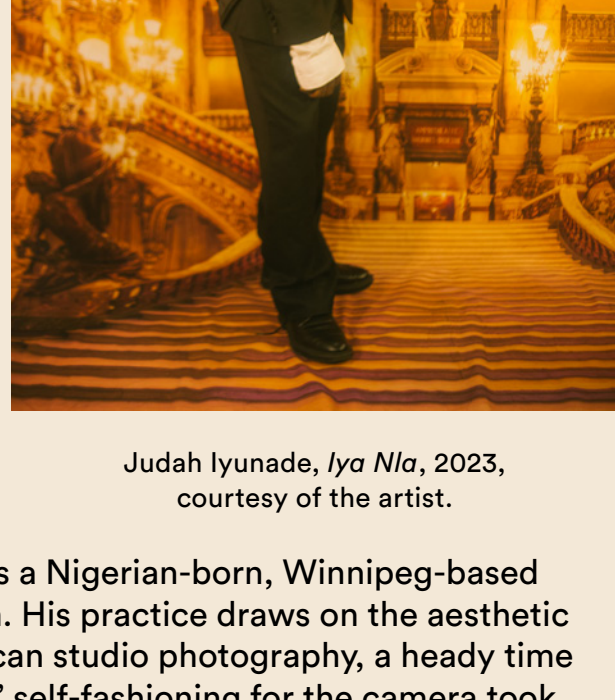
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JUDAH IYUNADE

b.1988



Judah Iyunade, n.d., photographer unknown.



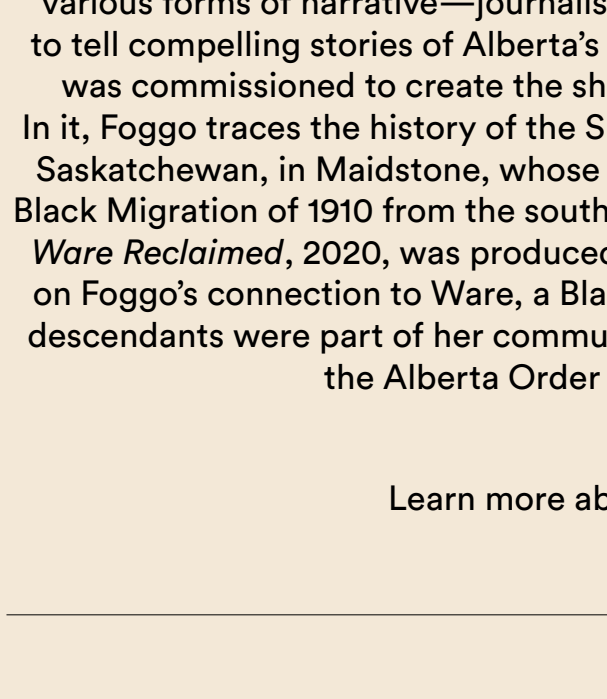
Judah Iyunade, *Iya Nla*, 2023, courtesy of the artist.

Judah Iyunade (b.1988) (above left) is a Nigerian-born, Winnipeg-based artist working in photography and film. His practice draws on the aesthetic tradition of 1960s and 1970s West African studio photography, a heady time for photo portraiture when the sitters' self-fashioning for the camera took place against the backdrop of anti-colonial independence struggles unfolding across the continent. As Iyunade explains, he looks to this legacy to "explore history, sexuality, identity, and love as a way of centering the African diasporic experience," with a particular attention to intimacy and vulnerability. Iyunade is fascinated by how photographic portraits circulate among friends, family, and loved ones—a part of everyday life.

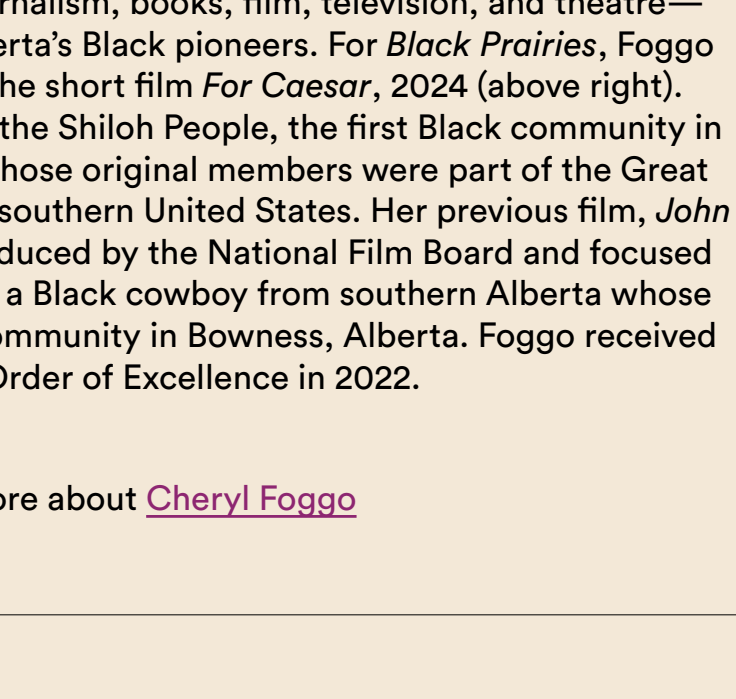
Learn more about [Judah Iyunade](#)

CHERYL FOGGO

b.1956



Cheryl Foggo, n.d., photographer unknown.

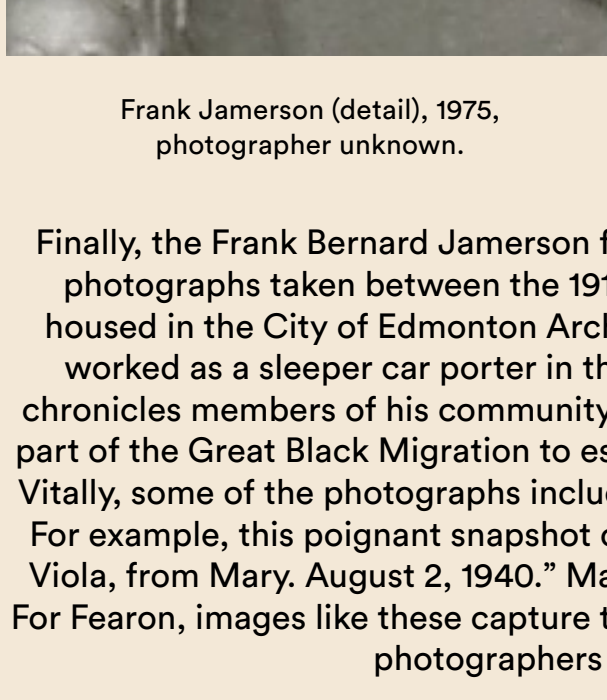


Cheryl Foggo, *For Caesar* (video still), 2024, courtesy of Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina.

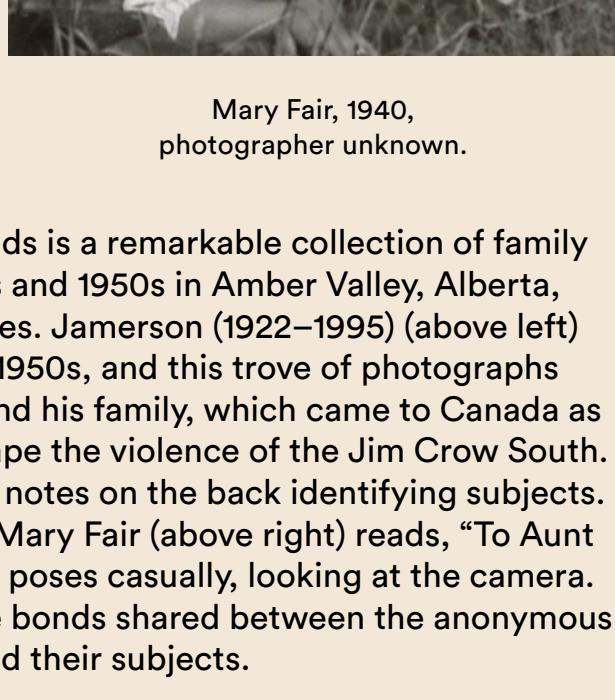
Cheryl Foggo (b.1956) (above left), an award-winning Canadian storyteller, uses various forms of narrative—journalism, books, film, television, and theatre—to tell compelling stories of Alberta's Black pioneers. For *Black Prairies*, Foggo was commissioned to create the short film *For Caesar*, 2024 (above right). In it, Foggo traces the history of the Shiloh People, the first Black community in Saskatchewan, in Maidstone, whose original members were part of the Great Black Migration of 1910 from the southern United States. Her previous film, *John Ware Reclaimed*, 2020, was produced by the National Film Board and focused on Foggo's connection to Ware, a Black cowboy from southern Alberta whose descendants were part of her community in Bowness, Alberta. Foggo received the Alberta Order of Excellence in 2022.

Learn more about [Cheryl Foggo](#)

THE FRANK BERNARD JAMERSON FONDS



Frank Jamerson (detail), 1975, photographer unknown.



Mary Fair, 1940, photographer unknown.

Finally, the Frank Bernard Jamerson fonds is a remarkable collection of family photographs taken between the 1910s and 1950s in Amber Valley, Alberta, housed in the City of Edmonton Archives. Jamerson (1922–1995) (above left) worked as a sleeper car porter in the 1950s, and this trove of photographs chronicles members of his community and his family, which came to Canada as part of the Great Black Migration to escape the violence of the Jim Crow South. Vivaly, some of the photographs include notes on the back identifying subjects. For example, this poignant snapshot of Mary Fair (above right) reads, "To Aunt Viola, from Mary. August 2, 1940." Mary poses casually, looking at the camera. For Fearon, images like these capture the bonds shared between the anonymous photographers and their subjects.

Learn more about the [Frank Bernard Jamerson fonds](#)

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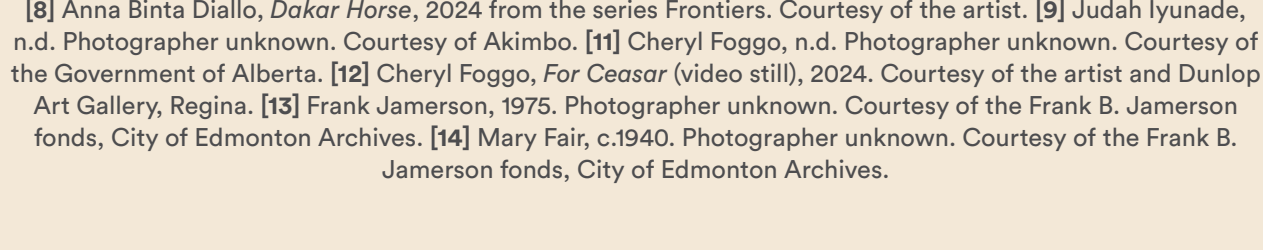


Image Credits: [1, 6] Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, *Untitled (Windrush)*, 2023–24, oil paint and gel image transfer on canvas, 122 x 122 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries. [2, 10] Judah Iyunade, *Iya Nla*, 2023, photographic print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist. [3] William S.A. Beal, self-portrait, c.1918. Courtesy of Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina. [4] William S.A. Beal, *Portrait of Lillian Elizabeth Henderson*, n.d. Courtesy of Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina. [5] Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, n.d. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the artist. [6] Anna Binta Diallo, *Dakar Horse*, 2024 from the series Frontiers. Courtesy of the artist. [9] Judah Iyunade, n.d. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Akimbo. [11] Cheryl Foggo, n.d. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Government of Alberta. [12] Cheryl Foggo, *For Caesar* (video still), 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina. [13] Frank Jamerson, 1975. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Frank B. Jamerson fonds, City of Edmonton Archives. [14] Mary Fair, c.1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Frank B. Jamerson fonds, City of Edmonton Archives.