

Mathieu Da Costa

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Image illustrated by Veronica Rojas Marquez, Fashion Arts advanced diploma student. Instagram: @veronicarojasm.

The first recorded Black person to arrive in Canada, Mathieu Da Costa, arrived from Africa in 1608 as an interpreter of the Mi'kmaq language to the governor of Acadia. He was a free man and served as an interpreter for the Dutch and French (Lambert & Millette, 2013). Little is known with 100 per cent accuracy, however, what is known is that in 1609 Mr. Da Costa accompanied Samuel de Champlain on one or more of his voyages to Acadia and the St. Lawrence region. While his time in North America is not clearly documented, the final piece of information that is known about Mr. Da Costa was that he was imprisoned for acts of insolence in late 1609. After that there are no further traces of him or how he spent his remaining years. (Lambert & Millette, 2013). While Mr. Da Costa may not be well known to many, his spot in the history Canada is more than relevant even today. As the first free Black man who ended up being incarcerated for illegitimate reasons, foreshadows the ongoing struggle of the Black community to this day.

Reference:

Lambert, M. & Millette, D. (2013). Mathieu Da Costa. In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/mathieu-da-costa>

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