



King's and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia Announce New Collaboration

For immediate release

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A new partnership between the University of King's College and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia ([BCCNS](#)) will ensure [King's](#) ongoing work on equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion will now benefit from a more robust, and regular engagement with the African Nova Scotian community. Through the BCCNS, an advisory committee will be formed to make recommendations to the university on the measures it can take to ensure that King's provides a welcoming and supportive educational home to African Nova Scotian and Black students, faculty and staff. The committee's work will generate research anticipated to add to the expertise and knowledge that have made BCCNS an invaluable voice in Canada's social, cultural and historical conversation.

This new partnership is an extension on the work King's and Dalhousie University have been doing with the BCCNS to organize and host the Universities Studying Slavery (USS) Conference, taking place in Halifax from October 18-21. King's and Dalhousie were the first two Canadian universities to join the USS, which consists of roughly 60 universities, mostly based in the United States. Like other members of the USS, both have conducted inquiries into their historical associations with the enslavement of Black people. Dalhousie released the [Report on Lord Dalhousie's History on Slavery and Race](#) in 2019, while King's released the papers written for [King's & Slavery: A Scholarly Inquiry](#) in early 2020.

A significant difference between the King's and Dalhousie inquiries is that King's inquiry focused solely on historical research. In contrast, the Lord Dalhousie Panel had the mandate not only to consider the history of Lord Dalhousie's actions and views on slavery and race but also the mandate to "recommend actions that Dalhousie could take to respond to this legacy, in order to build a stronger, more inclusive university that fully reflects our history, our values and our aspirations." Acting on the recommendations it received, Dalhousie has taken an extensive range of actions, including providing substantial funding for Black students and creating a new Black Studies Program, which will be available to King's as well as Dalhousie students.

King's is taking steps to identify and reduce the barriers causing African Nova Scotian and Black students' underrepresentation within the university. It re-established the historic Prince Scholarships for African Nova Scotian students and recently renamed these the Gordon Earle Scholarships, after the celebrated

African Nova Scotian and King's alum. In 2020, the university created the Sylvia D. Hamilton Awards for African Nova Scotian and Black students and this year entered into a new partnership with the PREP Academy, an organization that prepares African Nova Scotian students for success in school and higher education. King's has also increased the representation of the Black community on its board, staff and faculty, most recently with the appointment of African Nova Scotian Jasmine Parent as Equity Officer.

"We need to ground our ongoing work in a stronger relationship with the African Nova Scotian community", said King's President William Lahey. "Through our work together in planning the USS conference, we have formed a great partnership with Russell Grosse and the team at the Black Cultural Centre, where King's students Seleste David and Kamara Izzard recently worked as summer students. We are thrilled that Russell shares our enthusiasm for extending our growing partnership into the creation of an advisory body for King's, on the contributions King's can make to creating educational opportunity for African Nova Scotian and Black students".

Lahey said the research from King's & Slavery: A Scholarly Inquiry marks the point of departure for the advisory committee's work. The Inquiry's findings will be presented to an international audience at the USS conference. They include the determination that the university received substantial funding across its early decades from the wealth created by enslaved Black people and that King's, with some exceptions, represented and reflected the white supremacy on which the system of slavery depended. The advisory committee's work will also be informed by what is learned at the upcoming USS conference—particularly with respect to the work other universities are engaged in to address the legacies of the benefits historically received from Black enslavement.

"King's deserves credit for the leadership role it played in bringing the annual conference of the USS to Halifax, as one of the first steps it took in response to the findings of its inquiry," said Russell Grosse, Executive Director of BCCNS. "It is a significant opportunity for the Black Cultural Centre and the African Nova Scotian community to work with King's. In fact, this is the first time BCCNS has partnered with someone in the higher education sector.

"Together we'll explore how we can apply what we learn from this conference and turn it into actions to make King's a more welcoming and supportive university for African Nova Scotian and Black students, faculty and staff, and a greater contributor to initiatives under way in our communities. I have every confidence this process will open the door to future opportunities to elevate and shine a light on Black history stories."

One dimension of the work will be to consider how King's can create educational opportunities for Black students from the Caribbean and the Caribbean community in Nova Scotia and Canada. Douglas Ruck, KC, Chair of King's Board of Governors, said this was important given that much of the wealth created by enslaved Black people that made its way to King's was generated in the Caribbean. "My own family has its origins in the Caribbean," said Ruck, who graduated from King's in 1972. "We have to respond to our history in a way that reflects how embedded Nova Scotia was in the global system of slavery that existed in King's early decades."

King's and BCCNS expect to establish the advisory committee within the next few months, with a view to completing its work over an estimated period of 18 months. Both Grosse and Lahey agreed that while speed was important, it was equally important to give the process the time it would need for a

thoughtful analysis and set of recommendations. “This is about action”, said Grosse, “but is fundamentally about relationship building and that takes time.”

About the University of King’s College

Established in 1789, King's College is Canada's oldest chartered university and is associated with Dalhousie University. A small and extraordinarily lively academic community located in Halifax (Kjipuktuk), Nova Scotia, King's is known nationally and internationally for its highly acclaimed interdisciplinary programs in the humanities, including its renowned Foundation Year Program, its professional programs in journalism and its fine arts programs in creative writing.

About The Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia

The Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, established in 1983 as a provincial museum and community gathering place with a mandate to Protect, Preserve and Promote the rich history of one of Canada’s founding cultures. People of African descent have called Nova Scotia home since the 1600s and have made a significant impact as the birthplace of Black Culture and Heritage in Canada. The Centre features exhibits and artifact collection that shares this little known history, through programs, displays and outreach, both provincially and nationally.

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