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Scholarly inquiry to examine King's possible colonial links to slavery

Recognized experts from Canada and the U.S. to study possible direct and indirect connections

Halifax, N.S | Professor William Lahey, President of the University of King's College, today announced the establishment of a scholarly inquiry to examine the possible connections, direct and indirect, of the university with slavery in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The comprehensive project will comprise original, independent research by leading Canadian and U.S. scholars and is expected to be completed in early 2019.

"Here at King's we care deeply and seriously about our history," says Lahey. "Given that our university was established in 1789 and slavery existed in Nova Scotia until 1834, we want to understand our early story fully and in all its complexity."

"King's cannot hope to be viewed as a welcoming community to people of African descent unless it openly and forthrightly addresses the questions that can legitimately be asked about its history on race, including its history relative to slavery in Nova Scotia," says Mr. Douglas Ruck, QC, King's alumnus and member of the panel that will review the independent research.

"By looking at this difficult issue through a scholarly lens, we hope our research will not only contribute to a growing body of knowledge but also help foster stronger links between our King's and African Nova Scotian communities," says President Lahey.

BACKGROUND

The original King's College was founded by Loyalists, many from New York, fleeing the United States during the American Revolution. For the past several decades, King's has identified itself to be the successor of King's College in New York City, itself re-established after the war as Columbia University.

Columbia recently published research showing how its predecessor institution—King's in NYC—was implicated with slavery. Columbia is one of a number of American universities—including Brown, Georgetown, Harvard, Rutgers and the University of Virginia—along with the University of Glasgow, the University of Bristol and Dalhousie University, examining the legacy of their connection to slavery.

Part of the work now being commissioned by the University of King's College in Halifax will look at the nature and extent of connections between itself and the original King's College in NYC and, by extension, to the latter institution's connections with slavery.

LEADING HISTORIANS TO UNDERTAKE ORIGINAL RESEARCH

To help understand, assess and contribute to the body of academic knowledge on this issue, the University of King's College has commissioned original research by historians and slavery scholars, assisted by undergraduate and graduate students.

In addition to a literature search, under the direction of **Dr. Jerry Bannister**, professor of history at Dalhousie University and a specialist in Maritime and Loyalist history, the following topics will be examined:

- Nature and extent of the connections between King's College in New York (the institution that became Columbia University) and the King's College established in Windsor, NS, in 1789—by **Dr. Henry Roper**, Inglis Professor of the University of King's College and an authority on the history of the institution;
- Indirect links King's may have had with slavery here in the province, including ways the college may have benefitted from an economy and society that depended on slavery in other places, including the Caribbean—by **Dr. Shirley Tillotson**, Inglis Professor of the University of King's College, assisted by **Dr. Amani Whitfield**, Professor of History at the University of Vermont and an authority on slavery in Nova Scotia;
- Direct King's connections with individuals (including patrons, funders, board members, faculty, staff, students or alumni) who were directly involved with or benefitted from slavery, or who held opinions on slavery—by **Dr. Karolyn Smardz Frost**, adjunct professor at Acadia University and York University, and a specialist in African-North American history, and **Mr. David States**, retired Parks Canada historian and independent genealogist.

REVIEW PANEL TO EVALUATE & PROVIDE FEEDBACK

An expert review panel, chaired by King's professor of Humanities and Holocaust scholar, **Dr. Dorota Glowacka**, will evaluate and offer feedback on the research papers, prior to publication. Joining Dr. Glowacka on the review panel are:

- Dr. Sylvia D. Hamilton, Rogers Chair in Communications, University of King's College.
- Dr. John Reid, professor in the Department of History, Saint Mary's University, and a specialist in Canadian and Atlantic Canadian history.
- Dr. Bonnie Huskins, professor of history and Loyalist Studies coordinator, University of New Brunswick.

- Mr. Douglas Ruck, QC, Halifax lawyer and former provincial ombudsman and University of King's College alumnus.
- Superintendent Donald MacLean, Halifax Regional Police, University of King's College alumnus and member of the Board of Governors.
- Faculty member, to be appointed by King's faculty.
- Two students, chosen in consultation with the King's Students' Union.

“For universities that have histories reaching back to eras of imperial activity, and especially to the time when enslavement was characteristic of the Atlantic World, it is essential to examine forthrightly the connections that the institution may have had with these practices and the wealth generated by them,” says Dr. Reid. “That the University of King's College has embarked on its enquiry with an emphasis on high-quality historical analysis, and rightly insists on a thorough study that will lead to published research findings, will ensure that the result will add significantly to our understanding of African Nova Scotian and Atlantic World history as areas of national and international importance.”

“As the oldest university in Nova Scotia and one of the oldest in Canada, we have a responsibility to examine and acknowledge all aspects of our life as an institution devoted to seeking and understanding truth,” says Lahey.

“Equity and diversity are core principles of today's King's College,” says Lahey. “In the spirit of reconciliation with the African Nova Scotian community, we want to examine our past openly and honestly.”

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About the University of King's College

Established in 1789, King's College is Canada's oldest chartered university. A small and extraordinarily lively academic community located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, King's is known nationally and internationally for its highly acclaimed interdisciplinary programs in the humanities and journalism. For more information, please go to www.ukings.ca.

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