



University of King's College launches cohort initiative for Mi'kmaw journalism students

For immediate release

September 8, 2022

Initiative marks an important step forward in the university's work to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action on education, journalism and media

The University of King's College is dedicating \$600,000 over five years to establish a program for Mi'kmaw students who want to study journalism at King's, based on the cohort model of improving access to higher education for students from underrepresented communities.

The initiative aims to encourage Mi'kmaw students to study journalism in the university's School of Journalism, Writing & Publishing and to better support all Indigenous students studying at King's. The initiative has been developed in consultation with Ann Sylliboy of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, the educational authority for twelve of Nova Scotia's thirteen Mi'kmaw First Nations. It also reflects input from King's Board of Governors member and Director of Indigenous Community Engagement at Dalhousie University, Catherine Martin, as well as from Director of Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Post-Secondary Recruitment and Retention at the Department of Advanced Education, Sheila Isaac.

Beginning in 2023, King's will through a combination of scholarships, financial awards and tuition waivers, fully cover the cost of tuition for up to three Mi'kmaw students each academic year who are studying in the university's undergraduate Bachelor of Journalism (Honours) program. Participants in the program must be endorsed by their communities and meet King's admission requirements. The funding offered to students in the cohort will ensure that neither the students and their families, nor their communities, will be responsible for bearing the financial burden of tuition. Mi'kmaw students currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Journalism (Honours) program will be eligible to participate in the program. In the future, King's will consider initiatives in the university's postgraduate journalism programs.

Cohort models operate on the premise that a group of students who study together in a program benefit from the relationships they form and the support they provide one another throughout their education. In the case of students from underrepresented communities, the ability to form relationships with peers who share the same cultural context is considered a strong enabler of success.

Efforts to ensure the success of the cohort initiative and the success of all Indigenous students attending King's, will be bolstered by the introduction of additional appropriate supports. These supports include:

- funding an Indigenous Student Advisor who will be available to King's students on a priority basis;
- a dedicated space on King's campus for Indigenous students;

- strengthening the relationships between King’s and the Elder-in-Residence Program and the Indigenous Student Centre, both at Dalhousie;
- collaborative work between King’s and Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) is focused on making additional resources available to Indigenous students at both universities.

Other supports will be developed through ongoing discussions with Mi’kmaw representatives and organizations, including the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre (MNFC), and through further collaboration with other higher education partners. King’s is also in the process of establishing a Mi’kmaw/Indigenous advisory council. Further details of this program will be worked out with the advice of this council.

This tuition initiative is an important step forward in King’s ongoing work to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action on education and media. In 2020, the university launched “Reporting in Mi’kma’ki,” an innovative course offered in collaboration with Eskasoni First Nation that teaches journalism students about ethical reporting on Indigenous Peoples. The course was developed with input from a number of Indigenous specialists and alumni including Trina Roache, BJ’00, who was appointed Rogers Chair in Journalism at King’s in 2021. The cohort initiative directly responds to Call to Action 86:

We call upon Canadian journalism programs and media schools to require education for all students on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations.

Post-Secondary Consultant with Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey Ann Sylliboy, says journalism has “an essential role to play in the actions that are required to help with reconciliation.”

“Our youth have an interest in this field of study, to tell our stories, create understanding, hold truth to account, and to participate fully in an industry that has typically left Indigenous Peoples and issues underrepresented,” says Sylliboy.

“It’s important to have a diverse student body along with a diverse faculty. This initiative will ultimately benefit everyone in the School,” says Acting Director of Journalism Terra Tailleux.

King’s President William Lahey says that as Nova Scotia’s only university granting degrees in journalism, King’s must take every opportunity to address this and the other calls to action related to education.

“We must act in an ambitious and impactful way that reflects what King’s is well equipped to contribute and what Mi’kmaw leaders have told us they think King’s can uniquely offer. This initiative also presents the opportunity for substantial collaboration with Mi’kmaw communities—something that will strengthen King’s by helping us to become a more inclusive, welcoming environment—while paving the way for King’s to contribute to those communities in ways that are truly responsive to their needs and aspirations. Such contributions must be central to our efforts toward meaningful reconciliation with the Indigenous Nation on whose land this university stands.”

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.

www.ukings.ca

For more information, please contact:

Elizabeth Grant, Associate Director, Communications

Elizabeth.grant@ukings.ca