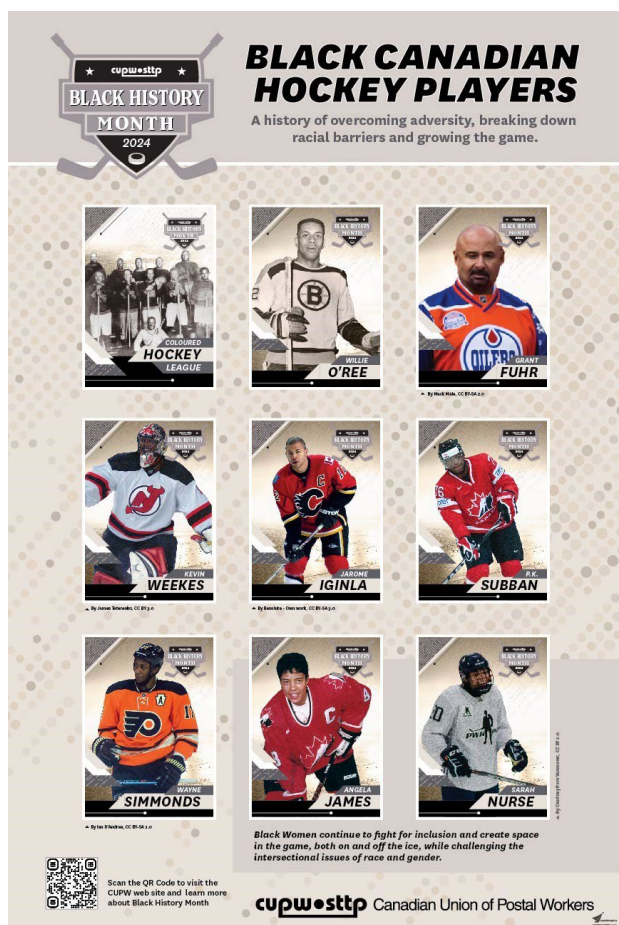


January 11, 2024

Black History Month 2024: Celebrating Black Canadian Hockey Players



Black History Month is a time to celebrate and reflect on the important contributions of Black people to various fields. One of these fields is hockey, where Black athletes have significantly contributed to the sport. Despite facing significant barriers, Black hockey players have persevered and excelled making their mark on the game.

Before the NHL and even before the Canadian Amateur Hockey League, there was the CHL, the Coloured Hockey League, founded by Black community leaders in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1895. Four hundred young Black players from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI competed in a dozen teams including the Dartmouth Jubilees, the Halifax Eureka's and the Amherst Royals. They played mainly on frozen lakes and outdoor rinks. They could only play in arenas after the White leagues had finished their seasons. The League was in operation - except for during World War I – until the Great Depression got bad in 1930.

Innovators

Though these players pioneered the slapshot and the butterfly way of goaltending, they faced racism at every turn. The premier hockey league in North America, the NHL, remained firmly White until January 18th, 1958 when New Brunswick's Willie O'Ree debuted with the Boston Bruins vs the Montreal Canadiens.

He faced racism, bigotry, and prejudice during his career because of his skin colour.

Almost 20 years later, Scarborough's Mike Marson became the second player in the NHL. Black players since- like Grant Fuhr, Kevin Weekes, Jarome Iginla, P.K. Subban, and Wayne Simmonds - have had long NHL careers. Black Women like World Championship Gold medallist, Angela James, and Winter Olympics Silver medallist, Sarah Nurse, have also had successful careers.

Sadly, the same systemic anti-Black racist issues which faced players of the past, persist today.

Challenging hockey culture

In 2020, former NHL player, Akim Aliu began a painful, important conversation challenging hockey culture - a conversation which continues today.

The CHL is now getting the recognition it deserves including a commemorative stamp and a documentary, "Black Ice".

A proud legacy for Canada

These extraordinary Black Canadians have left a proud legacy to ALL Canadians and fans of hockey.

We encourage all CUPW members to learn more about the history and legacy of Black Canadians in hockey here:

Scan here to see recent bulletins >



<https://www.historymuseum.ca/blog/artifactuality-breaking-ice/>

<https://blackicesociety.com/>

<https://www.crave.ca/en/tv-shows/black-ice>

<https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/community-engagement/black-history-month>
<https://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/pdisplay.php?pid=8354>

As we celebrate Black History Month, it's essential to acknowledge the significant contributions and achievements of Black Canadians in all aspects of Canadian society, including sports like hockey.

CUPW is committed to continuing its anti-racism and anti-oppression work, recognizing that until we are all free, no one is truly free. Let's take this opportunity to celebrate Black excellence, contributions, and joy, both on and off the ice.

Solidarity!



Jan Simpson
National President

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