

The Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia



The idea for the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia (BCCNS) came in a 1972 proposal put forward by Dr. William Pearly Oliver, who wanted to create a Cultural Educational Centre to both reflect and inspire the Black communities of Nova Scotia. Five years later, in 1977, the Black Cultural Society was incorporated as a charitable organization, and six years after that, on September 17, 1983 the doors of the BCCNS officially opened. Since then, the board and staff of the BCCNS have been working hard to protect, preserve, and promote Black culture and heritage in Nova Scotia.

Every year, the multi-functional centre welcomes hundreds of travellers from around the world who want to learn about the rich, vibrant, and important history of African Nova Scotian people. In addition to tourists, the BCCNS also hosts special events such as

concerts, meetings, and guest speakers, as well as school groups and summer camps. Over the years, the BCCNS has grown and changed with the times, and adapted to the current needs of the African Nova Scotian community, but one thing has stayed the same since the very beginning. Our mandate to protect, preserve, and promote African Nova Scotian history and culture, and our goal to educate and inspire everyone who come through our doors.

The BCCNS exists to be a place of learning, a place of inspiration, and a place of discovery. African Nova Scotians have had a profound impact on this province, as you will learn through the many exhibits, artifacts, and stories found around the building. The BCCNS is a place of vital importance, because it is a place where people from all backgrounds, all nations, all religions, can come together and feel welcome. It is a place to learn things and hear stories that can't be learned or heard anywhere else, because the BCCNS is unique in Canada. No other institution tells the stories of the many different ways in which the African Diaspora made its impact across time forming proud Canadians of African descent across Nova Scotia. We hope you leave the BCCNS inspired to learn more about this often forgotten history. Thank you for visiting!

The Black Refugees

A third wave of Black migration into Nova Scotia came during and after the War of 1812, once again in connection with an international conflict. As had happened during the American Revolution, the British once again issued proclamation aimed at attracting Blacks in the United States to relocate to British colonies. As with the Black Loyalists, a large number of American Blacks once again chose Freedom in Nova Scotia over slavery in the United States

In 1813-1814, approximately 1200 Black Refugees from the Chesapeake Bay area of Virginia

and from Georgia arrived in Nova Scotia aboard British ships. Another 800 southern American Blacks came to Nova Scotia at the end of the war via Bermuda. Smaller numbers continued to trickle into the province until 1816.

Though there were labour shortages in Nova Scotia at the time, the Black Refugees were not welcomed. A number of Refugees were quarantined on Melville Island, near Halifax,

and the local House of Assembly petitioned to end the Black immigration. Lieutenant Governor Sir John Sherbrooke dismissed the petition.

Almost 1000 Refugees ended up in Preston. Other areas settled by War of 1812 Refugees were Upper Hammonds Plains, Beech Hill (later Beechville) and Windsor Road (Sackville). Collectively, the newcomers faced

discrimination in land grants, jobs, and the distribution of supplies. Their situation was made worse by the "year with no summer" followed by the "year of the mice"- a crop destroying infestation of

rodents. There was also an economic recession at the end of the war.

Ninety-five Refugees would not make Nova Scotia their home- opting instead to migrate to Trinidad- but most did remain. They overcame obstacles of poor land and widespread racism to not only survive, but thrive. Some of their customs, language, and religious practices remain a part of the African Nova Scotian community to this day.



Dr. Carrie Best

Born in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia on March 4, 1903, Carrie Best came into a world where the odds were stacked against a woman of colour. When she passed away in 2001, her work as a poet, author, journalist, and fearlessly determined activist had done much to bring progressive change to the African Nova Scotian community and Black Canadians.

In 1946, a Black woman named Viola Desmond sat in the “whites-only” section of a theatre in New Glasgow, and was arrested, convicted, and fined. Earlier that year, Best had

established The Clarion, one of Nova Scotia’s first newspapers for Black Canadians. She used this platform to advocate for Black rights and together with Mrs. Desmond lobbied the Nova Scotia

government to repeal its segregation laws, which it did in 1954.

In 1954, Best’s radio program, The Quiet Corner, hit the airwaves. From the last 1960s to 1975, she wrote a weekly column entitled “Human Rights” for the Pictou

Advocate. In the column, Best spoke out against, among other things, substandard conditions on Native reserves, discrimination against Black property owners, and basic civil rights for all.

Dr. Best was a Member of the Order of Canada and served on the Task Force on the Status of Women.

She was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Medal, several honorary doctorates, and many other awards. Dr. Carrie Best, a role model for generations of Black Canadian women and the African Nova Scotian community as a whole.



Rev. Dr. William Pearly Oliver

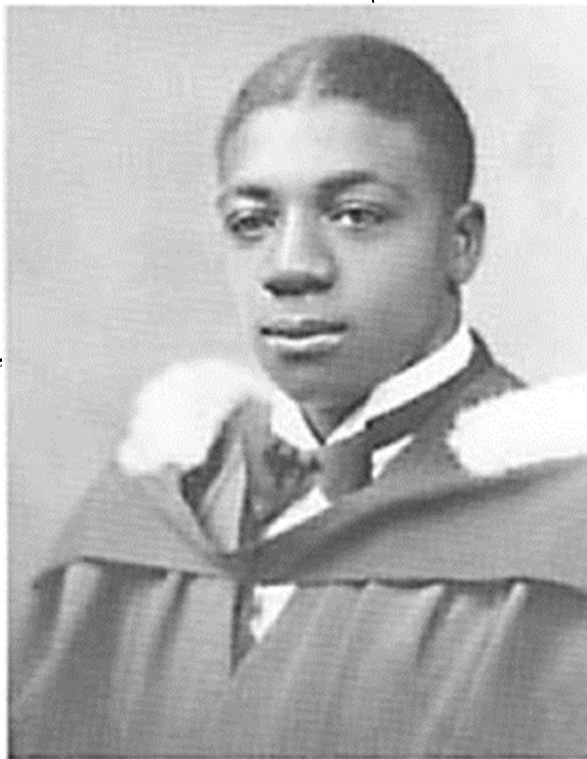
Rev. William Pearly Oliver was born in Wolfville, Nova Scotia on February 11, 1912. He grew up to become the first African Nova Scotian to graduate university with two degrees, holding a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Divinity from Acadia University. In 1936 he married Alethea “Pearleen” Borden of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

The two met while Oliver was completing his student ministry in New Glasgow. Their union would go on to last 53 years and together they parented five sons; William Jr., Leslie, Philip, Jules, and Stephen.

Following his ordination, Dr. Oliver became the pastor at Windsor Plains– Middleton– Inglewood Baptist Church. In 1937, Oliver took over pastoring at

Cornwallis Street Baptist Church. This church is known as the mother church of the African United Baptist Association. He would spend 25 years at Cornwallis Street, where he developed several youth programs, greatly increased church membership, and gained support from the broader community. In 1942, he joined the

Canadian Army and served as chaplain in the Halifax area. After leaving Cornwallis Street, he took over Beechville Baptist Church, where he had been ministering since 1937 in addition to his work at Cornwallis Street. He remained minister at Beechville Baptist Church until his death in May 1989.



In 1962, Oliver was elected president of the Maritime Baptist Convention. He was the first African Nova Scotian to hold this position. Oliver was also employed with the Adult Education Division for the Province of Nova Scotia, where he worked as a regional representative of education.

Dr. Oliver was the recipient of many awards and honours during his lifetime, including two honorary doctorate degrees in Civil Law from Kings College and Acadian University, and the Human Relations Award from the council of

Christians and Jews. Oliver was also appointed to the Order of Canada in 1984. Dr. Oliver was also instrumental in the founding of the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, the Black United Front of Nova Scotia, and the Black Cultural Centre.

Later Arrivals

A fourth major migration of Blacks to Nova Scotia– more specifically to industrial Cape Breton– began early in the 20th century. It came in two separate streams, one from Alabama and another from the Caribbean, especially Barbados. These groups came not in a quest for freedom but to obtain good-paying jobs in the newly developing steel and coal industries.

The group that came from Alabama were specially recruited by the Sydney steel plant to come work in the “boomtown” economy in connection with the new blast furnace. At the time, Black iron workers in the United States were regarded as among the very best. It is unknown exactly how many men relocated from Alabama in 1901 as the Sydney plant began operations, but there were several hundred. Some were accompanied by women and children. The



newcomers settled mostly in the Whitney Pier area and they saw to it that they had a church and their children received education.

Despite the promising beginning, the relocated Alabama community felt less than fully accepted in their new surroundings. Labour strife, local prejudices, and unfulfilled promises convinced nearly all to return to the

United States by 1904. Many walked back, though a few stayed on, finding new ways to make a living in the greater Sydney area.

Over the next decade, many small groups of Blacks from the Caribbean found their way to Cape Breton. They sailed north in the hopes of economic advancement and many ended up working in the coal and steel industries. Whitney Pier

was one area they settled but there were other communities as well. The transplanted Caribbean beliefs and customs added a vibrant, new dimension to Cape Breton life.

Portia White

Portia White was born in Truro, Nova Scotia in 1911. She was a school teacher as well as an opera singer. White began singing in the choir in her father's church at the age of six. When she was a child, her family moved to Halifax, where her father Rev. W.A. White served the Cornwallis United Baptist Church. She was teaching school and taking singing lessons by the age of seventeen.

White went on to a silver cup winner at the Nova Scotia Music Festival, soon after receiving a scholarship to the Halifax Conservatory of Music from the Halifax Ladies' Musical Club. She later made a successful debut in Toronto in 1941, followed by other concert appearances. In 1944, she made her New York debut at Town Hall and it received rave reviews. White then toured the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. The Nova Scotia Government set aside money through the N.S. Talent Trust (provides financial assistance to many outstanding young performers from the province to this day) to ensure that that she would receive top vocal training in 1945.



Portia White became the first black Canadian concert singer to win international recognition. One of the biggest highlights in Ms. White's life was singing before Queen Elizabeth II at the Opening of the Confederation Centre in Charlottetown in 1964.

She died in Toronto in 1968, and in the September of the following year, the Halifax City Regional Library was given a \$1000.00 gift from her estate to help in the purchasing of books and materials on music. Her contribution was a valuable asset to the cultural development of the Halifax region, as well as a living memorial of Portia White's love for music and her native province.

In 1997, the Historic Sites and Monument Board commemorated Ms. Portia White as a national hero. During 1998, the Portia White Prize, a \$25,000 award presented to an outstanding Nova Scotian artist that aspires to excellence in their discipline, was officially announced by the Provincial Arts Council.

No. 2 Construction Battalion C.E.F

Whether told bluntly “this is a white man’s war”, or politely that “we’ll call you if we need you”, countless patriotic Black Canadian volunteers were being rejected at recruiting stations at the outbreak of the war in 1914.

Bucking a racist bureaucracy that did not want a “checkerboard army”, several black leaders and white supporters lobbied tirelessly to be given the chance to do what they considered their patriotic duty. They made public the humiliation Blacks were suffering, and after the issue was raised in the House of Commons, a change came about. Blacks could join the war effort if they could gather enough men to form a segregated battalion.

Enlisted with over 300 men from Nova Scotia, were 350 men from Ontario (with 60 from Toronto alone), 50 from Western Canada, and a 165 American recruits. Together, they formed the No. 2 Construction Battalion on July 5, 1916.

This was Canada’s first and only black battalion, and it was also the only volunteer unit to engage in non-combative work before proceeding overseas: mainly lifting rails from the Grand Trunk sidings in areas of New Brunswick, such as Moncton, Nappadogan, and Edmunston.

On March 25, 1917, the Battalion embarked from Halifax on the troopship Southland. As it was “three hundred under strength”, the No. 2 Battalion was reorganized into a construction company and detailed into working parties where they were digging trenches for the troops in training in England, and repairing roads within the bounds of the Canadian command.



In 1917, the Battalion was attached to the Canadian Forestry Corps, departing for France on May 17. Upon arrival on May 21, in La Joux, Jour Mountains, they assisted in logging, milling and shipping operations, as well as repairing roads and relaying water supplies.

On April 3, 1918 the Battalion, made up of men who excelled in their work, was recommended to transfer to the Western Front. The war ended shortly thereafter, and the troops left for Canada in January of 1919.

A letter was received by Major Daniel Sutherland, a railroad contractor and resident of River John, N.S., who had volunteered to lead the Battalion. It conveyed thanks from the commander of the Canadian Forestry Corps to the No. 2 Battalion for its valuable and faithful service.

In 1986, the Black Cultural Society published Canada’s Black Battalion: No.2 Construction C.E.F. by the late Senator Calvin W. Ruck. At the book launching it

was suggested that the Market Wharf of Pictou, N.S., the site of the Battalion’s first headquarters, be declared a national historic site. And on July 9, 1993 this became a reality when the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada worked in conjunction with the Black Cultural Society to make a recommendation that was accepted by the Government of Canada.

The former mayor of Pictou, His Worship Lawrence LeBlanc, requested that the Black Cultural Society hold a ceremony at the site on an annual basis.

Now stands a monument in Pictou dedicated to all those who served in the No.2 Construction Battalion in WWI. Lest we forget.

The Jamaican Maroon

From the time of British conquest in 1655, the Maroons in Jamaica waged war against the British colonizers of the island. The Jamaican Government succeeded in overcoming the Maroons in 1796, after 140 years of intermittent warfare. To rid themselves of “the problem”, the Legislature decided to remove one group of the Maroons, the Trelawney, and resettle them in lower Canada (Quebec). Later, a change in decision led to the Maroons being sent to Halifax, N.S.

On June 26, 1796 three ships set sail from Port Royal Harbour, Jamaica. A total of 543 men, women, and children arrived in Halifax between July 21 and 23. After their arrival, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in North America employed the entire group to work on the new fortifications at Citadel Hill in Halifax.

A credit of £25,000 in Jamaican currency was given from the Jamaican Government for the resettlement. £3,000 was expended for 5,000 acres of land and the building of the community of Preston. After the first winter, the Maroons raised an independent and dominating culture.

At the time, military authorities were afraid that the French might try to recapture Nova Scotia through invasion. The Maroons proved themselves to be excellent fighters, and they were said to have been organized shortly after they arrived into military units in the style of self-government they had been used to in Jamaica. Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Wentworth later went on to inform the British Government that he believed the Maroons would “be useful and faithful corps to oppose an invading army”.

The winters of 1796-98 were severe, causing suffering and discomfort for the Maroons. This led to tension, and in the spring of 1799,

Governor Wentworth felt obliged to dispatch Captain Solomon and 50 men of the Royal Nova Scotia Regiment to Preston, where they withheld supplies from the most refractory, as a strategy to maintain order.

The money given by the Jamaican Government was running out and the Jamaicans were not in favour of the suggested ways of supporting themselves. In accordance with the demands of the Maroons, the Lieutenant Governor came to the conclusion that the best resolution would be to have them leave Nova Scotia.

Sierra Leone had also been suggested as a possible place of settlement in 1796, however, the Sierra Leone company was not in favour of receiving a “body of Negroes whose reputation could not be held to warrant such a step.” The reasons for objections by the company were that there was a rebellion by the earlier settlers from Nova Scotia against the Sierra Leone Government, and the colony was said to be intended for Christian Blacks (many of the Maroons were not in the Christian faith).

Eventually, the Sierra Leone Company was persuaded to receive them and plans were then made for their transportation to Africa.



The Maroons arrived in Freetown Harbour, Sierra Leone on October 1, 1800. Upon arrival, the Maroons were instructed to put an end to the insurrection of the Black Loyalists who had revolted against the government one year after their placement in Sierra Leone.

Although the majority of the Maroons left Nova Scotia, there were a few who remained. For example, a census done in 1817 of Black communities in the Preston Area and Guysborough County revealed that several persons living in the community were descendants of the Maroons.

The Black Loyalists

Once it was clear the British would lose in the American Revolution, the British Commander-in-Chief issued the Philipsburg proclamation, stating that any Negro to desert the rebel cause would receive complete protection, freedom, and land. Once the Americans had won, the British and their supporters gathered in New York to leave and Sir Guy Clayton, of whom the town of Guysborough in Nova Scotia is named after, refused the demand to return any slaves who had joined the British before 1782. Those who chose to emigrate were evacuated by ship to Nova Scotia, the West Indies, Quebec, England, Germany, and Belgium. The name of any Black person (free or not) on board a vessel was recorded in document called the Book of Negroes. There were over 3,000 Black Loyalists enrolled in the document, but there may have been as many as 5,000 who left New York for Nova Scotia.

The Black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia between 1783 and 1785. Some were newly-freed slaves, those born free, and disbanded soldiers, while others were indentured servants and slaves to the White Loyalists. Slavery was still legal and enforced in Nova Scotia at this time, it was not abolished until 1834. They settled in Annapolis Royal and the areas of Cornwallis/Horton, Weymouth, Digby, Windsor, Preston, Sydney, Fort Cumberland, Parrsboro, Halifax, and Port Mouton. About 1,500 Black Loyalists, mostly indentured servants and slaves, settled in Shelburne County, Nova Scotia. Many of the free Blacks settled in Birchtown, and formed the largest Black township of the time in British North America.

Resettlement was hard for the Black Loyalists. Nova Scotia was not prepared for the arrival of so many individuals. Many who arrived late in the fall spent the

winter in tents and makeshift huts in the woods. The British had promised free land and rations for three years to the Black Loyalists. Yet, out of 649 Black men, only 187 received land. Many Loyalists could not make a living from farming because they had no land or their land was unsuitable. Those with certain skills as blacksmiths, teachers, boat builders, tailors, military persons, and midwives were in a better position than some, but Black workers were not paid as much as White workers. Many of those who did not have a trade indentured themselves or their children to survive.



At the same time, since Nova Scotia's climate was harsh for a plantation system, many White Loyalists abandoned their slaves because they could not afford to feed them. Poverty, epidemics and suffering were widespread among the Black Loyalists. Harsh winters, sickness, and a lack of micronutrient-rich foods killed many. Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia used the church as a source of security, a social gathering place, an educational institution, and a place for political discussions.

By 1791, Black Loyalists became sure that a Promised Land, with freedom and security for their families, was not going to be a reality. Thomas Peters, sent to represent the settlers in a petition to get what was promised from the British Government, was approached by a business group that had established a colony in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Peters was told that the Black Loyalists would receive free land if they were to settle there, and he returned to Nova Scotia to convince Black Loyalists to leave.

On January 15, 1792, there were 1196 Black Loyalists left Halifax in fifteen ships, for Sierra Leone. This was a little less than one third of Black Loyalists who had arrived in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotian Black Loyalists and their descendants faced a struggle of equality, which is still not a given for African Nova Scotians. The fight for employment, access to education and human rights continues today.

Queen Charlotte Sophia

Queen Charlotte was the wife of the English King George III (1738-1820) and grandmother to Queen Victoria. She was a direct descendant of a black branch of the Portuguese Royal House, Margarita de Castro y Sousa. Queen Charlotte's African ancestry was solved as a result of an earlier investigation into the black magi (the biblical 'wise men' from the East) featured in 15th century Flemish paintings. Two art historians had suggested that the black magi people featured were actual people of the time (since the artist, without seeing them, would not have been aware of the subtleties in coloring and facial bone structure of quadroons or octoroons, which these figures invariably represented). Enough evidence was accumulated to propose that the models for the black magi were, most probably, members of Portuguese de Sousa family.

Six different lines can be traced from English Queen Charlotte back to Margarita de Castro y Sousa, in a gene pool which because of royal inbreeding was already minuscule, thus explaining the Queen's unmistakable African appearance.

The Negroid characteristics of the Queen's portraits certainly had political significance since artists of that period were expected to play down, soften, or even remove altogether the "undesirable" characteristics in their subjects' faces. Sir Allen Ramsey was the artist responsible for the majority of the paintings of Queen Charlotte; his



representations of her were the most undoubtedly African of all her portraits. Ramsey was an anti-slavery intellectual of his day. He also married the niece of Lord Mansfield, the English judge whose 1772 decision was the first in a series of rulings that finally ended slavery in the British Empire.

It should be noted as well, that by the time Sir Ramsey was commissioned to his portrait of the Queen, he was already, by marriage, uncle to Dido Elizabeth Lindsey, the black grand niece of Lord Mansfield.

From a brief look at the social awareness and political activism at that level of English Society, it would not be surprising in the Queen's negroid physiognomy was of significance to the Abolitionist movement.

Potentially, the most literary of these allusions to her African appearance, however, can be found in the poem penned to her on the occasion of her wedding to George III and the Coronation celebration that immediately followed:

Descended from the warlike Vandal race,
She still preserves that title in her face.
Tho' shone their triumphs o'er Numidia's plain,
And Alusian fields their name retain;
They but subdued the southern world with arms,
She conquers still with her triumphant charms,
O! Born for rule, -to whose victorious brow,
The greatest monarch of the north must bow!

Mathieu Da Costa

Admittedly little is known about Mathieu Da Costa. From the few records that remain, historians conclude he was a free man who earned a living as an interpreter for Europeans who were trading with Indigenous people in the New World or the America's as they are known today. Believed to be of African or even Euro-African descent, his connection to Canada and Nova Scotia came in the year 1608, when Da Costa signed a contract to work for French fur trader, explorer, and governor of Acadia, Pierre Dugua de Mons, and visited the coast of Atlantic Canada, making Mathieu Da Costa the first person of African descent for whom we have a name and know something about, to explore the area of what is now Nova Scotia.

It is known that contract with Dugua de Mons lasted some three years and it is assumed that Da Costa accompanied Dugua de Mons and Samuel de Champlain on one or more of their voyages to Acadia (made up of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) and the St. Lawrence River area. The

last information of Da Costa comes from a prison record in Le Havre, France, in December 1609. The record does not indicate why he was there but there were references to "insolences" suggesting that Da Costa had an independent spirit and spoke his mind.



While the full story of Mathieu Da Costa may never be known, interest in his life and in his unique connection with Nova Scotia can be found throughout the province. Today you can find Mathieu Da Costa's legacy at The Port-Royal National Historic Site in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. This historic site celebrates his role as an interpreter between Indigenous peoples and the French explorers.

In addition, a plaque honoring him has been placed on the Mathieu Da Costa African Heritage Trail, a series of monuments erected and unveiled in 2005 to highlight the history of African Nova Scotians in the Annapolis Valley.

Rose Fortune

Born into slavery in Virginia on the eve of the American revolution, Rose Fortune came north to settle in Nova Scotia at age ten as part of the Black Loyalist migration. Her family settled in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, where she would go on to spend the rest of her life.

In 1825, at age 51, Rose started her own cartage business, which later became known as the Lewis Transfer Company. She carted luggage between the ferry docks and local homes and hotels. She also provided a “wake-up” service to make sure that travelers were awake and ready to go in time for the morning ferry.

Fortune also became the town’s police officer, patrolling the town and the wharf. That made her, it is said, the first female police officer in Canadian history. At a time when neither women nor Black people were encouraged to pursue business, Fortune

started and ran two successful businesses. Over time these businesses became lucrative enough for horse drawn carriages to replace wheelbarrows in the Lewis Transfer Company in 1841. For the next 100 years, Rose Fortune’s children, grandchildren, and descendants would carry on this business.

Rose Fortune’s grave in Annapolis Royal’s Garrison Cemetery is unmarked, but a plaque in the Petit Parc on the town’s waterfront commemorates her life and many contributions to her community. Fortune’s legacy continues to this day, with the Association of Black Law Enforcers having created a scholarship in her name. In 1984, her descendent Daurene Lewis became the first Black female mayor in Canadian history, and in North American

history for that matter. Many of her descendants still work in the shipping and trucking industry, which proves just how much of a legacy Rose Fortune left behind.



Rev. Richard Preston

Born into slavery in Virginia, Richard Preston purchased his own freedom as a young man (in or around 1816) and came to Nova Scotia to find his mother who had migrated here as one of the Black Refugees of the War of 1812. He found her in the community of Preston and chose to live there with her, adopting the community name as his new surname.

Richard Preston was tall, poised, and inspired by religious faith. Already literate and a gifted orator, Preston became an apprentice minister in Halifax and then travelled to England to be formally ordained. On his return to Nova Scotia in 1832 he became the acknowledged leader of the African Baptists



in Nova Scotia and the founder of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church (now known as New Horizons Baptist Church). He travelled extensively throughout the province,

establishing eleven African Baptist churches from Yarmouth to Halifax.

He also played a leading role in founding the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) of Nova Scotia in 1854. This association is now the oldest African Nova Scotian association that is still active today.

Beyond his work to promote the Baptist faith, Reverend Richard Preston was a great community leader who devoted himself to abolishing slavery and advancing

better relations between races. In 2005, the government of Canada declared Rev. Richard Preston a person of national significance.

Viola Desmond

Viola Irene (Davis) Desmond was born in Halifax, NS on July 6, 1914. She was the daughter of George Davis, who operated a store and barbershop, and Gwendolyn, who was very active in the church and in various social groups such as The Criterion Club and The Gleaners. At 3 years old, she survived the Halifax Explosion of 1917, suffering only minor bruises and scratches when a set of window blinds fell on her.

Desmond received her training as a beautician in New York City under the direction of Madame C.J. Walker, who was America's first Black female millionaire. Upon completing her training, she returned to Halifax and started her own beauty school. The Desmond School of Beauty was located at 167 Gottingen Street in Halifax.

In 1946, Desmond, who was a married business woman, set out to travel from Halifax to Sydney, Cape Breton, however, she was forced to stop overnight in New Glasgow when her car broke down. While she was waiting for her car to be fixed, she decided to see a movie at the local Roseland Theatre. It was here that Desmond became the victim of a "Jim Crow Law". After purchasing her ticket, she took a seat on the ground floor of the theatre, when she was approached by an usher and asked to move to the balcony section. She thought that her ticket was for the ground floor, but due to theatre policy Black



folk were not permitted in this section. So, Desmond refused the request. After this, police were called, and Viola was arrested, thrown out of the theatre, and jailed overnight. The next day in court she was found guilty of defrauding the government of a 1 cent amusement tax, so she was fined. After paying the fine and being released, she returned to Halifax and explained what had

happened to her family and friends. The NSAACP rallied to her cause and fought the case in the Supreme Court. Although they did not succeed in a dismissal, the racist practice of the theatre stopped. It was clear that this case was an issue of Mrs. Desmond being an African Nova Scotian and there being a racist seating policy in place not to do with tax evasion. Viola Desmond stood up for her rights and fought against racism, and although she passed away before her arrest could be pardoned, she left a legacy and helped raise awareness about the realities of

segregation in Canada.

In 2010, Desmond was issued an official apology and a "free pardon", from Lt. Governor of Nova Scotia, Mayann Francis. This free pardon was the first of its kind in Canada. Desmond was also featured on a Canada Post stamp in 2012, and in 2016 it was announced the Viola Desmond would be featured on the new \$10 Canadian bill, to enter rotation in 2018, becoming the first female of colour to be featured on a bank note in all of North America.