



Figure 1. Official First Day Cover for the Colored Hockey Championship stamp.

## CANADA POST HONORS ALL-BLACK ICE HOCKEY TEAMS

by Kon Sokolyk

Since 2009, Canada Post has been celebrating Black History Month with a stamp issue. Generally, the focus has been on individuals, although both communities and a military unit have been featured. Baseball's Fergie Jenkins [Spring 2011 issue of *JSP*] has thus far been the only athlete to be honored in the series.

On 24 January 2020, Canada Post selected a sports theme for Black History Month with a single stamp (Figure 2) celebrating the Colored Hockey Championship and the all-Black hockey teams that competed in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island from 1895 to the early 1930s.

The church gave rise to the teams and the teams strengthened the communities. Leaders of the Black Baptist Church promoted hockey as a vehicle of attracting young Black men to the church and

retaining them. Games were often played following service. The community would go out and cheer its team, and the post-game get-togethers allowed Black players from different communities to meet and bond.

Figure 2. Stamp as issued, honoring the 8 individual teams and the Colored Hockey Championships. This "permanent" stamp had a value of 92¢ at the time of issue on 24 January 2020.

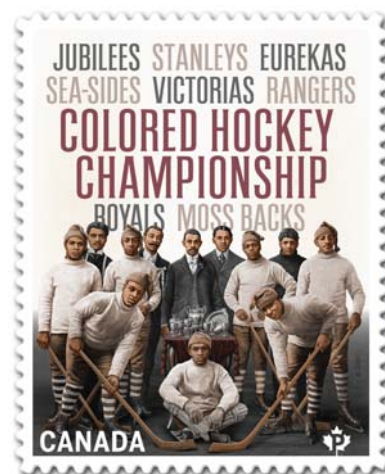




Figure 3. The booklet cover (left), and unfolded interior containing 10 stamps.

While the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes (CHL) was established to provide structure, there seems to have been no predetermined game schedule. Teams challenged each other to win the right to compete against the previous year's winner for the Colored Hockey Championship. According to *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, the "championship matches were on par with best of the white teams."

Further citing the *Encyclopedia*, the "games were played with no official rules other than the Bible..." Not only did this allow for fast, physical and exciting games but it also led to innovations. Goalies would drop to their knees to stop a puck and forwards began experimenting with the slap shot, both actions at the time prohibited by rule books. It was only after World War I that the league adopted standard hockey rules.

Eight teams comprised the circuit; not all necessarily operated concurrently. They included Nova Scotia's Dartmouth Jubilees, Halifax Stanleys, Halifax Eureka's, Africville Sea-Sides, Truro Victorias, Hammonds Plains Moss Backs, Amherst Royals and Prince Edward Island's Charlottetown West End Rangers.

Canada Post celebrated the 2020 Black History Month with a self-adhesive permanent domestic rate stamp (92¢ at time of issue) made available in booklets of ten (Figure 3). The stamp features an illustration, based on a photograph, of the Halifax Eureka's, the Colored Hockey Champions in 1904, along with the names of the eight all-Black hockey teams that competed in that era. Canada Post notes that the usage of the Colored Hockey Championship on the stamp is "a term not in use today, but which

the stamp issue retains because it is historically accurate."

Two players vying for the puck on a pond with the Halifax Citadel in the background are depicted on the official First Day Cover (Figure 1). The Halifax, Nova Scotia first day cancel features a toque, similar to the ones worn by the players.

Invitations to the stamp's unveiling at Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia (Figure 4) were mailed in envelopes franked with a "Picture Postage" stamp that featured a cropping of art work from the FDC. Five hundred stamps were printed for this purpose. Of those not used for mailing, a few were archived and the remainders destroyed.

*Thanks to Sally McMullen and Phil Legault of Canada Post for their assistance with information and illustrations for this article.*

Figure 4. Invitation to the unveiling ceremony (below), and the special "Picture Postage" stamp used to mail them (right).



## PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE UNVEILING OF THE 2020 BLACK HISTORY MONTH STAMP COMMEMORATING THE MARITIMES COLORED HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP.

From 1895 to the early 1930s, all-Black Canadian teams played organized ice hockey, challenging each other to matches and to the Colored Hockey Championship – the ultimate prize.

### Thursday, January 23

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
(doors open at 10:30 a.m.)

Reception to follow official ceremony.

Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia  
10 Cherry Brook Road, Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia

RSVP by Friday, January 17 to  
[CorporateEvents@canadapost.ca](mailto:CorporateEvents@canadapost.ca)

