

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

KING HERITAGE & CULTURAL CENTRE

FEBRUARY 21, 2022

ACKNOWLEDGING RACISM IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Museums across the country and around the world have recently been taking stock of their collections and re-examining art, artifacts, photos and documents through a new lens. As institutions that hold a place of trust in many communities, museums are responsible for the objects stored within their walls; responsible not only for their care but also for their interpretation and what they stand for.

Even the collections of community museums like the King Heritage & Cultural Centre (KHCC) contain material that is now known to be racist and hurtful. In addition, many North American collections are largely Euro-centric and are guilty of collecting a selective history, not inclusive, history of their communities. The challenge for museums is to be able to discuss or exhibit these offensive objects, with empathy but without causing more hurt. There are lessons to be learned by acknowledging the wrongdoing without glorifying the inherent racism of the objects themselves.

Going forward, historians should work alongside marginalized communities to tell their stories and set the historical record straight. We must listen to the voices that have been silenced and find the people that have been ignored in historical accounts.

MOVING FORWARD

Museums are accountable to their communities, to their *entire* communities. Historians can't correct past injustices but we can accept responsibility for those wrongdoings and view our collections with new eyes. And we can apologize.

The King Heritage & Cultural Centre is deeply sorry for any racist material held within our collections and any hurt that it may have caused. This material will only be used for research and display with the appropriate disclaimers and within the context of new interpretation. We will also work to fill the gaps of the historical record of King and to tell the stories of those who were ignored. We pledge to do better.