

**“... I knew William Hall well, and a braver, truer, more modest man, white or black, never lived.”**

- Dr. Henry Chipman

In honour of Nova Scotia Heritage Day, 2024, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is pleased to provide the biographical profile “William Hall: Nova Scotia Heritage Day Edition”. William Hall was a trailblazer. 2024 marks the 165th anniversary of Hall being awarded the Victoria Cross, the military’s highest decoration for valour. It is awarded only to those who have shown extreme bravery in battle. Hall was the first Black person and the first Nova Scotian to be awarded the Victoria Cross. His story is an essential part of the proud legacy of military service shared by many Nova Scotians.

The information found in the biographical profile provides opportunities for learners to learn the story of how Hall went from a boy who dreamed of sailing to a decorated hero. Through learning his story, learners can consider how he was shaped by his experiences growing up in Nova Scotia, and how through his actions, he continues to inspire others.

**Note to Teachers:**

*The table below includes a selection of ELA and Social Studies 7 outcomes that could be used to explore the biographical profile. Students can be encouraged to explore the stories of other prominent African Nova Scotians who overcame challenges to create opportunities for themselves and their communities by visiting the African Nova Scotian Biographical Profiles, or the Social Studies 7 provincial e-learning sites.*

## English Language Arts 7

**Learners will comprehend a range of communication forms using listening strategies, reading strategies, and viewing strategies.**

- investigate how reading and viewing strategies are used in comprehension
- analyse how communication forms influence comprehension

**Inquiry question: what are the qualities of a hero?**

As part of an inquiry, students can:

- discuss examples of heroes - what qualities do they possess? How do they demonstrate them?
- identify the qualities and personality traits that were described in the biographical document of William Hall
  - Why is he known as a hero?
  - How were his personality traits demonstrated through his actions?
  - Discuss how the layout helped draw attention to these aspects of his life and personality (consider subheadings, text boxes, captions, etc.)
- research another person recognized in Nova Scotia history for their heroic actions (e.g. Barbara Cuffy, Rose Fortune, etc.)
- create their own biographical profile that uses elements of a layout to highlight important traits about each person

**Suggested resources**

- William Hall: Nova Scotia Heritage Day Edition
- African Nova Scotian Biographical Profiles

## English Language Arts 7

Learners will reflect on how the cultures of communities, inclusive of the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and the Gaels, are expressed through a range of communication forms.

- Compare a range of voices and perspectives from within a culture.
- Investigate how communication forms vary or look the same across cultures.

**Inquiry question: how can we communicate a message without using words?**

As part of an inquiry, students can:

- discuss instances of when words do not communicate feelings as much as other forms of communication (eg emojis or text reactions, smiling at another person, using art to convey emotions, etc.)
- discuss the Adinkra symbols on the back of biographical profiles
  - Why and how can these symbols communicate feelings?
  - What symbol do you think represents William Hall? Are there several?
- research other Adinkra symbols, focussing on the meaning behind them
  - Which symbol(s) do you feel represent you? Why?

Possible extension activity: use images, symbols and other forms of non-written communication to represent the person researched in the initial inquiry question, "what makes a hero". Discuss and explain the choices made.

## Social Studies 7

Learners will reflect on historical opportunities and challenges in the Maritimes, inclusive of the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and Gaels

- Question the impact of geographic conditions on the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Gaels, and others in the Maritimes

**Inquiry Question: How does geographic location create opportunities and challenges?**

As part of an inquiry, learners can

- Discuss how geographic location influences the kind of economic opportunities that are available for different communities (Students can start with *Communities of the Maritimes*, pp. 6-7, 10).
- Investigate African Nova Scotian communities in different geographic locations throughout the Maritimes. (Students can start with *Black Nova Scotians* from the series *Resistance and Resilience*, pages 6-11).
- Reflect on the influence of William Hall's geographic location on the events of his life.
- Label a map of geographic locations that were important throughout William Hall's life. For each location highlight one opportunity or challenge that he experienced while there. (Horton, Avonport, Hantsport, Liverpool, Portsmouth, Queenstown Harbour)

**Extension Opportunity:**

After exploring how geographic location provided opportunities and challenges for William Hall, students can question how geographic location created opportunities and challenges for other people in the Maritimes. For example:

- The Mi'kmaq (*We are all treaty people: Nova Scotia 1820-1920*, pp. 9-20)
- The Acadians (*The Acadians: Nova Scotia 1820-1920*, pp. 8-9)
- The Gaels (*The Gaels: Nova Scotia 1820-1920*, pp. 8-9)

In small groups, students can discuss how opportunities and challenges varied by geographic location.

## Social Studies 7

### Learners will create a response to changing societal conditions in the Maritimes

- Investigate key individuals and groups active in changing social conditions

### Inquiry Questions: What obstacles did people face in creating change? How can obstacles to change be overcome?

As part of an inquiry, learners can

- Discuss the impacts of notable Maritimers who had to overcome significant obstacles to create change. For example:
  - Reverend Richard Preston (*Opportunities and Challenges*, p. 9, 11, “Richard Preston” Biographical Profile, *Black Nova Scotians 1820-1920*, pp. 12-13)
  - Rose Fortune (*Communities in the Maritimes*, p. 31, “Rose Fortune” Biographical Profile)
  - Africentric Math Cohort (*Communities in the Maritimes*, p. 27)
- Discuss how the actions of those people change living conditions for others
- Reflect on William Hall’s accomplishments; students can start with *Opportunities and Challenges* page 4 to better understand the reality of life as an African Nova Scotian at that time.
- Investigate how William Hall’s accomplishments created change for other African Nova Scotians.

### Extension Opportunity:

#### Learners will evaluate the impacts of World War I on the Maritimes

- Formulate a response to acknowledge the contributions of people in the Maritimes to World War I

After exploring the legacy of William Hall and the various ways Canadians have remembered his service, students can investigate the contributions of African Nova Scotians who served in World War I and formulate a response to acknowledge their contributions. For example:

- No. 2 Construction Battalion (*World War I: Impact on the Maritimes*, p. 32, 36, *The First World War and Canada’s Black Battalion*)
- Jeremiah Jones (*World War I: Impact on the Maritimes*, p. 33, 37, *The First World War and Canada’s Black Battalion* p. 13))
- Reverend White (*The First World War and Canada’s Black Battalion* p. 12)

### Additional Resources:

[William Hall VC Hantsport & Area Historical Society](#)

[William Neilson Hall The Canadian Encyclopaedia](#)

[Famous Black Canadians video series: 4/10 William Hall](#)

*Amazing Black Atlantic Canadians* NSSBB# 2002592