



BlackNorth Initiative – Addressing Systemic Barriers for U SPORTS Student-Athletes



**Dahabo
Ahmed-Omer**

Executive Director,
BlackNorth Initiative



**Chris
George**

Senior Wealth Advisor,
Portfolio Manager,
Scotia Wealth Management



**Sundeep
Gokhale**

Lawyer,
Sherrard Kuzz LLP



**Zach
Weese**

Manager, Governance and
Special Projects,
U SPORTS

ATHLETES ON TRACK

Bursary & Mentorship Program

PARTNERSHIP





Introductions



Dahabo Ahmed-Omer - *Executive Director of BlackNorth Initiative*

Zach Weese - *Manager of Governance & Special Projects, U SPORTS*

Sundeep Gokhale - *Partner at Sherrard Kuzz LLP*

Chris George - *Wealth Advisor at Scotia Wealth Management*



BlackNorth Initiative

Mission



The BlackNorth Initiative is on a mission to end anti-Black systemic racism throughout all aspects of our lives by utilizing a business-first mindset.

BNi's mandate is to address challenges the Black community faces in Canada by building a diverse procurement network that supports and promotes equity.





BlackNorth Initiative

Objectives



The BlackNorth Initiative was created to remove the anti-Black systemic barriers negatively affecting the lives of Black Canadians.

As a first step, we challenged senior leaders from all Canadian companies and organizations—both from the public and private sector—to commit their companies to specific actions and targets designed to end anti-Black systemic racism and create opportunities for all of those in the underrepresented BIPOC community.

*To date, we have close to **500 organizations** who have made the commitment.*



BlackNorth Initiative

Objectives

Corporate Canada was bold enough to take up the challenge to add gender diversity to Canadian boardrooms and executive suites by declaring policies, setting specific targets, and holding itself accountable and is now well on the way to reforming the system.

NOW IT IS TIME TO DO THE SAME THING FOR BLACK CANADIANS.





BlackNorth Initiative

The Commitment



*Leaders commit their organizations to specific actions to combat anti-Black systemic racism including hiring goals of at least **5%** within their student workforce and **3.5%** of executive and board roles being held by Black leaders by 2025.*

Every leader of every organization has a role to play by taking meaningful action to dismantle the system they inherited and apply an unparalleled effort to build a better one, thus being an agent of change. By pledging their organizations to policies and specific targets, senior leaders across Canada will play an active role in ending systemic anti-Black systemic racism.



BlackNorth Initiative

Diversity Matters

“...companies with the most ethnically diverse executive teams—not only with respect to absolute representation but also of variety or mix of ethnicities — are 33 percent more likely to outperform their peers on profitability.”





BlackNorth Initiative

A Holistic Approach

Ending anti-black systemic racism is a complex problem that requires a holistic and comprehensive approach.

We have established action committees that focus on the multi-layered challenges facing Black Canadians. Using clearly defined short and long-term goals, each committee will work to meet key performance indicators created to eliminate anti-Black systemic racism and barriers impacting Black Canadians.

Committees

HEALTH &
WELLNESS

YOUTH

EDUCATION

MENTORSHIP
& SPONSORSHIP

ECONOMIC &
EMPOWERMENT

PHILANTHROPIC



BlackNorth Initiative

Current Reality

In a recent article by the University of Victoria, it was indicated that like Indigenous students, Black and Asian students are also significantly impacted by racism in Canadian post-secondary education.

They face racial microaggression and higher incidences of stress, drop-out and mental health struggles that may inevitably lead to a lower academic achievement.





Athletes On Track

Goals & Objectives



- **Identify an opportunity to address a systemic barrier for Black student-athletes.**
 - *Provide financial support & world-class mentorship opportunities.*
 - *Work alongside BlackNorth Initiative to further opportunities for Black student-athletes.*

Athletes On Track

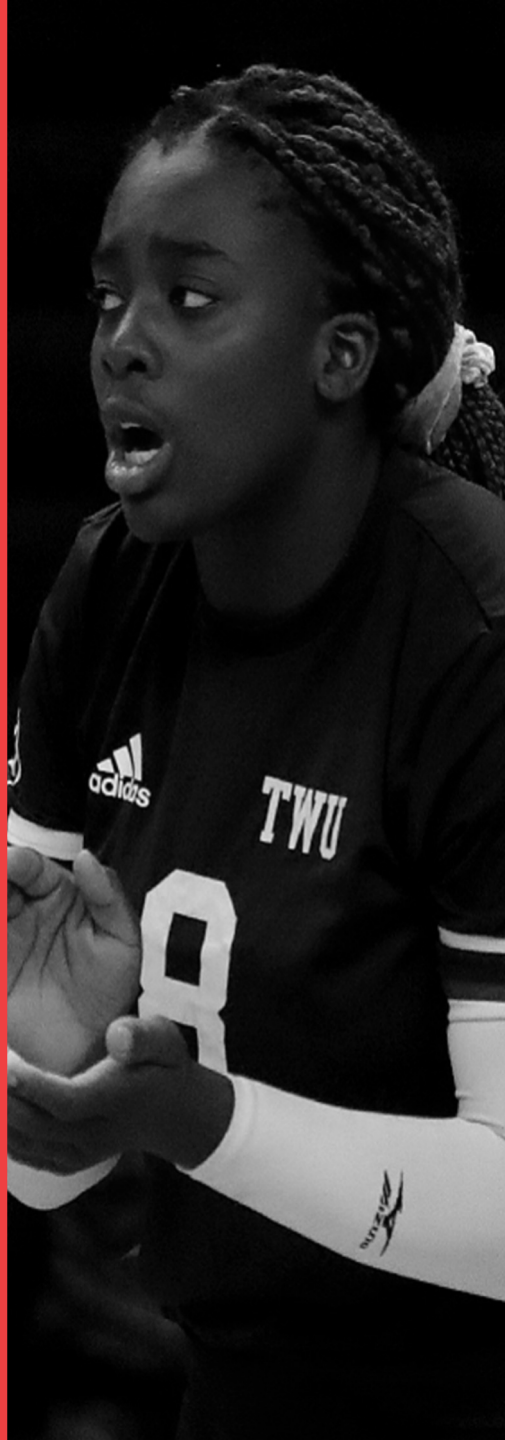
Program Components

Financial Commitment

- **\$5,000 Bursary** awarded to eight (8) Black student-athletes (one male and one female / conference).
- *Recipients are encouraged to use this money towards room and board or books, however, there is no restriction on what the Bursary can go towards.*
- *Award Bursaries are not considered by the AFA Committee as AFAs, therefore not countable towards individual or team caps.*

Mentorship Program

- *Through the **BNI Connect Program**, each Bursary Recipient will be paired with mentors, based on identified career aspirations.*
- *Mentors will include executives & community leaders from the over 500 BNI Pledge signatories, across corporate Canada.*
- *Designed to improve accessibility for the Black Community to employment, internship, and mentorship opportunities.*



Athletes On Track

Eligibility Requirements



- *The student-athlete must identify as Black (Afro-Caribbean, African Canadian and/or racialized).*
- *The student-athlete must be enrolled at a Canadian University (U SPORTS).*
- *The student-athlete must demonstrate financial need.*
- *Must be affiliated with U SPORTS varsity team during academic year the Bursary is being awarded.*
 - *Including those not able to be listed on the Eligibility Certificate (e.g., transfers), so long as the institution considers them affiliated with the varsity program.*
 - *Confirmed Recruits and Prospective S-As are also able to apply, despite not yet being at the institution.*
- *NOTE: previous award winners are eligible to re-apply for Bursary, should they continue to meet program requirements.*



Athletes On Track

BlackNorth Connect



Benefits for Candidates

- *Access to a large pool of jobs*
- *Access to mentorship opportunities*
- *Exposure to internship opportunities*
- *Access to a scholarship pool*
- *Development of new skill sets*
- *Development of a new professional network*
- *Build lasting professional relationships*
- *Improved chances of success*

Benefits for Employers

- *Highlight existing initiatives designed to advance the Black community*
- *Be an expert leader and mentor to the next generation of Black leaders*
- *Provide practical and professional knowledge*
- *Play an active role in advancing Black Canadians in their careers*



Athletes On Track

Student-Athlete Perspective



Sundeep Gokhale

UBC Thunderbird (2000)

Men's Basketball

Chris George

Western Mustang (1997-2000)

Men's Hockey

Colorado Avalanche Draft (1995)



Athletes On Track

Next Steps



Summer 2022

- *Program Preview*

September 2022

- *Official launch of inaugural 'Athletes On Track' program*
- *Call for Nominations*
 - *Submission by Athlete (or Coach / Athletic Administrator on Athlete's behalf)*

October 2022

- *Selection Committee reviews candidates and confirms winners*
- *Winners announced*

November 2022

- *Bursaries provided / BNI Connect Program initiated*



THANK YOU

Sagal Abdi
Program Manager
sabdi@blacknorth.ca



Zach Weese
Manager of Governance & Special Projects
zweese@usports.ca