



**Adirondack Experience to Launch New Discussion Series
Exploring Diversity Initiatives and the Realities of Racism in the Adirondack Region**

**Program Developed in Partnership with Adirondack Diversity Initiative
And Adirondack North Country Association**

New York, NY—June 25, 2020—The [Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake](#), announced today that it will launch a new online discussion series exploring the realities of racism in the Adirondack region as well as the work of local organizations to address these challenges. The program is being developed in partnership with [The Adirondack Diversity Initiative \(ADI\)](#) and [The Adirondack North Country Association \(ANCA\)](#), and is part of ADI’s wider antiracism education and mobilization initiative. Titled *The Black Experience in the Adirondacks*, the series will kick-off on Thursday, July 2 at 6:00 pm, with a conversation on the mission and work of ADI. Later discussions will explore the particular dangers of driving in the area as a Black person. The talks will take place live over Zoom, with public registration available at www.theADKX.org. A fuller detailing of the currently confirmed July discussions follows below, and additional events will be announced in the coming weeks.

“Although much of the recent national conversation on racism has focused on events in metropolitan areas, the unfortunate truth is that racism is as much a part of daily life in more rural areas like the Adirondacks. We know that racial profiling is a deeply entrenched issue and is one that plays out in particular on our highways and roads,” said David Kahn, Executive Director. “The vision for this series is to acknowledge that the Black experience in the Adirondacks is different than that of white individuals, and in doing so open new conversations about how to meaningfully address these realities. We are delighted to collaborate with the leadership at ADI and ANCA on this series and to amplify their work.”

The region referred to as the Adirondacks is formally Adirondack Park: a 6-million-acre park covering one-sixth of New York State that includes a mix of state protected and privately-owned land. This unique park was established in 1885 and is the largest publicly protected area in the contiguous U.S. It is also home to more than 100 towns, and many private farms and businesses. The population of the Adirondacks is a little more than 130,000, though an estimated 200,000 additional people live and work in the region seasonally. Of the year-round residents, the most recent demographic estimates show that the population is more than 90% white.

Thursday, July 2 at 6:00 PM

What is the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI)?

Established in 2015, ADI is focused on developing, implementing, and promoting strategies that will make Adirondack Park a more welcoming and inclusive place for both residents and visitors. In this

conversation, **Dr. Donathan Brown**, Assistant Provost and Assistant Vice President for Faculty Diversity and Recruitment at Rochester Institute of Technology and Co-Founder of Adirondack Diversity Solutions, will interview ADI's inaugural Executive Director **Dr. Nicole Hylton-Patterson**. The conversation will explore ADI's mission and approach, focusing in particular on how the killing of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement has impacted its agenda and upcoming actions.

Thursday, July 9 at 6:00 PM

What Led to the Establishment of the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI)?

This conversation, moderated by **Dr. Kim Irland**, Dean of Student Life and Diversity Officer at North Country Community College, will examine the origins of ADI. Featuring ADI's four founding members, the discussion will focus on why this group of white individuals felt it was essential to create an organization that would address issues of racial equity and justice in the region, and how their roles as allies have changed over time. Speakers include **Paul Hai**, Associate Director at SUNY ESF's Newcomb Campus; **Willie Janeway**, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council; **Pete Nelson**, a writer and teacher at North Country Community College; and **Martha Swan** Executive Director of John Brown Lives!.

Thursday, July 23 at 6:00 PM

Driving While Black, PART I

ADI Executive Director **Dr. Nicky Hylton-Paterson** will interview acclaimed historian **Dr. Gretchen Sorin** about her book *Driving While Black* (2020), which "reveals how the car—the ultimate symbol of independence and possibility—has always held particular importance for African Americans, allowing black families to evade the many dangers presented by an entrenched racist society and to enjoy...the freedom of the open road." At the same time, Dr. Sorin, who also serves as the Director of the Cooperstown Graduate Program in Museum Studies, will discuss how the road posed, and continues to pose, new racially driven challenges. A feature-length documentary on this subject created by Dr. Sorin and Rick Burns will air on PBS later this year.

Thursday, July 30 at 6:00 PM

Driving While Black, PART II

Clifton H. Harcum, diversity officer at SUNY Potsdam, will moderate a panel discussion with a group of Adirondack residents and visitors about their experiences with the New York State Police as Black people driving in the Adirondacks. Harcum will open the discussion by considering his own experiences of being stopped numerous times, between November 2019 and June 2020, while driving from his home in Saranac Lake to SUNY Potsdam. The names of the panelists will be released in the coming weeks.

Additional programs are being planned for the series and details will be announced soon.

About Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI)

The [Adirondack Diversity Initiative](#)'s mission is to develop and promote strategies to help the Adirondack Park become more welcoming and inclusive of all New Yorkers, both visitors and permanent residents. A more inclusive Adirondack Park will benefit not only the citizens of New York but the economic and political health of the Park as well. ADI is based at ANCA's office in Saranac Lake, N.Y. Its antiracism education and mobilization initiative includes an Antiracism 101 web series, workshops, town hall meetings with elected officials, and public policy mobilization.

About Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA)

[ANCA](#) is an independent, nonprofit corporation with a transformational approach to building prosperity across northern New York. ANCA's community-informed, results-driven strategies for local food producers, small business owners, would-be entrepreneurs and municipal innovators offer targeted interventions that are designed to keep wealth and value in local communities.

About Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake

Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake (ADKX), accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, shares the history and culture of the Adirondack region through interactive exhibits, hands-on activities, and culturally rich collections in more than 24 historic and contemporary buildings on a 121- acre campus in the heart of the Adirondacks. The museum is supported in part with donations from the general public, with some general operating support made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. For additional information, call 518-352-7311 or visit www.theADKX.org.

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