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TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2019 • TORONTO, ONTARIO: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RBC TAYLOR PRIZE EMERGING WRITERS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM RETURNS

LAUNCHED TO GREAT SUCCESS last year, the RBC Taylor Prize and the RBC Foundation today announced the return of this professional development program to support the next generation of Canadian writers.

Five emerging writers, selected from the nation's many fine writing programs, will be paired with the finalists for the 2019 RBC Taylor Prize, an award that honours and celebrates the pursuit of excellence in literary non-fiction. The program is curated by Joe Kertes, Dean Emeritus of the Humber College School of Creative Arts & Performance in Toronto.

Nadina Taylor, trustee of the Charles Taylor Foundation and daughter of the late Charles Taylor, is a strong champion of the program. "We've seen what a huge impact the RBC Taylor Prize Emerging Writer Award can have on a writer's career and wanted to amplify that effect with this opportunity – to help prepare these talented writers for the complex and competitive world of writing and publishing."

"At RBC Wealth Management, we believe it is important to identify, nurture and support the next generation of Canadian talent and to provide writers in the early stages of their career with mentorship opportunities that will help them succeed in the professional world," said Vijay Parmar, President of RBC PH&N Investment Counsel.

The five "emergent" writers, who each have an existing body of work, and a non-fiction manuscript close to completion, will correspond with their mentors prior to traveling to Toronto for the Prize weekend, Feb 28 through March 4th. They will meet with their mentors, participate in an intensive day of professional development, accompany their mentors through media and events, and participate in the Awards Luncheon on Monday March 4th.

2019 RBC TAYLOR PRIZE EMERGING WRITERS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The five participants in the 2019 RBC Taylor Prize Emerging Writers Mentorship Program are:

BECKY BLAKE — UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Blake won the CBC Nonfiction Prize in 2017 and the CBC Short Story Prize in 2013. She is a graduate of the Creative Writing MFA Program at the University of Guelph, and her work has appeared in journals, magazines, and newspapers across Canada. Her debut novel, *Proof I Was Here*, is forthcoming from Wolsak & Wynn's Buckrider Books in May 2019. She currently lives in Toronto where she is working on a memoir-in-essays called *Everything I'm About to Say Is a Lie*. The title refers to the recommended way to answer a phone that's been tapped (as Blake's once was). Her memoir draws on this and other



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experiences ranging from the criminal to the comical as she examines the singular power of a true story and the license we sometimes take to tell one.

KIRK ANGUS JOHNSON — UNIVERSITY OF KING'S COLLEGE / DALHOUSIE

Johnson is of both Metis and African ancestry. After graduating from Acadia University and an early career in theatre, he attended Concordia University in Montreal to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing. In keeping with the military traditions within his family, Johnson enrolled in the Canadian Forces as an Infantry Officer and was deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2010. Now released from the military, Johnson is returning to a career in writing. He resides in Three Mile Plains, NS, his childhood home, and is in the MFA in Creative Nonfiction at University of King's College in Halifax. *Some Kind of Hero* is a compelling account of the circumstances leading to Afghan vet Lionel Desmond's tragic 2017 murder/suicide, and the lessons we need to learn from it.

HELEN KNOTT — UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Knott is of Dane Zaa, Nehiyaw, and mixed Euro descent from Prophet River First Nations, living in Fort St. John, BC. She has published short stories and poetry in the Malahat Review, Red Rising Magazine, through CBC Arts, the Surviving Canada Anthology, alongside other publications and poetry video productions. In 2017, Helen was a recipient of the REVEAL Indigenous Art Award. In 2016, she was one of sixteen women featured globally by the Nobel Women's Initiative for her commitment to ending gender-based violence and activism. Her first book, *In My Own Moccasins: A Memoir of Struggle and Resilience*, will be released in August 2019. She is currently writing an Indigenous female manifesto entitled, *Taking Back the Bones*, where personal narrative is interwoven with humour, academic research and critical reflection.

MILES STEYN — UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Steyn was born in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and raised in Vancouver. His creative nonfiction has appeared in *Existere*, *The Xanadu Anthology*, *Unsubscribe Magazine*, *Gold Literary Magazine*, and his essay "Wire to the Sky" was short-listed for *EVENT Magazine's* Creative Nonfiction Contest. In 2018, Steyn's essay "From Clay" was long-listed for the CBC Nonfiction Prize. Expanding on the earlier essay, *Wire to the Sky*, Steyn's first book of nonfiction is a genre-bending memoir, told through letters from a brother to his late sister, about race, nationality, and the loss of family.

JOSHUA WHITEHEAD — UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Whitehead is an Oji-Cree, Two-Spirit storyteller and academic from Peguis First Nation on Treaty 1 territory in Manitoba. He is currently working toward a Ph.D. in Indigenous literatures and cultures at the University of Calgary. In 2016, his poem "mihkokwaniy" won Canada's History Award for Aboriginal Arts and Stories (for writers aged 19–29), which included a residency at the Banff Centre. His 2018 novel, *Jonny Appleseed*, was

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shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Fiction. His non-fiction book, *Making Love with The Land*, is a braid of forms that ruminates on topics such as Indigeneity, queerness, mental health, body dysmorphia, and chronic pain through a variety of literary forms, including horror, speculative fiction, poetry, and confession.

ABOUT RBC

ROYAL BANK OF CANADA is a global financial institution with a purpose-driven, principles-led approach to delivering leading performance. Our success comes from the 80,000 employees who bring our vision, values and strategy to life so we can help our clients thrive and communities prosper. As Canada's biggest bank, and one of the largest in the world based on market capitalization, we have a diversified business model with a focus on innovation and providing exceptional experiences to our 16 million clients in Canada, the U.S. and 35 other countries. For more information, please visit rbc.com.

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ABOUT THE RBC TAYLOR PRIZE

ESTABLISHED IN 1998 by the trustees of the Charles Taylor Foundation and first awarded in 2000, 2018 marks the seventeenth awarding of the RBC Taylor Prize, which commemorates Charles Taylor's pursuit of excellence in the field of literary non-fiction. The Prize is awarded to the author whose book best combines a superb command of the English language, an elegance of style, and a subtlety of thought and perception. All finalists receive \$5,000, and the winner receives a further \$25,000. All authors are presented with a custom leather-bound version of their shortlisted book at the award ceremony. All finalists receive promotional support for their nominated titles.

THE TRUSTEES of the Charles Taylor Foundation are: Vijay Parmar, David Staines, Edward Taylor, Nadina Taylor, and Noreen Taylor. The Prize Manager is Sheila Kay.

TO DOWNLOAD high-resolution images of mentorship program participants:
http://www.rbctaylorprize.ca/2019/rbctp_2019_mentorship_program_participants.zip

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

MEDIA CONTACT: Stephen Weir & Associates

STEPHEN WEIR: 416-489-5868 | cell: 416-801-3101 | stephen@stephenweir.com

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