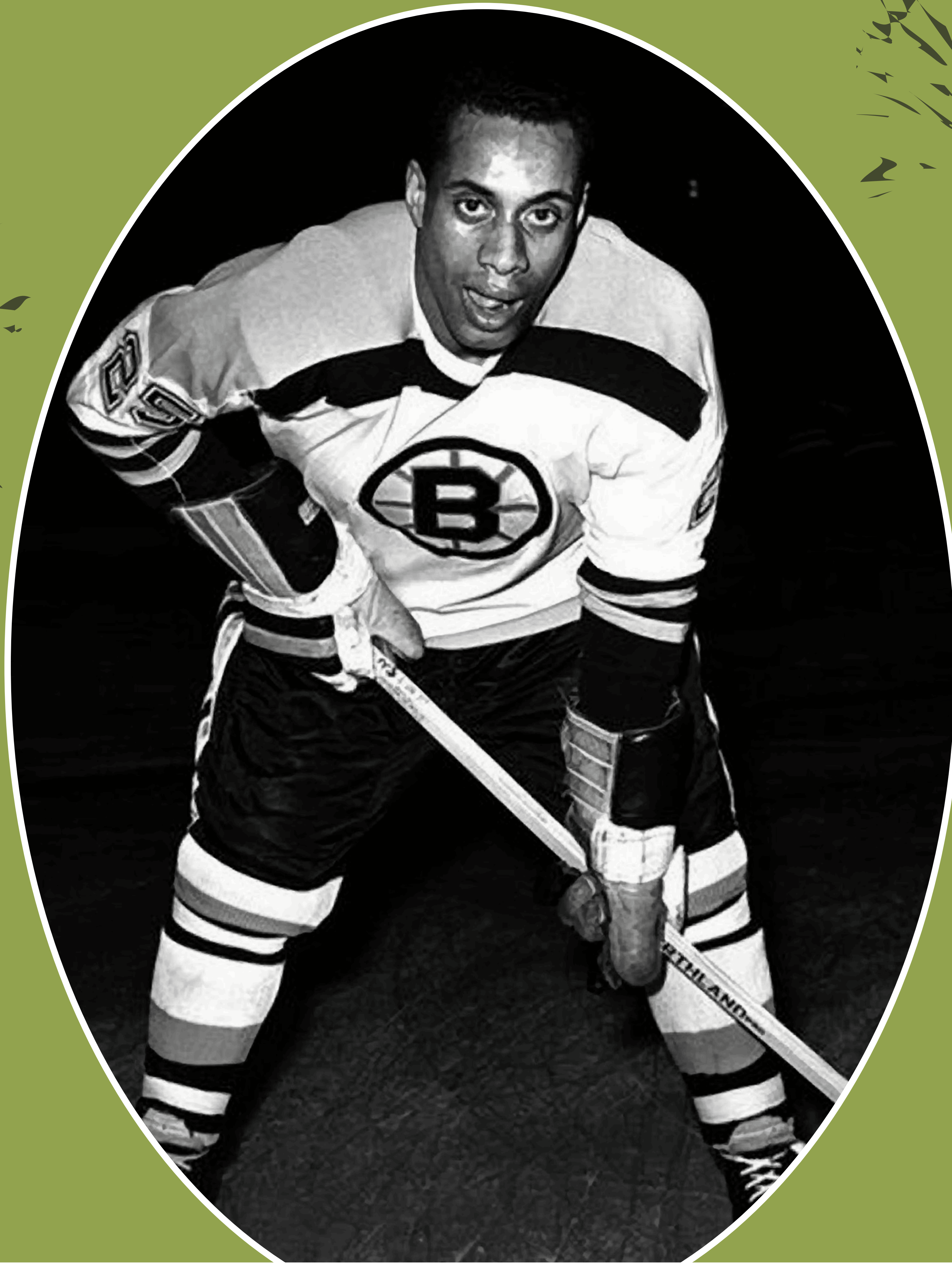


WILLIE O'REE

1935, Fredericton, New Brunswick



FIRST BLACK PLAYER IN THE NHL

Born and raised in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Willie O'Ree became the first Black player in the National Hockey League (NHL) when he debuted in 1958 while playing for the Boston Bruins. He had a decorated professional career spanning over twenty years with several NHL teams. O'Ree was inducted into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame in 1984, and received the Order of Canada in 2008. In 2018, O'Ree was honoured in the Hockey Hall of Fame, recognized as a 'Builder' within the sport. The same year, the NHL instituted the annual Willie O'Ree Hero Award in his name, to "recognize the individual who has worked to make a positive impact on his or her community, culture or society to make people better through hockey." As of May 2019, the 116th United States Congress authorized a bill to award O'Ree the Congressional Gold Medal, "in recognition of his contributions and commitment to hockey, inclusion, and recreational opportunity." Reflecting on his experience with racism in his sport, O'Ree stated, "[I]t didn't bother me, I just wanted to be a hockey player, and if they couldn't accept that fact, that was their problem, not mine."