



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

African Nova Scotian
Strategy Advisory Council

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STRATEGY OVERVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS



A DISTINCT PEOPLE

African Nova Scotians / Indigenous Blacks are a distinct people who descend from free and enslaved Black Planters, Black Loyalists, Black Refugees, Maroons, and other Black people who inhabited the original 52 land-based Black communities in that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia.

African Nova Scotians were “settled” in the province through enslavement or through fleeing enslavement elsewhere, and continue to experience all manner of structural, systemic and individual discrimination. Yet our experience is equally characterized by resistance, resilience, creativity, spirituality and hope that has profoundly shaped our families and communities — and this province and country. Indeed until 1961, more than half of all Black people in Canada were African Nova Scotian.

The Province of Nova Scotia identifies African Nova Scotians

as a founding culture. On May 8, 2018, the Government of Nova Scotia proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent. The text of the Proclamation states that the “Government is committed to addressing the issues facing African Nova Scotians, who have a long and unique history in Nova Scotia since the 1600’s.”¹

Dalhousie’s own 2018 Proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent recognizes “African Nova Scotians as a distinct people and acknowledges how they have shaped this province and University over centuries.”² The distinctiveness of African Nova Scotians as a people has been recognized by the United Nations in a 2017 Report of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent which stated, “there has been a long history of resistance and resilience by African Nova Scotians and they have developed a distinct culture, traditions and social and political practices.”³

African Nova Scotians have been subjected to under-resourced and segregated education. We continue to dismantle the legacy of an education system structured by white supremacy, and to pursue access to high quality, culturally relevant education. From the earliest petitions by African Nova Scotian communities for better schools, to the seminal Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) Report⁴ and more recent follow-up reports⁵, African Nova Scotians have fought for access to quality education at all levels.

¹<https://ansa.novascotia.ca/international-decade-people-african-descent>

²<https://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect/international-decade-for-people-of-african-descent-2015-2024.html>

³Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Canada, 16 August 2017, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59c3a5ff4.html> [accessed 6 December 2018] Such recognition implies the possibility of pursuing support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for targeted dialect retention of African Nova Scotian Vernacular English (ANSVE) and perhaps the designation of Africville as a World Heritage Site.

⁴Black Learners Advisory Committee (N.S.), *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity — Empowering Black Learners*, 1994, <https://acs.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/BLAC%20Report%20on%20Education%20Vol%201-3.pdf> [accessed 23 February 2021]

⁵See for example, *Report of the BLAC Implementation Review Committee* (September 2003); Enid Lee, *Reality Check*, (November 2009); and *Individual Program Plan (IPP) Review* (February 2016) <https://acs.ednet.ns.ca/publications>

THE NEED FOR AN AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STRATEGY AT DALHOUSIE

Central to the need for an African Nova Scotian Strategy and the foundation of the strategy itself, is the understanding that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people. The most comprehensive study on African Nova Scotian access to Dalhousie University remains *Breaking Barriers: Report of the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People (Breaking Barriers)*⁶. That report expressly examined the situation of Nova Scotia's Indigenous Blacks through a comprehensive consultation and review process. This African Nova Scotian Strategy adopts and incorporates the work of that Task Force, as many of the recommendations remain unimplemented after 30 years. Those same recommendations were echoed in community consultations completed in 2018.

Dalhousie has a strong history of introducing ground-breaking initiatives that have created many opportunities for African Nova Scotians including the Transition Year Program, the Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq Initiative at the Schulich School of Law,

Promoting Leadership in Health for African Nova Scotians and Imhotep's Legacy Academy. We are in an excellent position to now build on that history and champion additional sustainable initiatives that support African Nova Scotian students, staff and faculty members.

Dalhousie's Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026, Third Century Promise acknowledges the need to redress historical and ongoing systemic inequalities, particularly for African Nova Scotian communities. Under the 4th pillar of the Strategic Plan, entitled *Civic University with a Global Impact*, the Strategic Plan states: "Through implementation of our African Nova Scotian Strategy, Dalhousie commits to creating safe, culturally-specific academic, research, social, intellectual and physical spaces to nourish and facilitate meaningful and safe integration both on our campuses and in our engagements with the broader African Nova Scotian community."⁷

We cannot divorce the daily and pervasive structural, systemic and individual racism experienced by African Nova Scotian learners and their families generally from issues of access, retention and success at Dalhousie University. Moreover, the African Nova Scotian Strategy must be grounded in the experiences of African Nova Scotian people and their communities and led by African Nova Scotians. Our culture is distinct. Our kinship, social and professional networks, interrelationships, established institutions and organizations, and spiritual practices need to be respected and valued.

⁶Wayne MacKay, Chair, *Breaking Barriers: Report of the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People*, Dalhousie University, 1989. ("Breaking Barriers")

⁷Third Century Promise, *Dalhousie University's Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026*, Dalhousie University, <https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/leadership-and-vision/strategic-plan.html> [accessed 25 August 2021].

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed in 2018 based on the collective research, experience, expertise and wisdom of African Nova Scotian faculty, staff and students who together have decades of service to the university; and many of whom are mandated by their respective roles to provide specific service to African Nova Scotian students and communities — together with the experience, expertise and wisdom of African Nova Scotian community and organizational representatives, many of whom are Dalhousie University alumni. With the goal of full and equitable African Nova Scotian participation at Dalhousie University, a successful African Nova Scotian Strategy will include the following actions:

RECOMMENDATION

<p>The execution of a comprehensive, structured and resourced strategy grounded in the understanding of African Nova Scotians as a distinct people and operationalized through engagement with African Nova Scotian communities.</p>	<p>OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATION</p>
<p>The establishment of an African Nova Scotian Advisory Council inclusive of African Nova Scotian students, staff and faculty, as well as alumni and community representatives. Among other terms, the Council would receive progress reports and advise on African Nova Scotian specific policy and programming</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Ongoing consultation with Dalhousie Departmental and Faculty leaders to support their efforts to implement the African Nova Scotian Strategy.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Engage in ongoing consultation with African Nova Scotian communities, students, staff and faculty and internal and external stakeholders.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Develop a consistent definition of Indigenous Black/African Nova Scotian for programmatic and other purposes, to be periodically reviewed.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Develop and adopt an acknowledgment statement to be used at Dalhousie to recognize the African Nova Scotian presence and contributions to Nova Scotia.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Increase the visibility, recognition and understanding of African Nova Scotian contributions in curricula, art, lectures and events at Dalhousie.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Develop annual African Nova Scotian community immersion education and training with senior Dalhousie leaders.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>

RECOMMENDATION

<p>Compile and communicate an annual report card on the progress of the African Nova Scotian Strategy to African Nova Scotians with a reciprocal opportunity for African Nova Scotians to provide feedback.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Develop and offer for-credit courses in African Nova Scotian communities and through distance education, which will encourage recruitment and include mature/adult learners.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Develop and offer free lectures and workshops in the community (e.g. Humanities 101).</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Partner with the community to develop an African Nova Scotian Saturday school and work with organizations, governments and Centers for Education to infuse elementary and secondary school curricula with African Nova Scotian content.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Organize an annual youth summit in partnership with African Nova Scotian organizations to engage African Nova Scotian youth.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES</p>
<p>Develop a communications plan to support the African Nova Scotian Strategy and to engage internal and external stakeholders and partners. The plan should include social media platforms and discussion groups that can connect directly with young African Nova Scotians.</p>	<p>OUR COMMUNITIES & OUR INFRASTRUCTURE</p>
<p>Enhance the collection of disaggregated statistics in order to measure the progress of African Nova Scotians across the various dimensions of the African Nova Scotian Strategy.</p>	<p>OUR INFRASTRUCTURE</p>
<p>Review and implement the unfulfilled recommendations of the Breaking Barriers Task Force Report as they relate to the African Nova Scotian Strategy.</p>	<p>OUR INFRASTRUCTURE</p>

RECOMMENDATION

<p>Facilitate the development of an accessible system whereby African Nova Scotian organizations can access meeting space at Dalhousie University. Until such time as the African Nova Scotian Centre is established, provide a designated meeting space where African Nova Scotian staff, students, faculty and community members can engage.</p>	<p>OUR INFRASTRUCTURE</p>
<p>Develop and implement an African Nova Scotian statement of principles and policy to guide Dalhousie University policy and programming</p>	<p>OUR INFRASTRUCTURE</p>
<p>The development of an African Nova Scotian Research, Policy and Engagement Centre that would be the hub of African Nova Scotian research, policy development and student, faculty, community and staff engagement at Dalhousie. We recommend a Presidential mandate be given to the Department of Advancement to develop the Centre.</p>	<p>OUR INFRASTRUCTURE & OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Recruit, promote and retain African Nova Scotian faculty and staff, including developing and implementing a mentoring strategy</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Support African Nova Scotian staff in the most vulnerable employment positions in addressing racism and other challenges that they may experience in the workplace.</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Increase representation of African Nova Scotians in leadership and management positions including culturally specific outreach strategies, targeted hiring and supporting a range of leadership opportunities (e.g. secondments, African Nova Scotian Talent Management).</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Hire an African Nova Scotian Human Resources professional to support African Nova Scotian outreach, hiring and retention strategies</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>

RECOMMENDATION

<p>Ensure that data collection methods are sufficiently disaggregated to identify and measure diversity gaps for African Nova Scotian faculty, staff and students.</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Review the Dalhousie Quality of Work Life data and the implementation of programming to improve the quality of work life of African Nova Scotians including safety resulting from on campus racism directed toward African Nova Scotians.</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Recognize unpaid equity, diversity and inclusion work undertaken by African Nova Scotian faculty and staff, particularly as it pertains to tenure and sabbaticals.</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Designate African Nova Scotian representative(s) on the Senate and Board of Governors.</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>The strategy will be led by an Associate Vice-President (AVP) of African Nova Scotian Affairs and Engagement (or equivalent) and a corresponding African Nova Scotian Office with a minimum initial staffing complement of four positions addressing research, community engagement, student services and administrative support functions</p>	<p>OUR FACULTY AND STAFF</p>
<p>Develop and implement a Research Ethics Policy Framework and Protocol on working with African Nova Scotian peoples and communities.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Through community engagement, develop a research and policy agenda grounded in the distinctiveness of African Nova Scotian people that focuses on African Nova Scotian needs and concerns, including justice, economic development, employment, education, health, and Africadian culture.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>

RECOMMENDATION

<p>Include an African Nova Scotian research, policy and learning function in the development of the African Nova Scotian Centre.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Develop a faculty exchange program with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the United States, the Caribbean and on the continent of Africa.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Develop and distribute a directory of African Nova Scotian courses, African Nova Scotian faculty and instructors, and other faculty and researchers who study African Nova Scotian topics.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Expand African Nova Scotian curricular offerings, including through the Black and Diaspora Studies Minor and expansion to a major.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Develop initiatives that enable instructors, program leaders and faculty to infuse African Nova Scotian and Africentric perspectives, issues, pedagogies and ways of knowing into curricula and program development</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Encourage faculty to engage with African Nova Scotian communities, build relationships and create service-learning opportunities.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Organize an African Nova Scotian summer institute that would offer credited courses.</p>	<p>OUR RESEARCHERS</p>
<p>Increase strategic and targeted outreach to and recruitment of African Nova Scotian students from across the province into undergraduate, graduate and professional programs.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Enhance pathway programs for African Nova Scotian students, including direct entry and graduate and professional programs.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>

RECOMMENDATION

<p>Develop an African Nova Scotian access program for the Faculty of Medicine and School of Public Administration, similar to the IB&M Initiative at the Faculty of Law.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Review and enhance entrance and in-program needs-based bursary and merit based scholarship offerings (including the Indigenous Black Entrance Scholarships, graduate, post-graduate and professional scholarships) for African Nova Scotian students.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Support African Nova Scotian student success by developing and implementing a faculty and staff recruitment and advancement program.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Support African Nova Scotian student success by working to address and rectify curricula and classroom cultural competence limitations.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Enhance academic transition and support services to meet the needs of African Nova Scotian students. The services should be African Nova Scotian centered and trauma informed: a. Develop a system of proactive referral of African Nova Scotian students with risk factors to a culturally competent support person and provide continued support using a wrap-around model. b. Match African Nova Scotian students with a dedicated Dalhousie mentor (preferably from the student's discipline). c. Establish an African Nova Scotian Elder-in-Residence program whereby Elders can share wisdom, provide culturally specific spiritual guidance and support to students, faculty and staff, and help to process trauma and pain, referring as necessary to culturally competent medical services. d. Designate culturally competent clinicians to serve African Nova Scotian students. e. Provide advisory support to the Black Student Advising Centre.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Streamline and publicize research assistant opportunities and the promotion of graduate opportunities for African Nova Scotian students. Develop a pool of on campus part-time and summer jobs for African Nova Scotian students to support income attainment and exposure to post-graduate/professional schools.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>

**DAL'S STRATEGIC
PLAN 2021-2026
PILLARS**

RECOMMENDATION

<p>Implement programming, with funding, to expose African Nova Scotian students to international study opportunities.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>
<p>Establish an exchange program with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the United States, the Caribbean and universities on the continent of Africa.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS</p>



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