

# Promoting Diversity in Health Care

A Year in Review  
2017–2018





## MESSAGE FROM THE DEANS OF **HEALTH, DENTISTRY AND MEDICINE**

We have lots to celebrate this year, thanks to your generous support to ensure diversity in health care. We had a number of African Canadian graduates in health and medical disciplines, including 6 new physicians – the largest recorded number to graduate in one class. The new Indigenous Health Program also expanded the Junior University to include three locations across Nova Scotia – Dalhousie University, Cape Breton University, and St. Francis Xavier University.

We are proud of the successes that students and our growing network of alumni achieve every day. They have gained the skills and competencies to excel individually and as members of their communities. Our two key programs, PLANS and Indigenous Health, would not be possible without the support of our dedicated faculty members, community partners, staff, and volunteers. The key to our continued success comes from those who invest in these programs – our government partners and you, our generous donors.

With your support, we have advanced our mission to support Indigenous and African Nova Scotian youth to explore careers in health. Through programs, scholarships, and other supports, we are achieving greater representation of our diverse populations within our healthcare system.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to helping us close the gap that still exists for too many young people.

Together, we are making a difference.

*David R. Anderson*

David R. Anderson, MD, FRCPC, FACP  
Dean, Faculty of Medicine  
Chair, Dalhousie University's JSF Oversight Committee

# PLANS

## PROMOTING LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS

PLANS had a great year of supporting African Nova Scotians in their journey to careers in health and medicine. In the spring of 2017, PLANS together with families, community, and stakeholders celebrated graduates in a number of health and medical disciplines, including 6 new MDs – the largest recorded number to graduate in one class. In addition to the celebrations, PLANS increased its reach by adding a program assistant to the team. The program assistant provided support during the summer programming and follow up with campers, assisting with outreach activities by attending community and Dalhousie events, developing support materials for students, and contributing to PLANS social media presence.



## SUMMER PROGRAMS

Summer programming was a great success with new additions to the opportunities for youth. The African Nova Scotian Health Science Camp expanded and was held in 3 locations across Nova Scotia – Dalhousie University, Cape Breton University, and St. Francis Xavier University. These camps provided access to participants from rural settings and the opportunity to build partnerships with more faculty and staff at each host institution.

Additionally for 2017, the first PLANS Prep Institute (PPI) was held at Dalhousie University for health science camp alumni and senior high school students. PPI is the next phase to further prepare students for the transition from high school to postsecondary with a focus on the development of the non-cognitive skills marked as determinants of success in the early years of postsecondary education training.

The institute further explored courses and programs available with associated health careers, as well as non-cognitive factors such as time management and goal setting. Other sessions included paying for your education, introduction to the Dalhousie

Student Union, and graduate school. Programming was designed to allow participants to learn a skill and put it into practice.

Participants were divided into groups and assigned a case that presented a client and a health condition that disproportionately affects African descended people (e.g. sickle cell disorder, diabetes, cardiovascular disease) and assigned a health professional (e.g. social worker, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, dietitian). Each group then conducted research with regards to the health condition and assigned health profession using skills (i.e. where to find information, how to determine credibility of information) learned during a session with the health librarian. Groups then met with a mentor who was a health professional to further discuss their case. Each group presented their case to the larger group and received feedback on their presentation skills. One group also presented at the closing ceremony.

2017 was the 4th summer of summer programming for PLANS with over 140 total participants (Figure 1).

### 2017 Outcomes

- New institutional partner with St. Francis Xavier University (Antigonish)
- Postsecondary preparation programming delivered to 20 youth
- Successful partnership with Indigenous health programs in Sydney and Antigonish

### 2018 Planned Outputs

- Continued partnership with Indigenous health programs
- Connecting with PPI participants who went on to postsecondary to learn more about the effect of PPI on their first year.

### Summer Program Attendance Summary

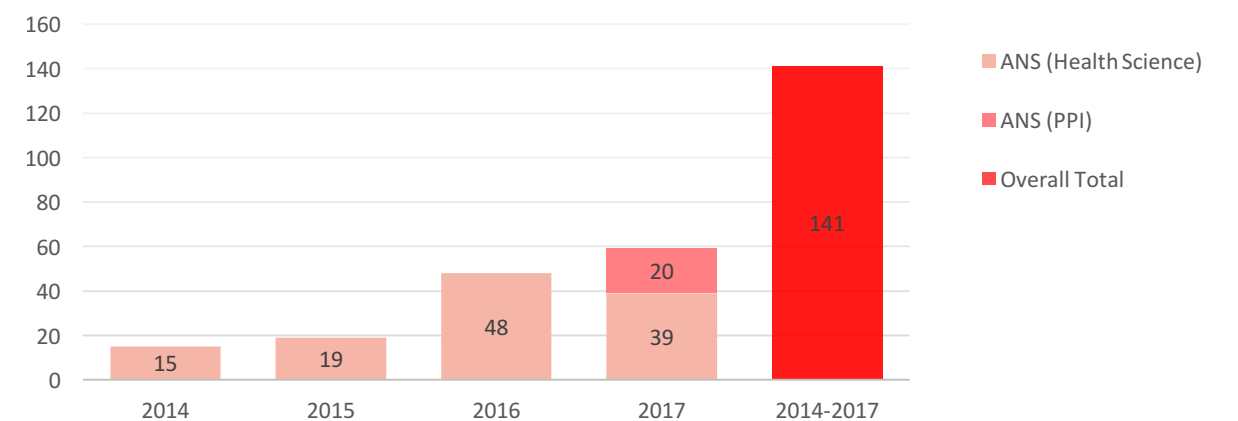
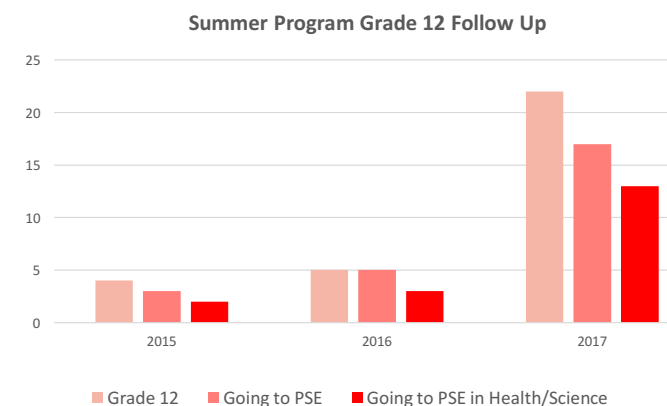


Figure 1. Summer Program Attendance Summary by Program



## SUMMER PROGRAM FOLLOW UP

Each year PLANS maintains the connections with summer program participants throughout the school year. In addition to providing on-going support and information, PLANS is interested in monitoring engagement with postsecondary education.



*Going to the PLANS Prep Institute and the Health Science Camp has literally been life changing and inspiring. It has motivated me to work even harder and has given me a chance to make bonds and lifelong friendship. This is an experience that I will never forget.*

– Grade 12, summer program participant

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Throughout the year, PLANS is available and meets with future students, families, and community providing information and advice on education options, and connection to resources such as financial, social and academic supports. Attending events in the community, across campus, and being visible at the Dalhousie University Black Student Advising Center has enabled PLANS to connect with many individuals and raise awareness of the supports offered. Maintaining content on social media has also been a way for PLANS to connect with a wide variety of audiences.

This year, PLANS provided guidance and support to two new student-led groups – Community of Black Students in Nursing (CBSN) and Atlantic Association of Black Aspiring Physicians (AABAP). Both organizations are open to current and prospective students to provide a safe space to discuss concerns related to being Black students and/or health professionals, to develop and foster interest in research and academics, and connect students with professionals for formal or informal mentorship. The goals are achieved through meetings held on a monthly basis organized on topics such as “nursing career options” with Dalhousie University nursing alumni (CBSN) and “what makes a medical student tick” with Dalhousie Medicine Admissions team (AABAP).

African Heritage Month is another opportunity for PLANS to get out into the community and foster connections. PLANS participated in the Halifax Community Investment Fund Youth Celebration that honored the contributions and successes of youth in the community. In partnership with Africentric Learning Institute TV, PLANS interviewed Dr. Clotilda Yakimchuk at a community event. Dr. Yakimchuk is one of Nova Scotia’s first Black nurses who paved the way for the training and recognition of nurses from underrepresented populations.

It was also a special honour for PLANS to be recognized by the Dalhousie University community for its dedication and contribution to the success of Black students in health, among other pioneering

pathway programs such as Dalhousie’s Transition Year Program, Indigenous Black & Mi’kmaq Initiative (in law school), Black Educators Association’s Math Camp, and Imhotep’s Legacy Academy.

## CURRICULUM

To inspire Black youth and foster inclusion, various forms of mentorship, role models, and curriculum changes are important to encourage Black youth to consider and pursue health careers. With the support from JSF, PLANS welcomed Dr. Onye Nnorom, Black health theme lead at the University of Toronto, as a guest speaker. During Dr. Nnorom’s visit she discussed inclusive curriculum with senior faculty leadership, engaged community in an inspiring dialogue on action, delivered a lecture on health equity, and met with aspiring physicians for a group mentorship session.

Further promoting Black health, PLANS along with Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch (School of Health & Human Performance) lead the offering of the first interprofessional health education mini-course, Centering Black Canadian Health. The course was open to all students in Dalhousie’s Faculties of Medicine, Health, and Dentistry. The course provided learners with an introduction to the African Nova Scotian history, health inequities specific to the Black community, and development in cultural competencies for future health practitioners.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Extend outreach to postsecondary students enrolled in partner institutions
- Build on success of the mini-course to develop for-credit course on Black Canadian health
- Further support the initiatives of the student-led initiatives
- Continue to build and foster relationships across Nova Scotia



# INDIGENOUS HEALTH PROGRAM

In October 2016, Dalhousie Medicine established an Indigenous Health Program to support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students into medicine. The program also aims to address the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and further Dalhousie's commitment to social accountability to the Maritime Indigenous population.

The Indigenous Health Program focuses on:

- Creating mentoring and outreach opportunities
- Offering pathway programs for junior and senior high school students
- Distributing bursary funds to support Indigenous students attending conferences and applying to health programs
- Providing support for the academic success and graduation of Indigenous students

## INDIGENOUS YOUTH HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAMS

In the summer of 2017, the Junior University program expanded and was held in 3 locations across Nova Scotia – Dalhousie University, Cape Breton University, and St. Francis Xavier University. The program collaborated with the Nova Scotia Community College.

There were 24 students who participated in the Junior University in July 2017. Throughout the year, we communicate with these students to support their ongoing learning about health professional careers and Dalhousie University.

Based on feedback from students, a new Dalhousie March break camp was established for high school students. The camp was called Eagle “Kitpu” Wise

and was developed in partnership with the Halifax Regional School Board. The week-long program involved students visiting the Dalhousie Halifax campus where they participated in programs run by faculty members in health faculties. Students received hands on exposure to clinical health education programs and were able to learn about careers in dentistry, nursing, occupational therapy and medicine. Students were able to shadow dentists during their clinical practice, learned about working with people who have limited mobility, and worked on a case with simulated patients. Aside from the academic and clinical lessons, students also worked with an elder making drums and learning about the significance of drumming and music as part of the healing process.

## MENTORSHIP

The Indigenous Health program supports and mentors summer and March break camp participants through the year. In addition to providing on-going support and information, the program teamed up with the Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship (AIM) Network.

AIM is made up of researchers from eight Atlantic Canadian universities who share the goal of transforming the Indigenous health research landscape within and beyond the region. The goal is to initiate a shift towards meaningful, impactful health research that resonates with communities and Indigenous scholars.

As part of the work, the focus is also on supporting health careers through intentional mentorship with students, junior faculty and community members.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Indigenous Health Program is committed to recruiting promising students from the Indigenous community and encourage their entry into a health career. Our recruitment efforts begin with students at a young age, in the hopes of inspiring them through exposure to the various health professions,

and to support them in their path to successful entrance into the program.

To meet this goal, we have developed strategic partnerships with community organizations, including the Centre for Education and Friendship Centers. The Indigenous Health Program is a core initiative that allows the Faculty of Medicine to be active at community events, by promoting the program through job fairs, and presentations at local schools and conferences. These activities provide opportunities to engage with community members and youth.

Working closely with the student-led group – Indigenous Health Interest Group (IHIG) – with a common goal of improving knowledge, awareness and action on Indigenous health and related topics at Dalhousie University. IHIG focuses on improving the health of Indigenous peoples and reducing Indigenous health inequities through education, empowerment, advocacy and research. IHIG aims to raise awareness of Indigenous health inequities while enabling non-Indigenous people to become better informed about Indigenous cultures and health issues. IHIG also assists in the development of culturally competent health practitioners and researchers, and helps to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) calls to action.

## CURRICULUM SUPPORT

To meet the commitment of the TRC Recommendations, the Indigenous Health program has assisted in reviewing and revising the curriculum and has helped develop cultural education sessions. These sessions are run by Indigenous health care leaders, and are designed to engage and educate faculty, staff and students.

The Indigenous Health Program also worked with faculty to develop a new Indigenous Health Education Course. This course also required the recruitment of Indigenous participants to be part of the simulated patient program, be Indigenous co-tutors, and engage in the ongoing review of the medical school admissions policies.



Dalhousie health faculties and their Indigenous community partners are jointly invested in the creation of a new Indigenous Health Education course that will be mandatory within the health programs at Dalhousie in September 2018. The new course will consist of four, two-hour modules, and will be completed over 4 weeks. The curriculum has been developed, and the course will be piloted with faculty and staff in May 2018, and offered to students in the 2018/2019 school year.

## CREATING SPACES FOR INDIGENOUS VOICES

Dalhousie has been taking steps to create space for Indigenous voices on the campus. Through strategic partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations, Dalhousie has developed outreach programs, and has created an array of learning opportunities for our faculty and students.

Eel Ground First Nation is a Mi'kmaq First Nation community located in Miramichi, New Brunswick.

Strategies to increase the awareness of medical students on health issues and cultural differences were identified with the community. This partnership continues to grow with opportunities for students to learn with the community.

Every year, our first year medical students spend a week observing a Maritime rural physician in practice. The purpose of the unit is to help our students identify characteristics of clinical practice, health-care delivery, and resource access/use in a rural setting. In 2017, the program held the first full day on Indigenous Health Education hosted in the community (Sipekne'katik First Nation).

The Medical Education Institute (MEI) is an annual day-long faculty development that addresses current needs-based topics and trends in medical education and curriculum. The primary focus of the MEI is to support faculty of Dalhousie Medical School in their roles as educators and academics. In 2017, the MEI focused on social accountability with a blanket exercise led by Elders and supported by community health workers from Millbrook First Nation.

## SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The Elders in Residence program was established in 2015 and has since expanded to service all the Dalhousie faculties on the Halifax campus. There are 5 Elders on Staff active on campus and are committed to making themselves available to students for guidance, counseling, and support.

Elders are also available as cultural advisors, and perform traditional practices and ceremonies, such as smudging and talking circles on campus.

In 2016, Dalhousie permanently raised the Mi'kmaq Grad council flag in the upper campus court yard. This was a symbolic gesture of Dalhousie's commitment to creating a more inclusive campus for Indigenous students. With the coming of 2017, Dalhousie has put its plan into action and continues to work with Indigenous communities to create academic equity across its campuses.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Through the support of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, PLANS and Indigenous Health provided financial support to Black and Indigenous post-secondary students to eliminate or reduce financial burdens to assist with participation in academic conferences, training seminars, and associated fees for entrance exams such as the MCAT and CASPer.

In 2017-2018, 12 conference bursaries were awarded. The funds awarded were allocated toward registrations fees and/or travel fees.

In 2017-2018, 9 Entrance Requirements bursaries were awarded and reduced the financial burden associated with application requirements.

