



Johnson Scholarship Foundation – A Catalyst for Change

Toward an equitable and inclusive future in
health care for Indigenous and African Nova Scotians

Five Year Impact Report | June 2021



“Where we are now would not have been possible without this investment from the Johnson Scholarship Foundation. From my perspective, this gift has been an incredibly worthwhile use of funds, time and energy, serving JSF well, Dalhousie well, along with communities of people of African and Indigenous ancestry and, indeed, the Nova Scotia health system overall.”

Sharon Davis-Murdoch
PLANS Advisory Board member, Co-president,
Health Association of African Canadians

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Over the past 200 years, Dalhousie University has proudly forged an international reputation for excellence in teaching and learning, ground-breaking innovation, and service to community.

As a university, we strive to live our core values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, with intention and commitment, in all aspects of the Dalhousie experience. As leaders in education, we use the power of knowledge and the passion for inquiry to forge stronger futures and create new opportunities for all.

These same principles lie at the heart of our commitment to help address the legacy of systemic racism experienced by our African Nova Scotian and Indigenous peoples across our province and our region. Initiatives like our Transition Year Program, the Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq Initiative in our law school, the James R. Johnson Chair in Black Canadian Studies, and the Imhotep's Legacy Academy – each developed in consultation with the communities they serve – are helping create new narratives of opportunity and new routes to success for African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students.

In this same way, your generous funding of PLANS and IHIM has been integral to this process of reconciliation, renewal, and hope. Because of you, Dalhousie now offers customized, culturally attuned programming and resources, designed to encourage, nurture, and support Indigenous and African Nova Scotians students who aspire to careers in health.

While much work remains to be done, the structure is strong and the path forward is clear. Through the generosity of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, aspiring Indigenous and African Nova Scotian health professionals can look forward to a more inclusive, accessible, and representative healthcare system. In so doing, we will build a stronger medical system – and a better future – for all people.

I am delighted to share this final report, detailing the impact of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation's five years of Pathways Program funding.

Thank you for believing in us.

Sincerely,

Deep Saini
President and Vice-Chancellor
Dalhousie University

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEANS OF HEALTH, DENTISTRY AND MEDICINE

As you know from Dalhousie University's PLANS and IHIM programs, creating a more diverse, inclusive and representative health system is a long-term process.

Burdened by generations of systemic racism and economic exclusion, our African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities, until only recently, rarely saw themselves – or their needs – reflected in the health system. Generations of young leaders from these communities were thwarted in their dreams of health careers, let alone university education.

Thanks to committed community and philanthropic partners, like the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, the needle is moving.

As we reflect on our successful partnership with the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, we can look with pride on our achievements and with hope for the future. Your support has allowed us to be more intentional in our work, focussing our energy, resources, and aspirations where it counts most: with increasing the numbers of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students enrolled in our health programs and professional schools.

PLANS and IHIM staff have stepped forth as effective advocates for change, helping shape policy and curriculum while advancing our collective knowledge in our faculties and across the institution.

Creating an inclusive and representative health system will take time. The past cannot be undone in five years. But our goal is within reach, thanks to the solid foundation we have built with the Johnson Scholarship Foundation.

This is your legacy. Thank you sincerely for your support.

Dr. David Anderson
Dean of Medicine

Dr. Brenda Merritt
Dean of Health

Dr. Ben Davis
Dean of Dentistry

YOUR LEGACY

Since 2016, the Johnson Scholarship Foundation has invested \$1,000,000 in matching funds to create a path to a brighter future for hundreds of Indigenous and African Nova Scotian youth, opening the door to their studies and advancement in the health-care fields.

Together we are empowering future generations of young African Nova Scotian and Indigenous leaders who will help create a truly equitable and culturally competent health-care system for all. Your generous gift—together with the gifts from other forward-thinking donors that you helped to attract—has catalyzed fundamental change for years to come.

The below impacts are only the beginning! Just five years ago, the foundations we have built together were little more than ideas and ideals. With your support, we now have two strong, thriving programs tailored for each community that are changing the face of healthcare and improving the quality of care for all in Maritime Canada and beyond. Our partnership has achieved much in this short time, including:

- **Increased enrollment of African Canadian and Indigenous students** in Dalhousie health programs, and a growing number of related events, inquiries, requests for support, and partnerships.
- **Strong, consistent, and innovative programming that builds pathways early.** We have together created programming that is responsive to student needs, intentional in delivery, and grounded in community and cultural relevance.
- **Mentorship programming and targeted financial support** designed to meet the unique needs of our students pursuing their goal of a career in health.
- **Growing visibility and credibility** of the programs within the African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities.
- **More collaborations and partnerships** across the University's networks, including with government, community capacity builders, educators, and the medical community.
- **Far-reaching culture shifts** within the University as our students, programmers and advisors from these priority communities "take their place" at the tables of influence. Their opinions and advice are sought across Dalhousie as they carry forward shared values of inclusion, diversity and equity and continue to advocate for greater representation in the health curriculum, educational practices, and services.
- **Full integration of foundational programming and organizational capacity within Dalhousie,** setting in motion the start of generational change.
- We would never have gotten this far without you. It is because of your leadership and partnership with Dalhousie that our programs have been able to grow into what they are today: institutionally embedded initiatives working to empower, nurture and mobilize students who otherwise may never have thought a career in health would be possible.

Thank you for helping to create more inclusive opportunities for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian youth and a more equitable health-care system for all.





FIVE YEARS OF IMPACT: IT ALL STARTS WITH LEADERSHIP

For many of our Indigenous and African Nova Scotian students pursuing a career in health is but a distant dream. Unlike other students, ambitious young scholars from these two communities often must face and overcome formidable financial and systemic barriers to realizing their dreams.

Your support has helped Dalhousie hold and nurture these dreams – and help see them through. Together we have developed nimble, responsive,

and culturally-centric programs focusing on recruitment and retention to mentorship and financial assistance.

We can now walk beside our students. Encouraging. Supporting. Advocating. Celebrating. And that takes committed and visionary leadership, strategically positioned within the university and connected into their communities of interest.

“As a young woman who identifies as Black and Indigenous, I face many barriers, including that of finances. Thanks to the Pathways Scholarship, I was able to pay for my tuition for the Advanced Nursing Program at Dalhousie and prove that, as a young black woman, I am capable of great things.”

Kyla Simmons
Faculty of Health, Nursing

INNOVATION IN PROGRAMMING



Sarah Upshaw

Promoting Leadership in Health for African Nova Scotians (PLANS)

Originally established in 2011 through the Faculty of Medicine to increase representation of African Nova Scotians in the health professions, PLANS started small.

With the addition of funding from the Foundation in 2016, the program was able to grow substantially to encompass its current suite of programming and network of community relationships. More recently, a part-time student coordinator position was also added. Hired in October of 2019, our current PLANS Manager, **Sarah Upshaw** brings a background in mental health nursing, recreational therapy, and counselling to the position.

Both PLANS and IHIM programs are part of the **Global Health Office** under the leadership of its director, **Shawna O’Hearn**. Each program also benefits from the guidance and counsel of **advisory committees**, mandated to seek improvement in health outcomes within the African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities, and advise our deans of Health, Dentistry and Medicine on the strategies we need to continue to be accountable to both our priority communications.



Hannah Asprey

Indigenous Health in Medicine (IHIM)

The Indigenous Health in Medicine program was only established in 2016 with the injection of funds from the Foundation. IHIM’s goal is to increase the representation of Indigenous students in health

care fields from across the Maritime provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The IHIM Manager, **Hannah Asprey**, is a member of Millbrook First Nation and brings a background in financial services, having previously managed the education portfolio for Millbrook. She successfully navigated the realities of pandemic programming by pivoting IHIM’s programs and services from in-person to virtual.



WHERE IT REALLY COUNTS THE MOST: INCREASED ENROLLMENT

Today, the prospect of creating the diverse and equitable health-care system that we all need and deserve is real. And we are deeply indebted to the Johnson Scholarship Foundation for your support of our programs and capacity to create this change.

The process of change is finally underway.

While both programs are still young, early enrollment trends have been encouraging. In every respect, the numbers are demonstrating what we know anecdotally to be true: Our PLANS and IHIM engagement models are working. From sparking and inspiring a dream of a healthcare career in secondary school to supporting and nurturing future health professionals throughout their university years, our programs are starting to make a difference.

Overall Dalhousie enrollment

- While **African Nova Scotians** comprise less than 2% of total student enrollment, their numbers increased over this period by 121 to 232 students.
- The overall number of **Indigenous** (Inuit, all First Nations (including Mi'kmaq) and Métis) students increased over this same period by 108 to 626, or 4% overall.
- **Mi'kmaq** students from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and parts of New Brunswick make up less than 2% of Dalhousie's total enrollment, approximately 203 students self-identified as Mi'kmaq in 2019, up from 66 in 2015.

All the faculty-specific areas that have shown enrollment strength are currently supported by equity-servicing programs (i.e. IHIM and PLANS for Health and Dentistry, the longstanding Indigenous Blacks and Mi'kmaq Initiative for Law, and the Transition Year Program, which has a high continuation rate for studies within the Faculty of Arts and Social Science.) In fact, **the Be Counted authors directly credit PLANS and IHIM as key factors in the increased enrollment numbers of African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students in the health faculties.**

**Data compilation for the 2020 Dalhousie Community Data Report is still underway.*

Each year, Dalhousie University collects census data from its student, faculty, and staff populations. While strictly voluntary, more than 80% of students and 90% of staff participate.

And the numbers say it all. From 2015 – 2019, enrollment levels for African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students – while still lower than their representation in the general population -- have been steadily increasing, and especially in the Health faculties.

Among the five-year trends noted in **Be Counted: The 2019 Dalhousie Community Data Report*** are **these highlights.**

Faculty-Specific Enrollment

- **African Nova Scotians** make up 1.5% of the overall university student population, two of our faculties attract a higher percentage: Dentistry (3%) and Health (2%). The only other faculties with larger African Nova Scotian enrollments are Law at 4% and Arts and Social Sciences at 3%.
- The highest enrollments among **Indigenous students** overall were in Health and Law (7% for each).
- When looking specifically at **Mi'kmaq** students, enrollment is highest in Dentistry (4%) and Law (5%).

BUILDING THE PATHWAYS EARLY

ENGAGING AND INSPIRING JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Your tremendous generosity has helped PLANS and IHIM build critical early pathways that can help overcome the long-standing systemic barriers that continue to discourage youth of Indigenous and African descent from pursuing post-secondary education.

We learned early on through our prior experience with PLANS that reaching and connecting with students while they are still in secondary school is the essential first step to reframing the narrative from “University isn’t for me” to “I’m going to be a doctor. Just watch.” Your funding allowed us to build further on this experience to expand the existing PLANS program and establish IHIM, founded on those learnings and community consultations.

By the end of the five-year funding period, we had helped 355 African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students see themselves and their futures through a new lens, reflected in the success of their mentors and role models, and inspired through new fields of discovery.

We also learned with the help of your funding that new pathways were needed to reach the youth where they are at and not be restricted to single university. By the end of the funding period, we were working with two other universities in Nova Scotia.

“There’s often such a disconnect between our African Nova Scotian students and the prospect of university. You can see it while they’re still in school. In so many cases, they completely rule out the idea of continuing their education, simply because they don’t believe it’s achievable for them.”

Sarah Upshaw
Manager, PLANS

SUMMER & MARCH BREAK CAMPS

From the outset, we realized that the best way for the youth from our priority communities to see themselves as a university student was to actually spend time on campus, immersed in the experience and inspired by role models.

Our series of residential summer and March Break Camps, offered by both PLANS and IHIM, are designed to do just that: ignite the students’ passion for a university education and, possibly, a career in health. For many of these students, this might be their first time stepping foot on a university campus, and for some, their first visit to the province’s capital city of Halifax.

Organized jointly – but run separately – the camps offer engaging, interactive and hands-on programming from six schools in the Faculty of Health, along with the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry at Dalhousie.

In addition to discovering the academic and clinical sides of health education, the students also learn about the practical side of being accepted into and thriving in university: the application process,

accessing scholarships and bursaries, managing time and setting goals. In the evenings, participants and organizers explore their shared cultures and values through activities or meet with health professionals from their communities to learn from their experience and success.

Most importantly, **each participant is paired with a mentor**, either an African Nova Scotian or Indigenous student enrolled in a Dalhousie health program. These mentors – who can speak to their experience navigating life as a racialized student in health – also serve as role models and confidants for these young learners.

To better reach students living outside Halifax, the summer camp program expanded its reach with two universities: **Cape Breton University (CBU)** in Sydney in 2016, and **St. Francis Xavier (StFX)** in Antigonish in 2017. Organizers drew on local faculty specializations to expose the students to Human Kinetics, Human Nutrition, Public Health and paramedicine.

PLANS Camps – Highlights

- PLANS launched the African Nova Scotian Health Sciences Summer Camps for students in Grades 8-11 in 2014.
- In 2017, a new program, the “PLANS Prep Institute,” was launched for students in the final years of high school. This Institute focuses on building the essential skills for students to succeed in their first years of post-secondary education, examines issues of Black health and community wellness, and offers in-depth opportunities to learn more about health career options.
- Enrollment in PLANS camps has tripled in size and **241 African Nova Scotian students** participated in the PLANS camp program.

IHIM Junior University Camps – Highlights

- The original “Junior University” program – a one-week summer camp at Dalhousie for Indigenous youth, ages 14 -17 – started in 2011. The infusion of JSF funding in 2016 brought a new focus and energy to the programming.
- In 2017, the Junior University program expanded to CBU and StFX, in collaboration with PLANS.
- Based on student feedback, IHIM established a new March Break program for high school students, in partnership with the Halifax Regional School Board, known as Kitpu.
- Since 2017, 114 **Indigenous students** participated in IHIM camps.

Thanks to the Johnson Scholarship Foundation’s support, eight camps in total were offered in both 2018 and 2019: four by PLANS, four by IHIM.



LOOKING AHEAD

As we continue to evolve our engagement models to reach even more students in new ways, we do so by building on our model of success, made possible by the Johnson Scholarship Foundation the JSF Pathways Program.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had no choice but to cancel the 2020 in-person camp programs. This forced pause gave us the breathing space to assess, reimagine and plan the next stage of the camp model.

Among the questions we are asking are these:

- How can we reach even more African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students in communities across the province?
- Can we engage our youth earlier, ideally at the elementary level?
- Are there alternatives to the one-week format that would create space for year-round opportunities for connection?
- Could we incorporate elements of online learning into future program delivery?

IMPACT

355 African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students saw themselves and their futures through a new lens, reflected in the success of their mentors and role models, and inspired through new fields of discovery. Thank you for believing in their potential.

As we evolve the camp program to reach more students, in new ways, we do so by building on this model of success, made possible through the JSF Pathways Program.

Indigenous Health Programs

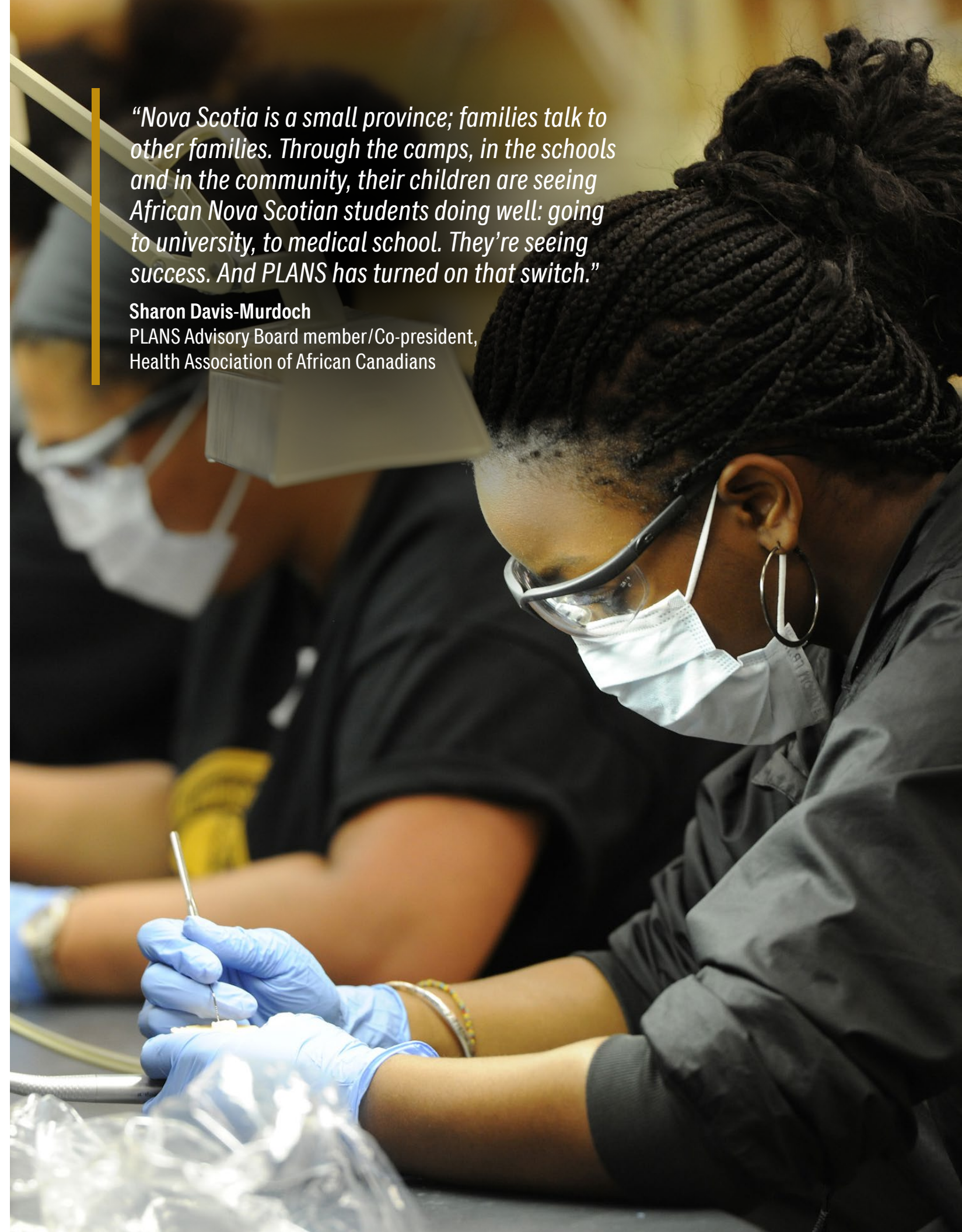
Year	Camp				Total Students
	Dalhousie	CBU	St Fx	Kitpu	
2017	9	7	8	-	24
2018	9	12	7	11	39
2019	10	10	14	17	51
Total					114

PLANS Summer Programs

Year	Camp				Total Students
	Dalhousie	CBU	St Fx	PREP	
2016	39	9	-	-	48
2017	27	5	7	20	59
2018	28	10	9	20	67
2019	28	10	9	20	67
Total					241

“Nova Scotia is a small province; families talk to other families. Through the camps, in the schools and in the community, their children are seeing African Nova Scotian students doing well: going to university, to medical school. They’re seeing success. And PLANS has turned on that switch.”

Sharon Davis-Murdoch
PLANS Advisory Board member/Co-president,
Health Association of African Canadians



CREATING POSSIBILITY THROUGH THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

To reach as many African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students in schools across the province and, indeed across the Maritimes, PLANS and IHIM leverage a wide network of community and government partners in an ongoing process of relationship building. From establishing targeted outreach events and creating in-school resources to internship programs, our PLANS and IHIM staff understand that all change starts with personal connection.

Whether it is an encouraging conversation or an inspiring presentation, seeing the face of someone who looks like you, doing the kind of work you have dreamed about but never thought possible – until now – makes all the difference.

PLANS PARTNERSHIPS

PLANS links into the public school system across the province, with particular attention to the Halifax Regional Municipality and the 48 historic Black communities across Nova Scotia.

Linking in through school guidance counsellors and the African Nova Scotian support workers, PLANS staff promote the program and offer support, from assisting high school students in navigating the Dalhousie admissions process to connecting them with upper-year African Nova Scotian student mentors already in the health science stream. Prior to the pandemic, staff and role models frequently visited schools, meeting directly with and leading presentations to African Nova Scotian students.

Over the past five years, PLANS extended the depth and breadth of its youth outreach by collaborating with a robust network of **community partners** across the province, who together strive to help improve success and bridge the achievement gap for African Nova Scotian school students. They include the Black Educators Association, Business is Jammin’ – a Black Business Initiative program, the Delmore “Buddy” Day Learning Centre, the

Relationship building is a fluid, ongoing process of connecting, reconnecting, reaching out and nurturing networks of allies, grounded in trust and powered by integrity. And it takes time and intention to do well.

Significantly, our growing reputation for excellence and impact is opening doors. Leading community partners – such as the IWK Health Sciences Centre and Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education -- are now proposing joint projects to advance diversity and inclusion.

Authentic connection defines the essence of what we do, by sparking ambition, encouraging goals, advising, and helping navigate the pathways to success.

Black Cultural Centre, the STEM-focused Imhotep’s Legacy Academy, Nova Scotia Department of Education – African Nova Scotian Branch, and the Health Association of African Canadians. Formally and informally through this network, PLANS provides information and connection to resources for students and families on topics including financial, social, and academic supports.

Since 2016, PLANS has connected directly with African Nova Scotian school students through community-based outreach events, large and small, including:

- **Passport 2 Youth Success XPO:** This long-established, two-day career fair attracts more than 3,000 youth—44% of them African Nova Scotian – in grades 9 through 12 from across the province. PLANS has participated for three years, with its booth consistently attracting some of the highest numbers of visitors.
- **Sister 2 Sister:** This annual conference for young women brings together 150 African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students from across Halifax. Targeted to participants from junior high through post-secondary, the event

is designed to nurture bonds and create community through education.

- **IWK Career Fair:** Hosted by the local children’s hospital, this annual event for junior high and high school students showcases pathways to health careers.
- **Black Student Advising Centre Academic & Services Fair:** This annual event for African Nova Scotian high school students interested in attending Dalhousie University brings more than 200 high school students and staff to campus.

In 2020, PLANS partnered with the **Dartmouth General Hospital (DGH)** to pilot the first-ever co-op program for high school students. Developed in collaboration with the **Halifax Regional Centre for Education**, the initiative offered 10 African Nova Scotian students from five Dartmouth-area high schools the opportunity to experience hands-on activities, led by health professionals, while learning about the range of health careers and – as importantly — the prerequisites for admission. The 80-hour, ten-week placement ran from October 2020 through January 2021. So successful was this pilot that students are now being accepted and matched with mentors for a second term.

As part of this new initiative, PLANS staff also worked directly with four of the Grade 12 co-op students who expressed interest in the Dalhousie nursing program. In addition to setting up an admissions information session with the Dalhousie Registrar’s Office and helping the students

navigate the application process, PLANS also supported their application and CASPer (Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Personal Characteristics) test fees. All four students will enter Dalhousie Nursing in the fall of 2021.

Looking ahead, the success of this DGH/PLANS partnership may serve as a model for similar co-op programs in high schools across Nova Scotia. We are currently discussing this possibility – and its extension to IHIM -- with the provincial department of Labour and Advanced Education.

“Passport 2 Youth Success is about empowerment, and so is PLANS. We partner with them because they share our commitment to enhancing our youth on personal, social, education and career development level”

Jessica Bowden
Founder, Passport 2 Youth Success XPO



IHIM PARTNERSHIPS

In any context, developing successful relationships is an iterative, ongoing process of building and nurturing trust and connection. Our Indigenous IHIM staff start early by linking with students from elementary to high school, both on-reserve and off.

For students on the 13 Mi'kmaq reserves across Nova Scotia, IHIM works directly with the **Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)**, the directors of education from all the reserves in NS (excluding Millbrook). To reach urban and off-reserve Indigenous students, IHIM builds links through the network of Indigenous support workers in the public schools across the province.

Face-to-face, on-the-ground connection is essential. As Hannah Asprey, the program manager, explains, "Not only do we want the Mi'kmaq community to know about us and how we're here to support them, but we have to ensure their voices are being heard and the students' needs being met in our programming."

Community collaborations are essential to meeting this goal. In addition to its long-standing relationship with the **Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre in Halifax** – part of the National Association of Friendship Centres – IHIM has worked with the **Native Council of Nova Scotia** and the **Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs**.

IHIM also works to strengthen links with Indigenous communities across Atlantic Canada, including Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. In the case of New Brunswick, this is especially valuable given the Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick (DMNB) program, which provides medical school students from New Brunswick the opportunity to do their studies closer to home.

Since 2016, Dalhousie medical students have also gained first-hand understanding of Indigenous health priorities and issues through a unique partnership with Eel Ground First Nation in New Brunswick. In the process, Indigenous residents benefitted from access to additional health-care providers.

DMNB, in partnership with the **Under One Sky Friendship Centre** in Fredericton, New Brunswick, also launched "Doctor for a Day" in March 2019. Developed as a one-day opportunity for interested middle- to high school-age students in the region to visit DMNB and explore the study of medicine through educational activities, the event offers hands-on skills development, and discussion with medical students and Indigenous health professionals. A second event took place in November 2019 and resumed as a five-part series of virtual workshops in March 2021, in partnership with (IHIM).

With the support of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, IHIM staff also been able to connect with Indigenous youth through regular job fairs and presentations at local schools and conferences, including:

- Eskasoni First Nation Career Fair
- Dalhousie Indigenous Youth Career Fair
- Passport 2 Youth Success XPO

Given the realities of Covid-19, all outreach in 2020 was virtual and delivered primarily by email and through IHIM's social media channels.

"The intergenerational trauma of the residential school system means Indigenous students often distrust and disconnect from the school system early on. That's why we focus on connecting, building self-esteem and the belief that a career in health care can be theirs."

Hannah Asprey
Manager, IHIM

SEEING SUCCESS IN ACTION: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

Nothing reinforces the message of "This could be your future" better than seeing the success of people who come from your communities and share your history, values and lived experience.

Both PLANS and IHIM, in conjunction with community partners, have developed print and video resources featuring African Nova Scotian and Indigenous role models, designed to inspire youth to dream about a career in health.

- **IHIM** prepared a resource guide for Indigenous high school students across the Atlantic region, promoting health-related careers in collaboration with the Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network
- **PLANS** developed a series of seven posters showcasing African Nova Scotians in different health professions in partnership with the **Nova**

Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Designed for students in junior high and high school, the posters feature a cross-section of role models from African Nova Scotian communities across the province

- Both **PLANS** and **IHIM** are working closely with colleagues from the **IWK Health Sciences Centre** – the region's leading hospital for children, youth, and women – to create a series of short videos highlighting careers in health care. These three-minute videos also feature a number of PLANS and IHIM alumni. A series of print materials will accompany the video campaign, targeted to junior and senior high students across Nova Scotia.

IMPACT

It all starts with connection. With an encouraging conversation. An inspiring presentation. Seeing the face of someone who looks like you, doing the kind of work you've dreamed about but never thought possible –until now.

Relationship building is a fluid, ongoing process of connecting, reconnecting, reaching out and nurturing networks of allies, grounded in trust and powered by integrity. And it takes time and intention to do well.

Significantly, our growing reputation for excellence and impact is opening doors. Leading community partners – such as the IWK Health Sciences Centre and Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education -- are now proposing joint projects to advance diversity and inclusion.

Authentic connection defines the essence of what we do, by sparking ambition, encouraging goals, advising, and helping navigate the pathways to success.

And it's working.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS ON THEIR DALHOUSIE JOURNEY

HUBS FOR CONNECTION. RESOURCES FOR EMPOWERMENT. RESPECT FOR IDENTITY.

PLANS and IHIM staff help new students build the skills they need to succeed in university, including how to research, study and manage their time. From information sharing and hands-on assistance navigating university services to facilitating mentorships, financial support and pathways to professional schools, PLANS and IHIM create safe and affirming spaces where students are empowered to excel.

Changing the health system and improving health outcomes for our African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities requires building cultural empathy, sensitivity and understanding among all health care practitioners. And that change of perspective starts at Dalhousie: in the classroom, in the lab, in the clinic, and in the learning materials.

“It’s difficult when you come from a community where no one has entered the medical profession. You don’t know that you can and so you’ve a huge barrier to get over or break through. That’s the strength of these programs: we help our students recognize they can be whatever they want to be.”

Dr. David Haase, MD, FRCPC
Co-Chair, PLANS Advisory Committee

ON-CAMPUS SUPPORTS DELIVERED BY PLANS

Focusing on Black Canadian Health

PLANS has been instrumental to introducing learners of all backgrounds to the Black Canadian community, particularly the history and unique experience of African Nova Scotians, the course explores historical and intergenerational trauma, along with the impacts of racism and discrimination on this population’s health and wellness. PLANS helped design the course, which launched in 2017-18, and is co-facilitated by the PLANS manager.

Celebrating Black-Led Research

Since 2019, PLANS has been partnering with and three student groups partnered with Dalhousie’s Imhotep’s Legacy Academy (ILA) and the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute of Halifax to organize and host the **Black Excellence in STEM and Health Research Symposium**.

The two-day event showcases Black leadership in STEM and health-related fields, featuring keynote speakers along with noted researchers of African descent from across Canada presenting and discussing their research. Student researchers are also offered the opportunity to present their thesis projects to an expert panel for feedback.

As with all our programming this past year, the 2021

symposium successfully navigated the pandemic and pivoted to a one-day, online format.

Promoting Black Student Leadership

Over the past five years, PLANS has nurtured the development of the three below student-led groups for students of African descent who are enrolled in health-related programs:

- **Atlantic Association of Black Aspiring Physicians (AABAP)**
- **Community of Black Students in Nursing (CBSN)**
- **The Health Association of African Canadians – Student Organization (HAAC-SO)**

Together and separately, these groups organize Black student-focused professional development opportunities and networking activities. PLANS and these three student-led associations are part of a larger network of organizations and offices across Dalhousie supporting students of the African diaspora. This includes the **Dalhousie Black Medical Student Association**, the **Black Student Advising Centre**, **Black United Students Association**, and the **Dalhousie African Students Association**.



“Indigenous students often say that university is about surviving the system while keeping your identity. It’s one thing getting students in the door; it’s another to creating that sense of ongoing belonging. I value IHIM because I know the students I refer to them will be taken care of in a truly supportive way.”

Michelle Graveline
Indigenous Student Advisor, Dalhousie University

ON-CAMPUS SUPPORTS DELIVERED BY IHIM

Introducing Cultural Safety in Healthcare for Indigenous People

The faculties of Health, Medicine and Dentistry, along with IHIM and partners from the Indigenous community, came together to create a mini-course. Launched in 2018-19, the mini-course provides students with background into the histories of Indigenous people, discusses the reality of racism and offers advice on cultural safety when working with Indigenous patients. **The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs (APC)** were involved in the design and development of the mini-course's content, and identifying presenters on Indigenous health, health-care delivery and culture.

IHIM staff played an active role in recruiting the original Indigenous participants for the simulated patient component and helped prepare the case studies; today, Hannah Asprey co-facilitates the sessions.

Promoting Indigenous Student Leadership

Over the past five years, IHIM has collaborated and supported the work of the student led group, **Indigenous Health Interest Group**. Together and separately, they organize student-focused professional development opportunities and networking activities, and speaker series. IHIM is part of a larger network of organizations and offices across Dalhousie supporting Indigenous students including the **Dalhousie Indigenous Student Centre, Director of Indigenous Community Engagement** and the **Indigenous Advisory Council**.

For Indigenous students, the very design of a university education – group work, the lecture format, grading practices, non-representative course content – can run counter to cultural value systems. Being able to access support that celebrates and allows them to bring their values forward is essential to feeding our students' dream of a career in health care.

One such avenue is the **Elders-in-Residence program**, run out of the Indigenous Student Centre. The five elders are available to students for

guidance, counsel and support, as well as to provide smudging ceremonies, opening and closing prayers at ceremonies, and conducting talking circles for students on request.

As IHIM manager, Hannah Asprey, explains, "Our students find comfort speaking with an elder, particularly when they're going through periods of crisis."

In March 2021, IHIM launched a new support initiative, a virtual Sharing Circle. Co-chaired by Hannah and Dr. Andrew Lynk, Dalhousie University Chair of Pediatrics, the Sharing Circle is an opportunity for Indigenous students in medicine to voice their concerns about classes or curricula, get feedback, ask questions about their programs, seek mentorship or simply share their experiences. Designed as a safe space for mutual support and guidance, the monthly Sharing Circles will also identify new opportunities for institutional leadership.

IMPACT

Thanks to JSF support, IHIM and PLANS are participating as partners in this process of curriculum renewal. As Sarah Upshaw explains, "We're sharing the voice of our students and the voice of our communities." PLANS and IHIM are a consistent and trusted presence: informing, educating, and helping shape the content, tone and direction of Dalhousie's health curriculum and university policies.

Today, IHIMS and PLANS are at the table. Our perspective is sought. Our voices are heard.

That's how sustainable change starts.

"Dalhousie is welcoming increased numbers of Indigenous students into our medical school, with a dual commitment to create cultural awareness and competencies for non-Indigenous students and faculty. We are connecting with Indigenous students from Maritime junior high and high schools, to support and encourage them to pursue a career in the health professions. As leaders, we are also committed to promoting learning environments that are safe and supportive for everyone, and participate in sharing circles with our Indigenous students to listen, share and grow together on this hopeful new path together."

Dr. Andrew Lynk, MD MSc FRCPC D.Litts (Hon)

Chair of Pediatrics - Dalhousie University Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine



MENTORSHIP: ROLE MODELS FOR SUCCESS

Since 2016, both IHIM and PLANS managers have tapped into their networks of upper-year health program students and alumni to engage them as mentors.

Whether with high school students considering a career in health, undergraduates pondering next steps or aspiring doctors and dentists navigating professional school, these mentors generously advise, encourage, and share the benefit of their experience. In fact, studies show that support programs like these help improve completion rates and decrease student stress.

In turn, our African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students connect with and are inspired by successful individuals from their communities – people who have “already made it.”

These popular, informal mentorship arrangements have evolved into a core support service for both IHIM and PLANS.

More recently, we have deepened and broadened our mentorship options with the addition of two formal programs, made possible through the generosity of the Johnson Scholarship Foundation.

Sophia B. Jones Mentorship Program

This program was launched in September 2019 for African Nova Scotian/Canadian students in the

Faculty of Medicine, the program matched seven students in years 1 through 4 of medical school with a Black resident or physician. Mentors and mentees typically meet on a monthly basis and often more frequently.

Sophia B. Jones was the first Canadian-born black woman to become a physician. Denied entry into Canadian medical schools on the basis of her race and gender, she persisted and pursued her dream by attending medical school in Michigan. A pioneer in her field, Dr. Jones contributed many publications on the advancement of Black health.

Johnson Scholarship Foundation Mentorship Program

The Bachelor of Medical Science program is a highly competitive and strenuous program. To help support the current students, the Johnson Scholarship Foundation Mentorship Program was developed to match first and second-year students in the Medical Science program with upper-year students from their communities. Mentors and mentees meet at least once a month. These connections are supplemented with workshops covering topics such as the admission requirements for medicine, MCAT preparation advice and how to fund a medical school education. Ten pairs of students participated in the inaugural cohort.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: MAKING THE DREAM A REALITY

In addition to the many other barriers faced by African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students, the long-term financial commitment of a medical or dental school education, and the possibility of a career in health care, can feel out of reach.

The financial barriers that students face are realities that the Johnson Scholarship Foundation understands well. Thanks to the Foundation's generous support, PLANS and IHIM now offer two streams of financial assistance, one for bursaries and one for scholarships, for our students.

“I know from talking with students that financial issues affect their whole lives, and money concerns are often the one barrier that prevents them from continuing with their studies.”

Mercedes Stemm
IHIM Program Assistant

BURSARY SUPPORT

When you are living on a tight budget, spending \$300 on an entrance test can represent your grocery bill for an entire month, while the prospect of investing upwards of \$5,000 to prepare for and apply to medical school can derail the dream altogether.

It is no surprise that, early on, our African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students told us their greatest need was financial support in two key areas: entrance exam fees and conference fees for professional development. And we listened.

Since 2017, our **Bursary for Entrance Requirements Support** has helped underwrite students' entrance exam fees, such as CASPer (a personal characteristics assessment for nursing and dentistry), Dental Admissions Test (DAT) and Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT).

These micro-bursaries serve as part of a larger suite of comprehensive test preparation and admission supports that also include access to study guides, mock interviews, information sessions and one-on-one mentoring. In 2020, four PLANS students helped pilot a new offering: MCAT interview preparation with a private coach, paid for by the program.

In this same vein, the Bursary for Conference Participation enables PLANS and IHIM students registered in the Faculties of Health, Dentistry and Medicine (including the Bachelor of Medical Studies) to attend extracurricular programming such as conferences as part of their professional development. The micro-bursary underwrites conference registration fees and /or travel costs.

IMPACT: 2017- 2021

Bursary	Total Awarded	African Nova Scotian	Indigenous
Entrance	\$18,353	52	8
Conference	\$16,805	20	10

“I always knew I wanted to be a dentist, I just didn't know how to get there, the courses I needed or how to pay for it. PLANS staff identified the prerequisites I needed, helped me navigate the application process and requirements for African Nova Scotian students, and even awarded me a bursary to cover the cost of my Dental Admission Test. Without PLANS, I likely wouldn't have made it into dental school on my first try.”

Zoe Rolle
1st-year Faculty of Dentistry
JSF Pathways Scholarship Recipient, Dalhousie University

THE JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION PATHWAYS SCHOLARSHIPS

In perhaps the most fitting finale to our five-year partnership with the Johnson Scholarship Foundation, Dalhousie University was delighted earlier this year to announce the inaugural recipients of the much-anticipated Johnson Scholarship Foundation Pathways Scholarship.

Endowed with support from your foundation and other private donors through matching funds, the combined fund allowed us to award \$4,000 scholarships this year to 20 new Pathways Scholars, out of 47 applications received.

Scholarship	Total Awarded	African Nova Scotian	Indigenous	ANS/Indigenous
JSF Pathways Scholarships	\$80,000	13	5	2

As a further testament to the lasting value of your investment in PLANS and IHIM, these scholarship

recipients are indeed realizing their goal of a career in health and health-related professions:

Dentistry	Medicine	Nursing	Physiotherapy	Respiratory Therapy	Radiological Therapy	Health Promotion	Social Work
4	2	5	1	1	1	1	5

Second-year medical student and scholarship recipient, Michael W. Gardner, describes the impact of the Johnson Scholarship in his letter of thanks:

“Your kindness and generosity have allowed me to continue pursuing my dream...Tuition for Health programs can be burdensome, especially for programs like Medicine. These financial obstacles disproportionately affect students of colour, who despite having a passion for healthcare, are impeded

in the pursuit by generational and systemic barriers. But with the generous support from donors like yourselves, we are provided with the means to address some of these barriers, allowing us to not only achieve our personal career dreams but also to shape the future of our professions.”

Thank you for believing in each of them: in their talent, in their potential and in their drive to succeed.

IMPACT

While both programs are young, these trends are encouraging. In every respect, the numbers are demonstrating what we know anecdotally to be true: Our PLANS and IHIM engagement models work. From sparking the dream in school to supporting and nurturing future health professionals through university, our programs are starting to make a difference.

The process of change is finally underway.

Today, the prospect of creating the diverse and equitable health-care system we all need and deserve is real. And we are deeply indebted to the Johnson Scholarship Foundation for believing in these programs and their capacity to create change.

*The 2020 Dalhousie Community Data Report is currently being compiled.



“As an African Nova Scotian, I can tell you the reason that we don't see more black faces and more First Nations faces in medicine is not because these young people are not interested in medicine. It's not because these young people are not talented and bright and capable of being excellent physicians. The reason they're not has everything to do with systemic barriers that we need to break down, and programs like PLANS and IHIM are one way – a very good way – for us to start to recognize those barriers and to dismantle them.”

Dr. Chadwick Williams, MD, FRCPC
Internal Medicine Site Chief, Dartmouth General Hospital



THE IMPACT WILL NOT END HERE...

Within this report, we have shared some of the stories and numbers that illustrate the impacts we have together made on Indigenous and African Nova Scotian youth over the past five years. The impact will not end here – your support has set a momentum in motion that will continue to impact

countless others, for many years to come, who can now follow in their footsteps.

We have together successfully laid the foundation for inclusive opportunities for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian youth and a more equitable healthcare system for all.

The doors are opening. Thank you for helping to build the steps to reach them.

“The data shows that we actually provide better health care when the medical institution is more diverse, more inclusive and more culturally competent. Programs like PLANS and IHIM, by increasing interest and awareness and, hopefully, representation and diversity in medicine will ultimately help provide better medical care for all our patients.”

Dr. Chadwick Williams, MD
Internal Medicine Site Chief, Dartmouth General Hospital

**THANK
YOU**

