

African Nova Scotian Strategy Highlights

September 2024 to September 2025



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STRATEGY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS 2024/2025

Quenta Adams

Assistant Vice Provost, Student Engagement and Success, Student Affairs and Co-chair, African Nova Scotian Strategy

Michelle Williams

Associate Professor, Schulich School of Law and Co-Chair, African Nova Scotian Strategy

Rev. Dr. Lennett J. Anderson

Senior Pastor, EBC The MEETING Place, Upper Hammonds Plains and Assistant Professor in Leadership and Racial Justice, Acadia Divinity College

Nathan Barton

Student, Dalhousie Medicine

Brenda Francis-Jarvis

Executive Director, Jordantown Acaciaville Conway Betterment Association

Winnie Grant

Part-Time Instructor, School of Social Work

Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch

Assistant Vice Provost Equity and Inclusion and Professor, School of Health & Human Performance

Kelsey Jones

Director, Indigenous Blacks and Mi'kmaq Initiative, Schulich School of Law

Jalana Lewis

Director, African Nova Scotian Community Engagement

Melisa Marsman

Assistant Professor, Schulich School of Law

Kaitlin McNeil

Student, Faculty of Arts, Dalhousie University

Michelle Patrick

Manager, Programs & Planning, Nova Scotia Department of Advanced Education

Alexandra Randolph

Student, Schulich School of Law

Matthew Thomas

Advisor, Black Student Advising Centre

Monique Thomas

Manager, Recruitment Marketing and Communications, Dalhousie University

Tristan Thomas

Student, Schulich School of Law

Robert Wright

Assistant Professor, Criminology, Saint Mary's University

Wayne Desmond

Lawyer & Master of Laws Student, Schulich School of Law

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This annual report summarizes the activities of the African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council, covering the period from September 2024 to August 2025. Dalhousie's African Nova Scotian Strategy is built on the recognition that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people. Led by the Advisory Council, the Strategy outlines the necessity for a proactive approach to boost the representation and support for African Nova Scotian students, staff, and faculty at Dalhousie.

Composed of dedicated community leaders, many of whom are also Dalhousie students, staff, alumni, and faculty members, the Advisory Council convenes on the third Friday of each month during the academic year. Additionally, once per semester, the Advisory Council hosts an event, often in partnership with Dalhousie Faculties or Units, for the wider African Nova Scotian and Dalhousie communities to come together, offering opportunities for connection and reflection.

The past year has been a busy one for the Advisory Council, and we remain dedicated to encouraging, engaging, and advocating for African Nova Scotian people both on and off campus. While not all activities and collaborations from the past year are detailed here, we extend our gratitude to all the Faculties, Units, and colleagues who have collaborated with us and championed our efforts over the past twelve months, valuing every contribution made to support the implementation of the African Nova Scotian Strategy.



NOTE FROM NATHAN BARTON, Student-Member, African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council

My name is Nathan Barton, my family is from the historical African Nova Scotian (ANS) community of Jordantown-Acaciaville, and I have had the privilege of being a part of the ANS Strategy Advisory Council since 2021. Over the past four years I have grown tremendously as a student and employee at Dalhousie thanks in part to my time with the Advisory Council. I have been lucky to be supported by amazing mentors and friends involved with the ANS Strategy at the University.

I began with the Advisory Council in the second year of my undergraduate degree in Microbiology and Immunology. Following my graduation, I worked as a Health Promotion Coordinator at Dalhousie with Student Health and Wellness and maintained my involvement with the Advisory Council during that time. This fall I will start my journey as a medical student at Dalhousie and will again be a student representative on the Advisory Council, which I am both grateful and excited for. I am eager to begin this next chapter, and I am confident knowing that I have a community of support surrounding me at Dalhousie.

Throughout my time with the Advisory Council, I have come to understand the depth and complexity of institutional change. Early on, I often heard about the challenges of shifting long-standing systems, but it was not until I was more involved with the ANS Strategy that I truly grasped how difficult it can be to challenge the status quo. Through firsthand experience, I saw how progress often requires persistence, collaboration, and a willingness to engage in difficult conversations. This realization gave me a broader appreciation for the work the Advisory Council does and the impact it has, not just on policy, but on people, including myself.

I will carry these lessons with me as I begin my studies at Dalhousie Medical School. I look forward to continuing my involvement with the ANS Strategy as a student representative on the Advisory Council. I will be an advocate for African Nova Scotian students and communities within the Faculty of Medicine. I am excited about the possibilities and opportunities ahead, and to continue to see African Nova Scotian students, staff, and faculty succeed at Dalhousie and beyond.



Nathan Barton



Nathan Barton.

ACROSS CAMPUS

Achieving the African Nova Scotian Strategy's vision of fostering a university culture that more effectively engages with African Nova Scotian people and communities requires strong collaboration with Dalhousie partners across campus. Our cooperative efforts with various groups at Dalhousie are exemplified by the following initiatives.

Dalhousie's Black Student Support Network

The Black Student Support Network (BSSN) held five meetings during the 2024/25 academic year, bringing together staff across Dalhousie who support African Nova Scotian and Black students. The BSSN draws membership from Faculties such as Health and Management and administrative units such as Athletics and Student Affairs. These gatherings provide valuable opportunities for members to plan and partner on student focused events such as the Black Student Advising Centre's annual Black Student Block Party and annual Networking Event. BSSN members used these meetings to share successes and challenges, and exchange resources.

The final BSSN meeting of the academic year featured a refresher from People & Culture on professional development, wellness programs, tuition waiver processes, and employee discounts. Key BSSN discussion included updates on pathways, initiatives, and programs designed to increase the enrollment of African Nova Scotian and Black students across campus. Meetings also included a presentation by David Parks, Projects & Partnerships Coordinator from the Faculty of Agriculture, on professional development opportunities in international projects through Extended Learning. Additionally, Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch shared insights into the developing African Nova Scotia / African Descent Post-Secondary Education Framework, a collaborative effort among post-secondary institutions province-wide.

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE

Bridge into Agriculture & Step Into Agriculture Programs

Jalana Lewis, Director of African Nova Scotian Community Engagement, was invited to participate in the Bridge into Agriculture (BIA) & Step Into Agriculture September 2024 Graduation program in Truro. Jalana co-hosted the graduation with Monique Thomas, Manager, Recruitment Marketing & Communications and African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council member. Both programs aim to involve African Nova Scotians in food production training and explore entrepreneurship and career pathways within local agriculture. The event welcomed families, with graduates' children and other loved ones present. Each graduate received a certificate and a gift for their participation.

Jalana served as a member of the interview committee for the 2025 BIA Program Facilitators. Josyl Headley and Patrick Gooden were the successful applicants. They began in mid-May and will continue facilitating the program until its completion in October.

Sian Borden Co-Facilitates International Student Opportunity

In February 2025, Sian Borden, an African Nova Scotian Dalhousie employee and Outreach Coordinator in Dalhousie's Coastal Hydrology Lab, co-facilitated a study abroad experience for 14 undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture who visited the island of Dominica. This cultural exchange with Dominica State College, focused on resource management and understanding the history of the island, which Sian found to be a great opportunity to build leadership skills and learn about a country she had never visited. Sian's participation in the trip was a result of a collaboration between the Faculty's Extended Learning team and the African Nova Scotian Strategy.

Participants explored the island's industries through visits to a soap factory, small-scale farms, and holistic health businesses, and learned about the history and basket weaving craft of the Kalinago, the Indigenous Peoples of Dominica. The group also enjoyed the island's natural beauty, visiting sites such as the Emerald Pool, a 40-foot waterfall in Morne Trois Pitons National Park, known for its green appearance in filtered sunlight.



Sian Borden (first person from the left in the front row) with Dalhousie and Dominica State College students.

African Nova Scotian Engagement Session for Faculty of Agriculture

In April 2025, Jalana also co-led an engagement session with Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch for Faculty of Agriculture staff and faculty, providing insights into the university's ongoing work to support African Nova Scotian students, staff, and faculty through Dalhousie's African Nova Scotian Strategy. Dr. Hamilton-Hinch is a Professor in the School of Health and Human Performance and also holds the position of Assistant Vice Provost Equity and Inclusion for Dalhousie. Additionally, she is a member of the African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council.

The session focused on strengthening relationships with the African Nova Scotian community, particularly in the Truro area, with sixteen colleagues from the Truro campus attending. Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Dr. Heather Bruce, participated in the session and is committed to fostering future collaborations to strengthen the relationship between the African Nova Scotian community and the Dalhousie Agriculture Campus.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

This year, the Director of African Nova Scotian Community Engagement partnered with Huwaida Medani, Manager of Employment Equity, and Stef Adams, Advisor for Temporary Recruitment, both from the People and Culture team, to improve strategies for attracting and retaining African Nova Scotian employees at Dalhousie.

Key initiatives included:

- **Recruitment Brochure:** In collaboration with Dalhousie's Creative Services, developed a brochure featuring photos and inspiring quotes from African Nova Scotian Dalhousie employees (Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch, Vanessa Jackson, Jake MacIsaac and Matthew Thomas), along with details on employee benefits and where to find current job postings. This brochure was first distributed at the African Nova Scotian Strategy's May 2025 Community Day, providing valuable information on employment opportunities.
- **African Nova Scotian Strategy Community Day Engagement, May 2025:** Members from the People & Culture team set up a table to engage with attendees, discussing job application processes at Dalhousie, employee benefits, and available resources for Dalhousie employees.
- **Black Student Support Network (BSSN) Presentation:** At the June BSSN meeting, People & Culture colleagues provided a refresher on professional development, wellness resources, tuition waivers, and employee discounts available to Dalhousie staff. Members were encouraged to ask questions and reach out to the People & Culture team whenever they have questions relating to the Dalhousie employee experience.



Image of Recruitment Brochure created in partnership with People and Culture & Creative Services.

EVENTS

Events hosted by the African Nova Scotian Strategy facilitate meaningful discussions and create important connections, both essential for the Strategy's progress. The Advisory Council takes pride in hosting gatherings that reframe the African Nova Scotian experience on campus, ensuring community members see themselves reflected and celebrated at Dalhousie throughout the year.

African Nova Scotian Strategy Update & Quilt Unveiling

November 2024 marked a significant milestone for the Dalhousie community with the unveiling of a powerful quilt by African Nova Scotian artist Anja Clyke. The quilt draws on the legacy of secret codes and patterns believed to have guided freedom-seekers along the Underground Railroad. This beautiful artwork now permanently resides in the Schulich School of Law, a testament to the collaborative spirit between Pamela Edmonds, Director and Curator of the Dalhousie Art Gallery, the Faculty of Law and the African Nova Scotian Strategy.

This cross-campus initiative illustrates the African Nova Scotian Strategy's dedication to amplifying community voices and weaving meaningful art into the University's fabric. The event was twofold in purpose and drew together African Nova Scotian staff, faculty, students, and community members, alongside individuals from across the University, to honour this important addition and recognize the Advisory Council's impactful work over the past year.

Nathan Barton (BSc '24), a current member of the African Nova Scotian Advisory Council and incoming Dalhousie Medicine Student, shared his inspiring personal journey and how his involvement with the Advisory Council has fostered his growth. The integration of Anja Clyke's engaging artwork into the university, combined with a reflection on a year of accomplishments, was a fitting and meaningful tribute to African Nova Scotian voices and contributions at Dalhousie.



Top: Students at the event.
Bottom: Artist Anja Clyke.

Dalhousie's 2025 African Heritage Month Flagship Event

The 2025 African Heritage Month Flagship event, “Celebrating the Legacy and Future of Black Creativity,” was organized in collaboration with Human Rights and Equity Services, Marketing & Communications, and the Dalhousie Art Gallery. The Dalhousie Art Centre’s Sculpture Court hosted a ceremony honoring the artistic achievements of Black staff, students, and faculty, with awards presented to individuals for their outstanding contributions to the University. Among those recognized was Juliette Thomas, Dental Assistant and Clinic Coordinator for Dal’s Dentistry Outreach Clinic at Nelson Whynder Elementary School in North Preston, for her various art forms, including painting pottery, and jewelry-making.



Juliette Thomas.

Following the ceremony, attendees were invited to Dalhousie Art Gallery’s new exhibits, “Oluseye: by Faith and Grit” and “Down Home: Portraits of Resilience,” which featured African Nova Scotian and Black artists from across Canada. This event reflected on, celebrated, and educated attendees about the past, present, and future of Black creativity at Dalhousie University and beyond.

African Nova Scotian Strategy Community Day, May 2025

The African Nova Scotian Strategy Community Day, “Taking Care of Us,” was a highly impactful collaboration. It brought together the Faculties of Dentistry, Health, and Medicine, with additional support from the Registrar’s Office and Student Affairs. The event welcomed approximately 100 guests, including individuals of all ages and professional backgrounds. Attendees benefited from the insights of 20 African Nova Scotian speakers which highlighted the diverse contributions of community members working across the health sector.

The day featured excellent catering by Angie David of Upper Hammonds Plains and an energetic opening drumming performance by Wayn Hamilton’s Drummers from Home. Advisory Council members played a crucial role, moderating panels, welcoming guests, and ensuring the smooth flow of the event. Opening remarks were delivered by Advisory Co-Chair Quenta Adams, with afternoon greetings from her counterpart Professor Michelle Williams.

The event also served as a valuable opportunity for attendees to engage with various campus groups and units dedicated to supporting this initiative. Representatives from PLANS (Promoting Leadership in health for African Nova Scotians), People and Culture, and the Indigenous Blacks & Mi’kmaq (IB&M) Initiative at the Schulich School of Law were present to share information on different pathways and opportunities available at Dalhousie.

Photos from African Nova Scotian Strategy Community Day



1. Panelists (left to right): Kasia Johnson, Medical Sciences Student; Nevaeh Johnston, Sackville High School Student; Victor Amani, Dartmouth High School Student; and Sydnie Paris, Nursing Student.
2. African Nova Scotian Strategy Student Members: Tristan Thomas and Kaitlin McNeil.
3. Quenta Adams, Co-Chair, African Nova Scotian Strategy.
4. Panelists: Matthew Thomas (back row), Black Student Advising Centre; Kyiaisha Benton, Association of Black Social Workers, Jenna Upshaw, Faculty of Dentistry; Stephanie Bizzeth, Nova Scotia Health; and Devon Bundy, Department of Opportunities and Social Development.
5. Michelle Williams, Co-Chair, African Nova Scotian Strategy, and Jalana Lewis, Director, African Nova Scotian Community Engagement.



COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

The African Nova Scotian Strategy fosters vital collaborations with the African Nova Scotian community, both on and off-campus. These partnerships enable Dalhousie to share its research, programs, and physical spaces. They are essential for bringing community members of all ages onto campus, co-hosting public events that celebrate community achievements, and utilizing research to enhance the African Nova Scotian experience.

African Nova Scotian Research Ethics Project Funding

Michelle Williams, Melisa Marsman, and Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch, African Nova Scotian researchers at Dalhousie, successfully secured a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Insight Grant for the African Nova Scotian Research Ethics project, developed in collaboration with Dalhousie's African Nova Scotian Strategy. The project builds on a successful pilot community-based project initiated in 2021 and centres around the development of African Nova Scotian community-based research ethics rules.

This significant funding amounts to \$356,000, celebrating research excellence in the social sciences and humanities. Additionally, the Faculties of Health, Law, and Medicine each committed an extra \$25,000 over five years to support the project. This new funding will enable the project team to hire an African Nova Scotian Community Engagement Research Specialist who will play a crucial role in maintaining research-related connections within African Nova Scotian communities, ensuring continuous communication about the initiative, and guiding project-related activities to foster impactful collaborations across the province.



Top to bottom: Michelle Williams, Project Principal Investigator; Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch, Project Co-Lead; Melisa Marsman, Project Co-Lead.

Voices from Down Home - African Heritage Month Event

In February, the African Nova Scotian Strategy collaborated with the Dalhousie Art Gallery, the Nova Scotia Art Gallery, and Halifax Public Libraries to host *Voices from Down Home: Dialogues on Community Connections in Black Canadian Art*. This free public event, held at the Halifax Central Library, featured artists from the Down Home exhibition, curated by Fabiyino Germain-Bajowa at the Dalhousie Art Gallery. The panel, hosted by Pamela Edmonds, Director of the Dalhousie Art Gallery, included Vanessa Thomas, an African Nova Scotian digital artist, muralist, and current Advisor at Dal's Black Student Advising Centre.



Fabiyino Germain-Bajowa and Vanessa Thomas.



Vanessa Thomas, *Florcy (Memories from Up Home and Out Home)*, 2025.

St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary (SJAM) Connections

Since June 2021, SJAM Elementary School, with over 400 students, has been displaced, awaiting the opening of their new building on the original site in the north end of Halifax, which is home to a large population of African Nova Scotian and Black families. SJAM students are currently learning in a building without a gymnasium, library or accessible playground area. The African Nova Scotian Strategy has actively supported SJAM since the school became a temporary neighbour of Dalhousie. Jalana Lewis, Director of African Nova Scotian Engagement, joined the school's School Advisory Council (SAC) participating in monthly meetings to build and maintain connections with SJAM administration, teachers, staff and parents, and to identify ways Dalhousie could support the school community during their time in the south end of Halifax.

This past February, SJAM's Black Brilliance African Heritage Month Assembly was held at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium, with student presentations, performances and special guest Keonté Beals, a multi-talented author, musician and community advocate from North Preston. Dalhousie staff and faculty volunteered at the event to ensure a smooth and enjoyable visit for the students and staff. Dalhousie Arts Centre staff collaborated closely with the African Nova Scotian Strategy in the weeks leading up to the event. They meticulously planned event technology and accommodated all student needs on-site, going above and beyond expectations.

The third annual "Dal Day @ SJAM" lunch, held in May, was a great success. Dalhousie Food Services sponsored and prepared a nutritious boxed lunch for all SJAM students, teachers, and staff, who enthusiastically welcomed the Dalhousie community back to the school grounds. The event featured a visit from the Dal Tiger and engaging science experiments facilitated by Imhotep's Legacy Academy. Students reported having a great time, and the African Nova Scotian Strategy is dedicated to continuing this relationship with the school, especially given its demographic and upcoming return to the north end of Halifax.



CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

The Advisory Council champions educational equity and community leadership by supporting African Nova Scotian students and honoring the accomplishments of African Nova Scotian alumni. Student awards and financial aid are crucial for increasing representation in higher education by reducing financial barriers. The Advisory Council also celebrates and values the diverse contributions of African Nova Scotian alumni across various sectors and communities, actively seeking opportunities to spotlight these achievements.

Student Awards and Financial Aid

In March 2025, a selection committee including representation from the African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council reviewed over 60 applications for the First Nations and Indigenous Black (FNIB) Scholarship. Five African Nova Scotian students were awarded FNIB Scholarships, valued at \$8,000 annually for four years. Additionally, two students received the Senator Donald Oliver Scholarship, valued at \$12,000 per year for four years, and one student was awarded the Forsyth Scholarship, valued at \$20,000 annually for four years. Selection committee members personally contacted the recipients to share the good news.

Dalhousie's Sankofa Scholarship selection committee reviewed approximately 45 student applications for three awards. One was granted to an African Nova Scotian student, valued at \$8,000 annually for four years.

Additionally, the African Nova Scotian Graduate Scholarship selection committee awarded three scholarships, each valued at \$15,000 per year, renewable for up to two years.

Dr. Karen Hudson Awarded Honorary Dalhousie Degree

On June 18, 2025, Dalhousie alum Karen Hudson (MES'02) received an honorary degree at the Faculty of Science Convocation ceremony. The outstanding accomplishments of honorary degree recipients are meant to inspire graduates and reflect the character and values of the university. Dr. Hudson, currently principal of Auburn Drive High School in Cole Harbour and a resident of the Cherry Brook / Lake Loon community, made history by establishing Nova Scotia's first Africentric Math Cohort. She also served as interim president of the Black Educators Association and as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq Initiative at the Faculty of Law.

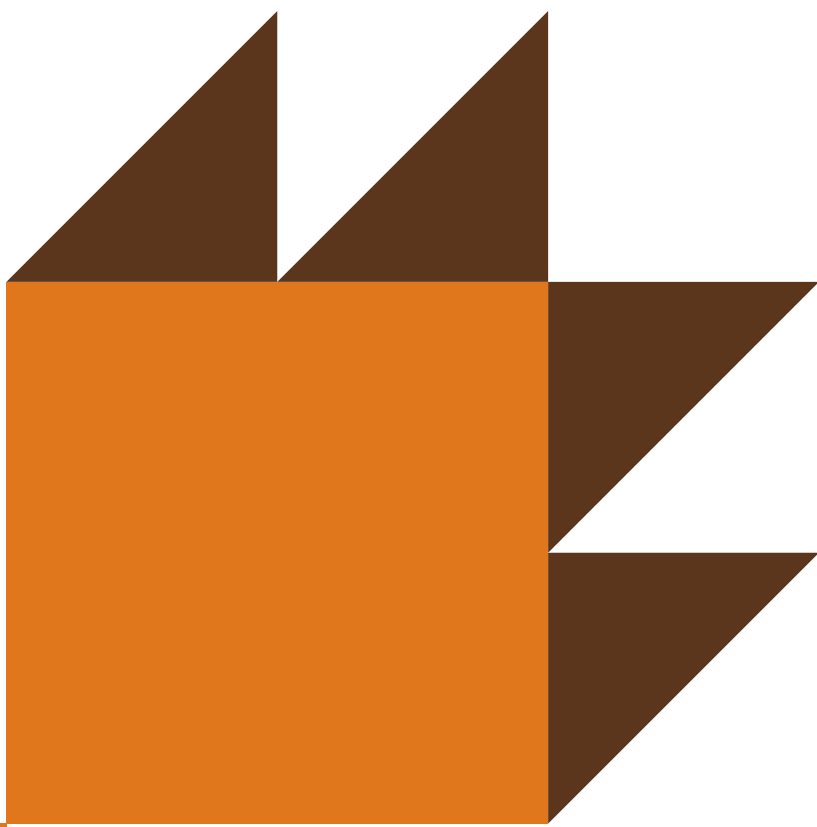


Dr. Karen Hudson.

IN CLOSING

As we look ahead to the next twelve months, the Advisory Council is excited to continue the vital work of implementing Dalhousie's African Nova Scotian Strategy. We eagerly anticipate the arrival of the African Nova Scotian Research Ethics Community Engagement Specialist in Fall 2025, a role that will enhance our research collaborations within the community. We are thrilled to be planning an African Nova Scotian Community Archives event on campus in spring 2026, which will be a powerful celebration of our shared history. We are also committed to the growth of the Black Student Support Network; an employee group focused on improving the experience of African Nova Scotian and Black students across campus.

This coming year we will actively seek opportunities to work with our valued past collaborators while forging new and impactful partnerships. As Dalhousie prepares to release its new strategic framework, the upcoming year is a timely opportunity to reflect on the African Nova Scotian Strategy's impact on the university community and to collectively chart the course for its continued and successful implementation. Again, thank you to all the students, staff, faculty, alumni, and broader community members who continue to support our work.





In November 2024, an event was held to celebrate the African Nova Scotian Strategy, featuring the unveiling of a quilt by artist Anja Clyke. The stunning quilt is now a permanent installation in the Schulich School of Law.