

DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

NORTH AMERICA'S OLDEST CAMPUS NEWSPAPER, EST. 1868



FEBRUARY FLASHBACK: IT'S A GREAT MONTH TO REVISIT THE EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACK CANADIANS.
(PHOTO OF OMISOORE DRYDEN PROVIDED BY OMISOORE DRYDEN; BLACK HISTORY MATTERS GRAPHIC PROVIDED BY HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES)

Celebrate Black History Month

Honouring the history and culture of Black Nova Scotians

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Recognizing Black Canadian history

Dear reader,

Sitting cross-legged on the cold white floor, I listened to my Grade 1 teacher read aloud from a picture book about Rosa Parks. This is my earliest memory of celebrating Black History Month. Back in 2006, throughout the month of February, my teacher read several books to our class about Black American history.

That's the thing: Looking back on how Black History Month was celebrated throughout my time in public school, I realize now much of the focus was on American history. I never learned about the atrocities committed — from slavery to police violence — against Black Canadians. It wasn't until I attended university, I discovered inspiring figures in Black Canadian history like Mary Ann Shadd Cary (the first Black woman in North America to publish a newspaper) and Portia White (a legendary singer from Halifax who achieved international fame).

Of course, it's important to learn about Black history from around the world, but it seems in Canada we haven't done a thorough enough job of examining our own nation's history. In 2017, cultural scholar Robyn Maynard published her book *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. In a CBC article, Maynard stated her reason for writing *Policing Black Lives* was "to contribute toward interrupting the near-total erasure of Blackness from Canada's official histories."

Canada has officially been celebrating Black History Month since 1995 — when former politician Jean Augustine, the first Black Canadian woman elected to the House of Commons, motioned parliament to recognize February as a month to honour Black Canadians. Now to properly celebrate this month of remembrance, we must end the erasure of Black Canadian history.

Systemic change is needed. On an individual level, all of us non-Black citizens can do better in remembering the past. One step is to educate ourselves about local Black communities and their history; stories we may not have read about in school. I hope this issue of the *Dalhousie Gazette* contributes to the recognition and celebration of Black Nova Scotian history. I hope these commemorations will continue beyond this month and for years to come.



-Tarini Fernando, Editor-in-chief

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THE FINE PRINT

The *Gazette* is the official written record of Dalhousie University since 1868. It is published every two weeks during the academic year by the *Dalhousie Gazette* Publishing Society. The *Gazette* is a student-run publication. Its primary purpose is to report fairly and objectively on issues of importance and interest to the students of Dalhousie University, to provide an open forum for the free expression and exchange of ideas, and to stimulate meaningful debate on issues that affect or would otherwise be of interest to the student body and/or society in general. Views expressed in the letters to the editor, in streeters and opinions section are solely those of the contributing writers, and do not necessarily represent the views of the *Gazette* or its staff. Views expressed in the Streeter feature are solely those of the person being quoted, and not the *Gazette's* writers or staff.

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Racist attacks continue in virtual world

Dal investigating hacked Zoom call targeting Black students

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR

An online meeting for Black students at Dalhousie University became the scene of a racist attack on Jan. 20, 2021 after uninvited users intruded on the Zoom call yelling anti-Black racist and homophobic language.

The attack took place at a Chair Chat hosted by OmiSoore Dryden, the James R. Johnston chair in Black Canadian studies in Dal's faculty of medicine. Chair Chats are a space for Black students in health professions and graduate school to come together as a community and discuss anything they'd like.

Despite the virtual attack, Dryden said the online event continued.

"The fact that white people inserted themselves into the space doesn't define nor determine what the space is. We know what the space is," Dryden said in an interview with the *Dalhousie Gazette*.

"They were the intruders in that space and so we will cleanse our space. We will restructure our space and we will have our space," Dryden said.

The attack

According to Dryden, the attack began while students were joining the Zoom call.

Chair Chats are usually made up of a fairly consistent group of students, but Dryden began to notice unfamiliar names join the meeting. After asking them to turn on their cameras and introduce themselves, the users began spewing racist, misogynist and homophobic language, Dryden said.

Dryden then ended the meeting and created a new call for students, where the event was able to continue.

In an email to students on Jan. 21, Dal President Deep Saini and Theresa Rajack-Talley, vice-provost of equity and inclusion, said the attacks were "abhorrent, unwelcome and fundamentally against Dalhousie's values."

According to the email, Dalhousie IT and security services are attempting to identify the attackers. The meeting was not recorded. The *Gazette* reached out to Dalhousie asking if there are any updates in this process, but the university did not respond before publication.

Racism still exists in the community

Dryden said the attack was "simultaneously unsurprising and surprising." Zoom intrusions are an issue they have dealt with before, but this doesn't make the attacks any less startling or upsetting, Dryden said.

In September, Dryden took part in the virtual launch of the National Black Graduate Network, which was also attacked, they said.

Dryden is also co-president of the Black Canadian Studies Association, who published tips on protecting the security of online events in January after several of their members "had such negative and harmful experiences online," the Association said in a recent statement.

Dryden said these virtual attacks on ex-

clusively Black spaces are born out of a history of white supremacy.

"There's an expectation that a group of Black people will always stop what they're doing or interrupt what they're doing in order to be in service to white people or white supremacy," Dryden said. "That extends to how we occupy space, whether it's virtual or in real life." Dryden equates this racist expectation to the way immigrants may be told to stop speaking their native language in public because white people feel entitled to understand what is said.

Dryden said the attackers "were gleeful, like they were really enjoying what they were doing."

"I think it's important to talk about that," Dryden said. "Because I think people like to say that those who are engaged in racist behaviour are ignorant or don't know, and they just need more education."

To effectively combat racism in the Dal community, Dryden said white faculty, students and community members need to directly address situations like this and discuss why Black students have legitimate reason to gather in spaces exclusively for them.

"How do we stigmatize the racist behaviour as opposed to feeling stigmatized because we've been targets of racist behaviour?" Dryden said.



CHAIR CHAT HOST OMI SOORE DRYDEN ARGUES FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF BLACK PEOPLE HAVING BLACK ONLY SPACES.

Importance of Black spaces on campus

"Black people having Black only spaces is not reverse racism. It is not segregationist. It's protectionist," Dryden said.

Dryden said Black students can often have a tenuous relationship with their universities. For example, in June 2020 a Black student at the University of British Columbia was racially profiled by campus security attempting to access an office. The Chair Chat demonstrates to Black students that they are supported by the university administration to use campus spaces as they please, Dryden said. Importantly, it's not simply a space for students to discuss racism, Dryden said.

"We're not centred on whiteness in that space. We are talking about what anyone else would be talking about. But with an understanding that we're having this conversation through these lenses of Blackness," Dryden said.

The existence of those lenses is part of what makes these spaces so important, Dryden said. "You don't need to, quote unquote, waste time or take space explaining Blackness," they said.

Dryden introduced the Chair Chats after being named the James R. Johnston chair in Black Canadian studies in 2019. It was a priority of theirs that Black students have a Black-only space on campus.

"I will continue to do that for as long as I'm chair, and I'll continue to do it possibly even after I'm chair, in another version," Dryden said.

Breaking barriers in healthcare

Nova Scotia Brotherhood Fund expands mental health services for Black Nova Scotians

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



Laura Clark (front left) of the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia and Mario Rolle (front right) of the NSBI accept a \$10,000 donation from local business owners Anna Gilkerson and Zac Barkhouse (back row). (Photo by Jill Chappell)

The Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia has partnered with the Nova Scotia Brotherhood Initiative (NSBI) to help bring better, culturally specific healthcare to Black people in the province.

The Brotherhood is a provincial program under the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) that provides Black men with access to culturally specific healthcare from Black health professionals, as well as other community mentorship services. In person, the Brotherhood operates across the Halifax Regional Municipality. But due to COVID-19 many of their services have become virtual allowing them to serve patients across the province.

The partnership, called the Nova Scotia Brotherhood Fund, was announced in December 2020 as a part of the foundation's pledge to actively seek out and support initiatives that help Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) in the province, said Jill Chappell, marketing and communications lead at the foundation. The fund has so far raised \$10,000 — an opening donation from Halifax clothing store Ana + Zac — and is now accepting public donations.

Mario Rolle, the team lead for the NSHA Community Health and Wellness Centres and the NSBI, said the partnership with the foundation and the donation from Ana + Zac was “heaven-sent.”

“They saw what we were doing, and gave us an opportunity to keep doing what we’re doing,” said Rolle. “In a few months, they’ve done a lot for us.”

The new source of funding will allow the Brotherhood to expand their mental health programs while also creating new support services for Black Nova Scotian women, Rolle said.

How the partnership came together

According to Chappell, the partnership began in the summer with the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter campaign.

“What we saw happening right before our eyes when we were all [alone] due to COVID-19 really spurred us to take action and to be allies,” Chappell said. “And do that in a more meaningful way than just what we were already doing.”

Chappell said the foundation was aware of the NSBI and the work they do. After reaching out to the NSBI, the foundation learned they had been struggling to fulfil all the requests they were receiving from the community due to a limited budget, Chappell said.

“[The NSBI has] an amazing program, they offer amazing services, they have the trust of the community. And what we wanted to do was provide them with additional funding so they can enhance what they’re already doing, and better meet the needs of the [Black Nova Scotian] community,” Chappell said.

Ana + Zac, which is run by Anna Gilkerson and Zac Barkhouse, became involved after they approached the foundation hoping to donate towards mental health supports during the pandemic, Gilkerson said in an email to the *Dalhousie Gazette*, writing on the behalf of her and Barkhouse.

They became inspired to raise money after a company the store works with in Lithuania sent them a box of linen scraps in the spring, she said.

They decided to make masks out of the scraps and sell them, with 100 per cent of the proceeds going towards mental health, Gilkerson said. That campaign raised \$7,400 in the spring. It was then, Gilkerson said, they decided to set a year-end goal of raising \$10,000. In the fall, the store held a Christmas tree sale,

which raised \$2,600 to bring their total donation to \$10,000. Gilkerson and Barkhouse were paired with the Brotherhood, after expressing their interest in supporting a BIPOC organization in their community to the foundation, Gilkerson said.

“The sort of work that the Brotherhood does benefits not only the individual, but their families and in turn future generations. It’s important work and we are very honoured to have been able to contribute,” Gilkerson said in her email.

“We realized that in order to help the whole man, we have to work on those social determinants of health.”

Why the Brotherhood’s work is so important

Rolle said the Brotherhood’s mission is simple: to break down barriers for Black men in the healthcare system and beyond.

The program was founded in 2016, modelled after a similar program in Chicago called Project Brotherhood. According to Rolle, it remains the only program of its kind in Canada.

The program offers free physical and mental health services to Black men by Black men, Rolle said. Through this approach, Rolle said the Brotherhood attempts to build relationships between healthcare professionals and Black men.

“The relationship is key,” Rolle said. “If you can’t build a relationship with your client, you’re not going to be able to help them.”

To achieve these relationships, appointments with the Brotherhood’s doctors usually

last between 30 to 45 minutes: “When you come in to see our doctor, he wants to get to know you,” Rolle said.

Through this process, doctors are able to learn the family history of their patients and

identify any hereditary issues that may eventually affect the patient.

The Brotherhood also builds relationships with their patients through the navigator position. The primary role of a navigator is to guide patients through the healthcare system. They also provide patients with support in

other aspects of their lives that may be affecting their physical or mental health, which are known as social determinants of health.

The most significant social determinant of health for the Brotherhood’s patients is racism, Rolle said.

“Wherever you go, you’re going to have racism,” he said.

Whether they face this racism in the criminal justice system or attempting to find employment, Rolle said the Brotherhood takes everything into account when trying to help a patient.

“It’s a cause and effect kind of thing. So, with the Nova Scotia Brotherhood we realized that in order to help the whole man, we have to work on those social determinants of health,” Rolle said.

Practically, this could mean connecting patients with affordable housing services or helping them meet with a lawyer, which Rolle used to do as a navigator before mov-

ing to team lead, he said.

Rolle continues to fulfil navigator duties when needed, as the Brotherhood currently only has one person in the position, he said.

New funding will increase mental health supports

The funding from the Nova Scotia Brotherhood Fund will be used to increase the Brotherhood’s mental health programming, while also allowing them to expand their services and help Black Nova Scotian women as well, Rolle said.

“In order to help our men, we have to help our women,” Rolle said.

“We’re confident there needs to be a sisterhood,” he said. From there, they hope to build a comprehensive service for Black health in the province, Rolle said.

A large part of the Brotherhood’s goal when it comes to mental health is eliminating the stigma existing around Black men asking for help, Rolle said.

“There’s a stigma, you know, from Black men about these various services. I mean, some services are available, but men are afraid to utilize them,” Rolle said. “We want to educate, we don’t want to embarrass.”

Rolle said making sure women are also receiving proper mental health services can help reduce the stigma within communities, especially when people like mothers and grandmothers know the value of mental health help “because that’s who everyone listens to,” Rolle said.

Although this is just the beginning of the fund, Rolle said the \$10,000 donation is recognition the Brotherhood is doing good work. Now, they only hope to improve upon it.

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Celebrating Black History Month online

Halifax Public Libraries offering innovative programs

BY TAYLOR ADAMS



LISTEN, LEARN, SHARE AND ACT ARE THEMES FOR THE 2021 AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH VIRTUAL CELEBRATIONS PRESENTED BY HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES)

Black History Month events are now happening at the Halifax Public Libraries, but this year people don't have to live in Halifax to attend.

Due to COVID-19 this year's programming, called African Heritage Month, has shifted to an online setting.

Hopefully, this means events will be attended by a broader audience than would usually be possible, said Crystal Mulder, the branch supervisor at Dartmouth North Public Library. Mulder is also co-chair of the Black History

Month Association, a society that focuses on the popularization and advancement of African Heritage Month a.k.a. Black History Month in Dartmouth and Halifax, N.S., and who work with the library to plan the annual month of events.

Mulder said the digital shift brought on by COVID-19 will allow people to tune into the library's celebrations from across the country and allow Nova Scotians to attend other events happening out of province.

"It's sort of the great equalizer," Mulder said, which "allows the African Canadian community to meet together in one big celebration this year."

A month of learning and sharing

The theme of African Heritage Month in Nova Scotia this year is Black history mat-

ters: Listen, learn, share and act.

Mulder hopes this theme will carry through the library's programming.

"Black history matters," she said. "It matters because people are listening, people are learning, people are sharing what they're learning and sharing their knowledge, and then they're acting on that knowledge, that is how we want the month to go."

The library is offering people the opportunity to listen, learn and act in various ways this month, as their programming ranges widely from facilitated discussions to art workshops and cooking classes.

Haiti Tynes, a local illustrator holding an art workshop for teens, says the library's programming offers people an opportunity to experience something that's been hard to find during COVID-19.

"Definitely now, people are feeling really lonely, and I think finding community in that loneliness, I think that brings people together," they said.

This message was echoed on the opening night of African Heritage Month at the library in 13-year-old poet Damini Awoyiga's performance of an original work, "Together We Stand."

"Binding together as communities of African descent, this is

where we've lived," Awoyiga said in her performance, asking people to come together to fight inequality.

One of this year's events will explore the history of those communities of African descent in Nova Scotia.

Allister Barton, the medical education coordinator at Dalhousie University's department of family medicine, is presenting his findings on Black genealogy in Nova Scotia.

The aim of Barton's event is to try to "celebrate and acknowledge those who stayed here," rather than just those who became well known outside the province, he says.

Barton's presentation connects the personal stories of his ancestors to significant historical events, ranging across "enslavement, running from slavery, the American

Revolution and the forced migration into this province," he said.

Barton said he would like to see the community and province embrace lesser-known stories of Black Nova Scotians such as the Black pioneers, a militia responsible for building communities like the town of Shelburne. Theirs "is a signature story that doesn't get the popularity or the attention or the celebration [it deserves]," he said.

Barton said Black history should be synonymous with more locations in Nova Scotia.

"When you hit Digby, what comes to mind?" he said. Barton went on to say Black Nova Scotians have been in Digby since 1783, though many people visiting the town may not know this history.

By sharing stories of his ancestors that were originally lost, "others might hopefully be able to do [this] too, by simply finding a document that exists on an ancestor," Barton said, "and telling a story about that document."

Different platform, same message

Through the hard work of the Black History Month Association, library staff, and the magic of YouTube and Zoom, the transition to an online experience has been smooth, Mulder says.

There were some delays in the initial planning, but "once we made that decision that we were going to move online, it was a very seamless transition," said Mulder.

Having "been doing this 37 years, the formula is already in place," said Mulder, "it's just a matter of taking that and figuring out how it works with an online platform," she said.

After the experience of virtual events, Mulder said other event organizers shouldn't be discouraged by moving to the digital realm.

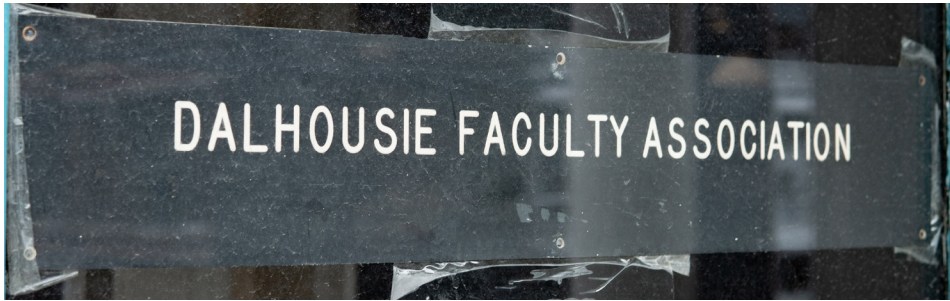
"Don't change [your event] because the platform requires it," said Mulder. "Keep true to your message. It doesn't matter how you get your message out, just keep true to it."

Some presenters have been putting in extra effort to ensure they are a success. Tynes has been researching and taking notes on other online workshops: "I'm hoping it will be fun," she said.

Reaching middle ground

After lengthy debate, DFA and Dal sign tentative agreement

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



THE DFA IS PLEASED TO HAVE MADE MANY NON-MONETARY GAINS FOR THEIR MEMBERS IN THEIR TENTATIVE TWO-YEAR AGREEMENT WITH DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Students have one less thing to worry about this term as the Dalhousie University board of governors (BoG) and the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) were able to leave their disagreements in 2020.

The two parties resolved all outstanding issues to reach a tentative agreement in a meeting with provincial conciliators on Jan. 8, 2021, the university said in an email to students on the same date.

The DFA membership voted to ratify the agreement on Jan. 21, the DFA said in a press release. The agreement will become official once the BoG hold their ratification vote on Feb. 9, DFA President David Westwood said in an interview with the *Dalhousie Gazette*. Westwood could not reveal specific details regarding agreed upon bargaining demands with the *Gazette*, as the BoG is yet to ratify the agreement, meaning there is still a possibility of it being altered. But Westwood said he has no reason to believe the BoG won't ratify it as planned.

Once ratification is complete, the new collective agreement between the BoG and the DFA will be in effect from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022.

The university did not respond to a request for comment from the *Gazette* prior to the publication date.

Important gains for faculty

When negotiations began last summer, the DFA approached bargaining with a majority of non-monetary demands, "recognizing the challenges people were now facing because of COVID-19," Westwood said. Many of these demands have been achieved in the new agreement, which is "hugely important," Westwood said.

When the pandemic forced classes online, Dal professors were tasked with presenting university quality lectures from their homes, which was a source of concern for the DFA.

"It was important to folks that, you know, Dal recognized that we're kind of working in our home offices here on our own dime,"

Westwood said.

As part of the agreement, Dal agreed to reimburse faculty "to a reasonable extent" if they require equipment such as a new microphone to conduct classes, Westwood said.

Another successful demand born out of the pandemic is the copywriting of online teaching materials.

"Teaching online created a context in which we hadn't really negotiated collective agreement previously," Westwood said. "So there were robust protections in place for the copyright of academic work and teaching materials generally, but we just wanted the [BoG] to confirm that this set of protections would extend towards if we put lectures online."

The DFA is also pleased to have made gains for its members on issues independent of the pandemic, such as increased support for extraordinary administrative workloads placed upon faculty members of designated groups.

Practically, this means greater support for faculty members who are a part of designated groups — defined by the federal government as women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and People of Colour — who are asked to use their experiences and knowledge to aid in matters of diversity and equity at the university.

"It tends to be the case that they get asked 10 times more often than non-designated group members to do administrative work, and they don't get credit for it," Westwood said. Prior to the collective agreement reached in 2018, "there wasn't really any recognition of that happening," Westwood said.

To aid faculty members struggling with increased workloads as a result of this issue, the university agreed in 2018 to provide supports such as a research assistant to professors doing this extra administrative work.

But this didn't solve much, Westwood said. The supports were funded by individual faculty budgets, which often couldn't afford them, Westwood said.

"So just to give them the support they needed, somebody would have to lose out," he said.

In the new agreement, deans will be able to request funding from the provost level if their faculty budget can't accommodate the required supports.

"It's sort of a procedural way to make sure that an agreed-upon principle could actually be delivered," Westwood said.

Potential deal fell apart in December

After negotiations remained stagnant throughout the summer, the DFA filed for a conciliator on Sept. 22, 2020, to help bring the two sides closer together over disagreements on the pension plan. That pension issue — which forced conciliation to fail on its first day and prompting a conciliation board to be struck — had been resolved in December.

After that resolution, the conciliation board drafted a list of recommendations meant to be the basis of the agreement. The DFA accepted the recommendations on the condition the BoG would as well, which they expected them to do, according to a DFA press release in December.

But the BoG rejected just one of the recommendations, bringing bargaining to a halt once more. The BoG took issue with a non-monetary recommendation the DFA had included in its list of demands concerning educational leave for instructors; the conciliation board had sided with the DFA's position on the issue and included it in their recommendations.

Dal professors and permanent instructors are granted a sabbatical or educational leave every seven years. For professors, the years they spent working in limited-term appointments are counted, for instructors they are not, Westwood said. As a part of the new agreement, the DFA wanted those years to count towards educational leave for instructors.

"It wasn't really clear why that was the case, because the principles are exactly the same," he said. "You work years in a limited-term role, and then eventually you get a permanent job, why should that service be counted differently for two different kinds of employees?" Westwood said.

According to Westwood, the conciliation board agreed and therefore included the demand as a recommendation.

The BoG did make it clear they wanted to do something to better support instructors, "just not this thing," Westwood said.

Ultimately, the conciliation board was able to convince the BoG to meet the DFA halfway at the

Sustainability: The new financial trend

Green bonds, ESG investing and more

BY TAYLOR ADAMS



THINKING ABOUT INVESTMENTS? CONSIDER PUTTING YOUR FUNDS INTO A GREENER, MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.
(PHOTO BY MOHAMED HASSAN ON PIXABAY)

Sustainable finance: what exactly does this term mean and how is it helping to slow climate change?

Essentially, sustainable finance is a combination of sustainable development and finance. Sustainable development, according to the United Nations' (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development, is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

So sustainable finance is the act of providing money to help the world reduce environmental degradation, helping fund the goals set out in the UN's Paris Agreement on climate change. Sustainable finance is generally done by funding eco-friendly projects and allowing investors to be more discerning in which companies they invest their money.

Most university students don't have the time or money to think about investments. But for the sake of knowledge and considering some options for the future (when you have a salary that allows you to invest), here are some interesting new investing trends for a greener planet.

Green bonds

At its core, a green bond is money raised to fund a green project. These green projects must have a positive climate or environmental impact (e.g., solar panels, wind turbines).

Though this type of funding is growing in popularity, real-world examples are still few in number. One prominent example in Canada is the green bond Scotiabank issued in July 2019. With the money raised by Scotiabank, they promised to use this money only to fund green projects including "renewable energy, clean transportation and green buildings," according to their website.

On top of funding projects that will help reduce climate change, a lower interest rate (and thus cheaper financing) is one of the benefits of getting green bonds, as shown by the green bond the city of Toronto issued in December 2020.

ESG investing

For personal finance, such as retirement savings, ESG (environmental, social and governance) investment is one way people can put their money towards climate and environmental benefits. It involves adding environ-

mental, social and governance decisions to the regular investment decisions you make.

An example of this may be to exclude oil companies or gun manufacturers from an investment portfolio. It is also possible to invest by putting money into an ESG index fund, such as XESG. According to investment management company BlackRock's website, XESG "seek[s] similar risk and return to the broad Canadian equity market while achieving a more sustainable outcome." Including ESG in investment decisions helps to send a message to corporations that climate change and the environment are of serious concern to individual investors.

Green deposits

As the current market for green investment products grows, there will be further financial innovation to help causes and companies that aim to help the environment and climate. One such product the industry is starting to look at is green deposits.

A green deposit is a way for people to place their money at a bank, like a regular deposit, with the bank's promise to only use the funds for green projects and companies. For example, the bank may lend the money in the form of a green loan. This type of product could further incentivise companies to become more environmentally conscious. If more money were deposited in the form of green deposits, it could reduce the amount of money available to companies deemed not environmentally friendly, and thus increase the interest on their loans.

While there has been progress, sustainable finance is still only a small part of the global financial machine. This sector's growth needs to be even quicker to reach the goals set out in the Paris Agreement.

It is well known the financial industry does not always have society's best interests at heart. As with everything in sustainable development, there is still further work to be done by the government, corporations and individuals to meet the Paris goals for an environmentally conscious future. If you have the money either now or in the future, these green investment options may be a useful step to consider in helping create a more sustainable future.

Veganuary is taking root

What to consider before switching to a plant-based diet

BY DARSİ AVERY



COMPANIES LIKE BEYOND MEAT HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE GROWING TREND TOWARD VEGANISM. BUT ARE YOU READY TO SWITCH TO A PLANT-BASED DIET? (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

In 2014, a non-profit organization was founded in the United Kingdom that would soon take the world by storm: Veganuary. The organization encourages people to try veganism for the month of January. A vegan lifestyle involves eliminating all animal products from your life.

The organization holds an annual event during the month of January, which they also call Veganuary. According to the non-profit's website, there have been more than one million participants in the Veganuary event since 2014.

Trying veganism one step at a time

There are many positive reasons for living a vegan lifestyle. Some people do it for health reasons, others for the environment and protecting animals, or all of the above.

Becoming vegan can seem like such a huge commitment both mentally and fiscally.

The goal of Veganuary is to make the month of January an opportunity for people to try veganism, and if they're interested, continue with the lifestyle after the month is up. But the following question arises: Is 31 days enough time to ease into a completely new lifestyle?

Megan McAllister is a vegan and first-year Dalhousie University student. She expresses some concerns about the Veganuary event and jumping into veganism all at once.

"I think it would be good if you started [by becoming] vegetarian, then started cutting out dairy and eggs," she says.

McAllister also recommends looking up recipes for vegan cuisine to get used to

cooking foods you may not be familiar with. She says taking the time to find out how to make nutritious and healthy meals is essential to making your vegan experience sustainable.

Not just a diet

Becoming vegan is not just about the diet. It's a lifestyle: Even though the food you consume is a big part of the commitment, veganism requires more than just cutting out your daily chicken sandwich.

McAllister expresses how temporary the one month Veganuary challenge is.

"Technically if someone was to just do it for a month diet wise, then that would just be a plant-based diet," says McAllister.

Becoming a fully committed vegan means you try to avoid owning or using any kind of animal products in your life. For example, you would not wear leather and only purchase cruelty-free products. This is a much bigger commitment than just swapping out meat as it pertains to makeup, clothing and other daily items.

Looking forward

The main goal of the non-profit Veganuary is advocacy. Participation in the challenge is increasing. In January 2020, the event reported 400,000 people signed up, which is a 60 per cent increase from 2019. (The numbers for 2021 have not yet been released.) The Veganuary website claims 98 per cent of participants would recommend Veganuary to a friend.

The internet can see its fair share of negativity, so a trend that promotes reduced meat consumption and environmental consciousness is a positive one. Going vegan can be a huge lifestyle change, especially if you don't know where to begin.

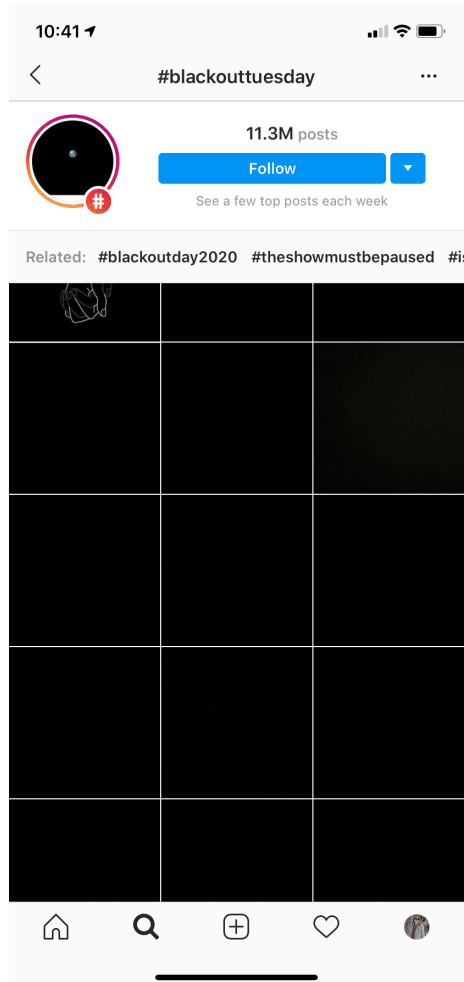
If you decide to take the Veganuary challenge next year, all I would say is this: Do your research. Before fully dedicating yourself, it's best to fully understand what veganism entails and how to make it a sustainable practice in your life.

"I think it would be good if you started [by becoming] vegetarian, then started cutting out dairy and eggs."

The problem with virtue signalling

Can an Instagram graphic end racism?

BY SONDOS ELSHAFEI



CREATING CHANGE REQUIRES MINDFUL ACTION: POSTING BLACK SQUARES WITH #BLACKOUTTUESDAY BACKFIRED. INSTEAD OF PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR BLM IT CREATED AN INFORMATION BLOCK.

Virtue signalling is opposing or supporting an opinion on social media platforms about certain political or social issues in a way that makes you seem superior to the rest of the world, condemning others for being ignorant. This act attracts the attention of people who agree with your opinion, and makes it easy for people to look like they are doing something useful for social justice movements when they really aren't.

What's so wrong about it?

In an age of addictive online content and personal branding, social justice is a valuable currency. It may seem morally good for an individual or group of people to show their support for positive change in the world, so virtue signalling is not immediately offensive.

But in many cases, virtue signalling is a

self-serving act rather than an altruistic one. It is easy to support or oppose a social justice cause simply by posting a picture, video or even a few words. However, nothing is being done in real life to support the cause. For example, the online platform for *Dazed* magazine reported last summer about white Instagram influencers attending Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests simply to take photos of themselves for social media.

As these online celebrities post opinions about certain issues to show their followers they support positive change, they rarely use the power they have to do the real, consistent work to help important causes like BLM.

Reflections on June 2020

On June 8, 2020, Democrats from the United States Congress donned kente cloths and knelt to honour George Floyd and all victims of police violence. The event led to widespread criticism.

To many, the Democrats' act was virtue signalling at its finest: Powerful people making a meaningless gesture benefitting nothing besides their own public image. It was a display of support for BLM, yet this gesture felt shallow against the backdrop of horrific police brutality happening at the time against peaceful BLM protestors.

Another example of virtue signalling from famous people was on June 11, 2020. The band Lady Antebellum changed their name to Lady A. The band made this change because the word antebellum refers, often in a nostalgic way, to a time in the Deep South before the American Civil War when slavery was still legal. Lady A, however, is also the stage name of Black female blues artist Anita White, who has used the name for more than 20 years. But White's objections did not stop the country music group from using the name Lady A. They even filed a lawsuit against White in July 2020 for having the same name as them.

Blackout Tuesday

Another problem with virtue signalling is the over-inflation of certain messages or symbols, like a hashtag, where the true cause behind the symbol gets overlooked.

In June 2020, millions of Instagram users posted a plain black square to show support for the BLM movement. This idea was originally created by music executives Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang to shut down the music industry's daily business on June 2, 2020 in sup-

port of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and all the victims of police brutality. Instagram users from all over the world started showing support by posting the black square and using the hashtag #BlackoutTuesday and #BlackLivesMatter.

While many of these users who posted a black square may have thought they were doing their part to support the BLM movement, they instead created an information block since the BLM hashtag was meant for petition links, donation links and important resources for BLM. It was becoming hard for BLM supporters to find actual useful information since the hashtag was filled with plain black squares and no information.

Corporate virtue signalling

Virtue signalling is also a corporate tactic. Major worldwide corporations such as Adidas, Nike, Amazon, Microsoft, the National Football League and many others created online content in support of the BLM movement. However, these acts seemed to have been mainly done in favour of public relations and marketing efforts, not out of true care for the cause.

The use of social justice and human rights movements for corporate gains is not a new story: The term "pink washing" is used to describe companies co-opting 2SLGBTQ+ symbolism, namely the rainbow flag, to feign surface level support for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

In the case of BLM, many of the large corporations who showed their support have a majority white C-suite and very small percentage of Black employees. Google, for example, reported in their 2020 diversity report only 2.6 per cent of their staff in leadership roles were Black (white employees make up 65.9 per cent of their leadership positions). Google did announce, however, it would spend more than \$175 million on racial equity projects. But again, the company came under fire in December 2020 when it fired (on seemingly unjust grounds) Timnit Gebru, a Black female employee who was the co-lead of an artificial intelligence research team.

Virtue signalling is an easy way to show support or to oppose social and political issues, however it is more harmful than helpful because it is becoming a replacement for physical action to create positive change. We must be reminded true change doesn't come from an Instagram reel, no matter how well designed. Unlearning and rejecting anti-Black racism is work, and this work is essential to uphold the values we all claim to hold.

Where did you get your braids done?

Black haircare services hard to find in Halifax

BY MAYOWA OLUWASANMI, OPINIONS EDITOR

From braids, twist-outs and weaves to crochet extensions, haircare is an integral aspect of Black identity. Black women use these hairstyles not just to protect our natural hair, but as a marker of heritage.

Nova Scotia plays an important role in Black hair history. In the 1940s, civil rights icon Viola Desmond opened the first Nova Scotia school of hairdressing that specifically catered to Black Nova Scotian women. Desmond started the college after being rejected from other local beauty schools due to her race. Desmond's school was also the first beautician school in Halifax to enrol Black students.

Despite past strides, getting Black hair done in Halifax today is still a complicated story.

Black haircare and accessibility

Living in a small city that is predominantly white, word of mouth remains the best modus operandi for Black students to learn where to get haircare. This means access to proper haircare can be a significant problem for many Black students.

Many salons and barbershops in the Halifax Regional Municipality can be too expensive for students. Additionally, the lack of Black hair business not only forces students to go the extra mile to find stylists, but also robs students of the community and processes of identity these spaces centred around Black hair provide.

Faidat Olatubosun, a fourth-year psychology major at Dalhousie says her experience with Black haircare in Halifax has been costly.

"I find that the products and services I need to get my hair done here are so expensive," she says.

When asked whether Black haircare is accessible in Halifax, Olatubosun says, "They are not even worth the quality, compared to what I am used to back home [in Nigeria]."

Selam Abdella, the Dalhousie Student Union Equity and Accessibility Office coordinator, echoes the same sentiments.

"Finding Black haircare is not easy in Halifax, especially to newcomers. As a student, I have relied on other Black friends to navigate haircare in this city," Abdella says.

What can only be described as a community built on recommendations, Black students in Halifax are often relegated to asking around instead of having one direct source or shop.

Samantha Dixon Slawter owns Styles by SD, a hair salon in Dartmouth, N.S., that caters to Black Nova Scotians. In a recent interview with CBC, Dixon Slawter called on the Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia to allow hairdressing



HAIRSTYLE PLAYS A BIG ROLE IN THE IDENTITY AND POLITICS OF BLACK PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. AFFORDABLE HAIRCARE SHOULD BE ACCESSIBLE FOR EVERYONE. (PHOTO BY PHAB ON PEXELS)

students to get in-salon training. This would allow Black students to learn from Black hairdressers, which is often not the case in pre-existing hairdressing programs. Dixon Slawter also noted the lack of local Black beauty services are linked to the lack of education in cosmetology schools about Black hair. Because of this, she hopes to open her own school for Black hairdressing.

Kitchen beauticians

It was the lack of available Black haircare that led Olatubosun, like other students, to start her own hair business selling Kanekalon braids and crochet hair at affordable prices, rather than pay exorbitant shipping fees to get these products from the United States.

Student stylists (who are often kitchen beauticians — people who do haircare out of their own homes) are a saving grace for Black students. Affordable and nearby, student-run haircare businesses fill the gap in local Black haircare.

"I think student hair businesses are doing their best to make it more accessible and affordable," Olatubosun says. For these student stylists, hairstyling has become a viable avenue for financial freedom and stability.

Haircare is a booming business, especially for Black consumers. (In 2018, market research firm Mintel estimated the Black haircare industry was worth more than \$2.5 billion.) However, the stu-

dent-kitchen-beautician model we currently have in Halifax isn't perfect: Scheduling conflicts, lack of communication and lower-quality work remain a problem.

"I still think though that some mediocre hair services use this opportunity and give crazy prices because they know Black students don't have a lot of options for hair services," Olatubosun says.

Furthermore, the lack of Black hair salons leave

many students who don't wear protective styles (attachments or extensions like braids that protect kinky hair from damage) out in the cold. Another issue with student haircare businesses, which are often

largely run on social media, is they aren't as easy to find.

"Black student hair businesses, often ran by students, have been a great resource to find affordable and protective hairstyles. However, it takes some time for Black students to become familiar with how to find these businesses," Abdella says. "There should be more support and exposure for these local businesses because they provide a much-needed accessible service to Black students."

Until a Halifax university steps up and provides a space for an affordable Black hair salon, local students looking for some midterm braids may just have to keep waiting to hear a stranger say, "I know someone!"

"Finding Black haircare is not easy in Halifax, especially to newcomers."

Black-owned businesses in Halifax

Six local businesses you should check out

BY RACHEL COOKE



MODELS DON DESIGNS FROM TREV CLOTHING, A BRAND FOUNDED BY FORMER DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY STUDENT TREVOR SILVER. (PHOTO BY GLADYZ PHOTOGRAPHY; TALENT FROM SOLI PRODUCTIONS MANAGEMENT)

While Black History Month is often considered a time to look back and honour Black history, it can also be a time to celebrate the thriving Black communities in today's world. So, to honour the accomplishments of Black Nova Scotians, here is a list of some local, Black-owned businesses you'll absolutely want to check out.

Back 2 Belair

Back 2 Belair is a vintage, secondhand clothing business. It operates from an exclusively online platform through Instagram marketing and sales. Brands like Nike, Champion, Adidas, Helly Hansen and many others are featured along with a plethora of sports merch such as jerseys, hats, jackets, sneakers and more. If you're trying to achieve the perfect '90s aesthetic wardrobe, or are a big sports fan, check out @back2belair on Instagram.

tREv Clothing

Trust, respect, education, value: these merits underpin the innovative, local, streetwear brand named tREv Clothing. The founder, Trevor Silver, decided to leave Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law after his first year to launch a clothing business.

Silver says his dream of becoming a lawyer was to show his family, friends and the Black community it was possible. However, after pursuing his dream to start tREv clothing, he

realized the Black community has more to offer than simply something to prove, and tREv clothing is a way to showcase this creativity and entrepreneurship. Incorporating the scales of justice into the brand logo, Silver pays homage to his time at law school and expresses his faith in balancing success.

Silver says, "trust, respect, education and value are what I believe are the key principles to success and what we all have to practice towards ourselves and others." Check out @trevclothing on Instagram to see the styles for yourself.

Delectable Desserts

Delectable Desserts is a local, family run bakery in Dartmouth, N.S. Their website states their aim is to provide, "high-quality, professionally made and tastefully decorated desserts," and that all of their products are, "carefully handcrafted from scratch daily using the finest and freshest of ingredients."

Delectable Desserts offers custom cakes (including vegan options), cupcakes, cheesecakes, cookies, scones, muffins, macarons, gift bundles and more. Some items come in gluten-free

and dairy-free options as well. Check out their Instagram for mouthwatering photos of their creations @delectabledessertsns.

Mary's African Cuisine

Mary's African Cuisine is located at 1701 Barrington St., as well as at the Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market, and Kicks Café at the BMO Soccer Centre. Chef Mary is at the core of the operation and has more than 20 years of culinary experience, according to the restaurant's website.

The menu offers dishes like curry, stews, fried plantain, rice, samosas, soups and more. Go to marysafricancuisine.com for mouthwatering pictures of all the delicious meals. Or better yet, head straight to Barrington Street to try a new dish for dinner.

Fire & Desire Candle Co.

Fire & Desire candles are handmade, eco-friendly, soy wax candles produced exclusively in Nova Scotia. Each candle has a unique name and fragrance so there is something for everyone. Scents range from 'Shorty Swing My Way' (caramel popcorn) to 'I Wanna Be Down' (apple and maple bourbon).

Fire & Desire candles are vegan, cruelty-free and will only bring goodness and delicious scents into your home. Check out @fireanddesirecandleco on Instagram to see their wide range of options.

Bailly Fragrance

Last but not least, Bailly Fragrance is a local perfume company. Every perfume is paraben-free, cruelty-free and vegan.

According to the company's website, Bailly seeks to "elevate women who have felt excluded from the

beauty industry." Their website also explains the story behind the brand name: Bailly is the name of an impact crater on the Moon and therefore symbolizes the way women make a positive impact in their communities. Follow @baillyfragrance on Instagram to see a refreshing feed of positivity, carefully curated scents and a business with genuine integrity at its core.

"Trust, respect, education and value are what I believe are the key principles to success and what we all have to practice towards ourselves and others."

Serving up success

Local plant-based butcher carves out niche

BY ADDIE TILLER



HALIFAX'S FIRST FULLY VEGAN BUTCHER, REAL FAKE MEATS, CREDITS THEIR SUCCESS TO THE RISE OF VEGANISM. DESPITE COVID-19 RESTAURANT RESTRICTIONS, THEY ARE ADAPTING TO NEW WAYS OF SERVING THE COMMUNITY. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Real Fake Meats: The name might be confusing, but the local restaurant is an absolute hit. It's Halifax's first vegan butcher and the two-year-old Gottingen Street business plays a dynamic role in the community.

The restaurant offers plant-based food to take-out, pre-cooked meals and before COVID-19 had seating for dine-in. They also supply their food products to local businesses. Real Fake Meats seems to be part of a larger global trend toward veganism.

Inside Real Fake Meats

Lauren Marshall is a vegan chef and co-founder of Real Fake Meats. She was the first chef at enVie, Halifax's first vegan restaurant, which opened in 2013. She took five years of vegan cooking classes and attended The Culinary Institute of Canada in Charlottetown.

Marshall founded Real Fake Meats because she believed Halifax was ready to see a vegan butcher.

"Plant-based meats were becoming more in demand because of the progression of the restaurant scene and it was [two years ago] Halifax was ready to see that," she says.

The six seats, wooden walls, chalkboard menus and neon "plant butcher" sign give the restaurant a rustic vibe. It's an easy place for customers to converse when the stools are closely arranged in a line facing the window.

High prices, high variety

The trademark of Real Fake Meats is their comfort food. Menu items like macaroni and cheese, donairs and barbecue wings appeal to a variety of consumers. Though their praise has not come without critique.

Anna Pittas, a vegetarian of eight years, says "it presents a social opportunity to show non-vegans how delicious vegan food can be." However, she believes Real Fake Meats should be contributing to the community members of the North End as their

neighbourhood is experiencing gentrification.

Marshall recognizes her business is located in a gentrified neighbourhood, but says Real Fake Meats contributes to the community in multiple ways. They donate to the Adsum House (a local women's shelter) and Feed Nova Scotia, employ the Wright Courier (a local North End driver) for deliveries, and purchase dressings from Hope Blooms, an organization that supports North End youth. Recently they hired local business Taya Ties to tie-dye their store apparel with proceeds going to North End charities.

Another deterrent for some customers are the prices at Real Fake Meats. Sylvain Charlebois, professor of food distribution and policy at Dalhousie University and senior director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab, is not a returning customer due to the prices.

"The price points you find are very high. I bought six patties and four portions of macaroni and cheese for \$57. I can't afford to do that every day," says Charlebois.

Marshall defends their price points by highlighting their \$6 value menu this month, comparing their \$9 burger and fries combo to the \$10.98 combo from A&W, and by explaining vegetable products aren't subsidized like some meat and dairy products are.

Jessica McGrath, a vegetarian of 14 years, lives in Dartmouth, N.S., and crosses the bridge just to get take-out from Real Fake Meats. Her only complaint is feeling claustrophobic in the small space. Despite this, it remains her favourite spot.

"The Wild Leek and enVie used to be my favourites, but they don't change their menus often enough," she explains. "When they did, the option I ordered was replaced by some salad or power bowl. No offence to salads, but I can pick up lettuce at the grocery store."

Pittas, on the other hand, eats at restaurants as a treat and enjoys items she can't make at home.

"I would never make vegan chicken nuggets at home. I prefer to eat in and take my time with my food," she says.

Where to find vegan food in Halifax

Real Fake Meats is the quintessential spot for vegans who crave their meaty and cheesy non-vegan favourites. According to McGrath, they entice the "dairy-free people who miss the taste of a delicious greasy grilled cheese."

Marshall also caters her business to people with less time. Katie Mombourquette, a student at Mount Saint Vincent University, gets to-go meals from the fridge on her way home.

The team of four chefs at Real Fake Meats are busy supplying products like fake meats, vegan cheeses and sauces to businesses around the province. In Halifax, they supply to The Nook Espresso Bar and Lounge on Gottingen Street, The Old Apothecary Bakery & Cafe, Organic Earth Market and more.

A local group called Vegan Event Planners organizes social events with vegan food and often serves Real Fake Meats products. The group planned a billiards event last year that served Real Fake Meats' wings, chicken nuggets, cheeseburgers and wraps.

James Purcell, an attendee of the event and vegan advocate, said "the cheeseburgers were identical to a regular cheeseburger from McDonald's. Real dirty and fulfilled that greasy junk food craving. The nuggets seemed no different than actual chicken flesh. It was weird at first how perfect they were."

The future of fake meat in Halifax

Real Fake Meats has adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by selling "butcher bags" for pick-up when Halifax was in lockdown and moved their menu online for a contactless delivery option. They currently do not have sit-in dining as an option.

Currently, they are the only storefront vegan butcher in Halifax, but similar businesses are expanding and Charlebois believes more competition will arise soon.

"A current phenomenon is the pursuit for inclusiveness. If you don't have a vegan option, you're excluding a lot of people. More restaurants will open and put silver bullet vegan options on menus to make them feel more democratic," said Charlebois.

Honest Kitchen could become an equal competitor. They operate from a commercial kitchen, and do delivery and wholesale for other businesses. They supply vegan products to G-Street Pizza, a neighbouring business of Real Fake Meats, and they are working on supplying their products to more restaurants and retail stores. Their Thai, Jamaican, Indian and Moroccan cuisine already differentiate them from Real Fake Meats. Having this ethnically diverse menu may prove to be a beneficial factor in the future as they gain more recognition in Halifax.

Life after Dal: A diaper dilemma

Dalhousie alumna becomes children's book author

BY DECKLAN ROLLE



SARABETH HOLDEN, A DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY ALUMNA, RECENTLY PUBLISHED A PICTURE BOOK WITH INUIT-OWNED PUBLISHING COMPANY INHABIT MEDIA. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY SARABETH HOLDEN)

Writing a children's book can be a lot of fun, especially when you're the mother of two infants. This was the case for Sarabeth Holden: a Dalhousie University alumna and author of the recently published picture book *Please Don't Change My Diaper*.

Holden based the book, illustrated by Emma Pederson, on her three-year-old son Raymond. The book was published by Inhabit Media, which according to its website is "the first Inuit-owned, independent publishing company in the Canadian Arctic."

"The book is about a baby that thinks the world was falling apart because the diaper change is looming. Spoiler alert: The world keeps turning," Holden says.

Holden, who graduated from Dal in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in economics, believes it is important to address how people should have a positive mindset in stressful situations. She wanted to share this message with children because it may be an easier lesson to learn as a child.

Holden got the idea to write a picture book when she first worked with Inhabit Media.

"I had done a little bit of work with them through my non-profit organization, the Toronto Inuit Association, which myself and a few others had created in 2016 to support the new Inuit community in Toronto. I went to pick up a book one day published by my cousin, and they jokingly said to me, 'When are you going to publish a book?'" Holden says. Shortly after, Holden came up with the idea for her first book.

Representation matters

Holden grew up in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Nunavut and Ontario. She remembers the difficulties of being the only Inuit student at her New Brunswick high school.

"I never had access to any of the services and didn't really know what they had in terms of services for Indigenous students," Holden says.

While she believes Indigenous student support in educational institutions has improved over the years, Holden acknowledges it remains a "work in progress."

Diverse racial and ethnic representation matters, and for Holden this is one reason why she is so proud of publishing a book featuring an Inuit child.

A 2018 study by the non-profit organization BookNet Canada found out of 805 characters (humans and non-humans combined) in Canadian picture books published in 2018, fewer than two in 10 were Black, Indigenous or People of Colour (BIPOC). Holden sees this lack of BIPOC representation as a problem.

"I think diversity is so important, and we need to reflect diversity in children's stories and create those role models for kids, you know?" she says. "But I think [racialized children] need to see themselves in writers and in books, and that would inspire them."

What's next

Holden's future is looking bright. She is currently the president of the Toronto Inuit Association and recently opened up her own brewing company, Red Tape Brewery, with her husband. Holden is now working on another children's book.

"It's about a Tyrannosaurus rex who eats so many bananas that he turns into one. It's being published by Inhabit Media and will be released in fall 2022," Holden says.



INSPIRED BY HER THREE-YEAR-OLD SON, HOLDEN'S DEBUT IS TITLED *PLEASE DON'T CHANGE MY DIAPER*. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY SARABETH HOLDEN)

Poetry primer to feed the soul

Must-read works by local Black poets

BY MANDY KING

If poetry feeds the soul, Nova Scotians are truly blessed. The province is home to some of the country's most influential Black writers including Afua Cooper, Abena Beloved Green, Maxine Tynes and George Elliott Clarke.

With the winter study break looming, many students seek scholarly and leisure reading. It is impossible to cover every talented Black poet in Nova Scotia, but here are some names to look for.

Gloria Ann Wesley

A retired teacher, Gloria Ann Wesley is credited as the first published Black Nova Scotian poet. Her first book of poetry, *To My Someday Child*, was released in 1975.

Since her initial publication, Wesley has appeared in three Canadian anthologies of poetry. She has also published two additional books of her own poetry, children's literature, historical novels and young adult novels. Her last book, *Righting Canada's Wrongs: Africville*, tells the story of Africville, a Black Nova Scotian community wrongfully destroyed in the 1960s.

El Jones

Recognized for her post as fifth poet laureate of Halifax, El Jones is also a journalist, human rights activist and instructor at the University of King's College.

Jones is a spoken word poet, and her first book of poetry *Live from the Afrikan Resistance!* was published in 2014. She encourages the voices of other Black poets, co-hosting a CKDU-FM radio show called *Black Power Hour*. The show invites imprisoned Black Canadians to call in and share their creative work on air.

Shauntay Grant

Halifax poet laureate from 2009 until 2011, Shauntay Grant is known for her artistry as a writer and performer. From Grant's award-winning children's book *Africville* to her theatrical success with *The Bridge* at Neptune Theatre, her talent spans multiple facets of art and literature.

Grant is an associate professor at Dalhousie University, focusing on subjects of creative writing, Black Nova Scotians, orality and poetry and more.



ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA SUPNIK ON BLUSH

Sylvia Hamilton

A King's College professor, Sylvia Hamilton is celebrated for her work as a Black historian, filmmaker, artist and poet. Hamilton's artistic achievements delve into the current lives and history of Black Canadians. She has earned multiple awards including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal (honouring significant achievements by Canadians) and the Nova Scotia Portia White prize (honouring Nova Scotian artists who have achieved excellence in their field).

Hamilton's debut book of poetry, *And I Alone Escaped to Tell You*, was published in 2014. Her poems have also appeared in the *Dalhousie Review*, *The Great Black North: Contemporary African Canadian Poetry*, *West Coast Line journal* (now known as *Line - SFU*), *To Find Us: Words and Images of Halifax* and other publications.

Guyleigh Johnson

Hailing from North End Dartmouth, N.S., Guyleigh Johnson is an advocate for her community and an accomplished writer.

Johnson has published two books of poetry. The first, *Expect the Unexpected*, is a compilation of poems about the lives of North End Dartmouth youth. The second is called *Afraid of the Dark*. It tells the story of a teen-

age girl named Kahlua struggling with her identity as a young Black woman finding salvation in poetry.

Damini Awoyiga

While the above poets are distinguished in their field, it is important to shine a light on the future generation of Nova Scotian poets. Damini Awoyiga, a 13-year-old student, recently presented her poem *Together We Stand* at the Black Cultural Centre in Cherry Brook, N.S.

Awoyiga is no stranger to artistic endeavours. In 2020, she became the first junior artist in residence for the justice and health organization Wellness Within. She also started the Afro-Indigenous Youth Book Club, the first book club of its type in Atlantic Canada.

You can check out another one of Awoyiga's poems called *Golden Molds* published in an October 2020 edition of the *Chronicle Herald* on the newspaper's website.

More great reads

Interested in reading more great Black Canadian poets? Consider reading *The Great Black North: Contemporary African Canadian Poetry* edited by Valerie Mason-John and Kevan Anthony Cameron. This volume contains poems by many of the poets above.

Combating racism in sport

Black coaches look for solutions

BY THOMAS SCOTT



TYLER SIMMONS (PICTURED WITH BALL) IS ONE OF MANY BLACK ATHLETES AND COACHES WHO HAS FACED RACISM IN NOVA SCOTIA AND ELSEWHERE. TO HELP COMBAT RACISM, ORGANIZATIONS IN CHARGE OF SPORT NEED TO PROVIDE MORE RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIPOC IN NOVA SCOTIA. (PHOTO SUBMITTED BY TYLER SIMMONS)

Black Nova Scotian athletes and coaches have faced many moments of racism and discrimination within their sports. The question remains: how will the Nova Scotian sports community address this issue?

Tasia McKenna, technical director and performance coach for Basketball Nova Scotia and the Saint Mary's University Huskies women's basketball team's assistant coach, detailed how she has faced racism throughout her career.

"Challenges can come in a variety of different ways. It can be institutional, it can be subtle," she said.

Although McKenna said racism can be shown in subtle ways, she has also experienced it from people who are very upfront.

"I've been in a situation just in the past year where I've been yelled at in the stands and called a thing, which was pretty uncomfortable to say the least," she said.

Pervasive racism

Racism can take place not only in games, but any sports setting. Tyler Simmons, assistant coach of the Mount Saint Vincent

University women's volleyball team, describes the struggles of being a Black coach in volleyball.

"When it comes time for doing coaching courses, you'll go into a room and I'll be the only Black person in there, and that of its own is a battle, being in a room talking about the sport and everyone else doesn't look like you," he said.

Simmons said he hears racist comments such as "Why does this guy coach volleyball or soccer?" and "Shouldn't you be coaching basketball or football?"

"[It's] little microaggressions to make you feel like you're not supposed to be in the field that you're in," he said.

Racism creates an unfair playing field for Black athletes, as Mark Smith, Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Famer and Sport Nova Scotia's director of sport, said while discussing the disadvantages of being a Black athlete.

"It really resonated with me that as a person of colour, and in softball in particular where I was one of very few people of colour I've ever seen play the sport, I wasn't being measured the same as my white counterpart," Smith said.

"It really resonated with me that as a person of colour. . . I wasn't being measured the same as my white counterpart."

Taking action toward change

Change is needed in addressing issues of systemic racism and discrimination in Nova Scotian sports. McKenna said change be-

gins with asking the important questions to understand racism in sport.

"Sometimes we go a couple of steps forwards and several steps backwards," she said. "And that's part of the process with anything where you're trying to make a pretty substantial change. The biggest thing is understanding. What does racism look like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like? And for anyone who's not

experienced it, it can be quite new, and can be quite shocking when you see it, especially when it's something very overt."

Smith said approaching the challenges that Black Nova Scotians face begins with those involved in local sports and actually creating change, not simply suggesting it.

"It's about mandating that things change and putting a legislative policy in place that will dictate how things will change," he said. "So that it's no longer left up to the discretion of a president or people who run an association. So it's determined that, by law, you will do things differently and you will provide opportunities."

"It's one thing to talk about it, it's another thing to take action and actually put things in place that encourage [improvement] to happen, recognizing the systemic barriers that exist."

For improvement to happen, people must be educated about racism. McKenna said communicating with one another can lend a hand to those who need to be educated.

"I think that other people have faced racial discrimination on several different levels. And there are times where you can work through those things and navigate them," McKenna said. "And sometimes it's just educating anyone that may have done that towards someone. It wouldn't be fair to say that everyone is aware of any sort of derogatory things that they may do. They just might not understand."

Simmons said, in the fight against racism, the difference between being a bystander or being part of the solution is crucial.

"The problem is," he said, "are you willing to speak up in that situation [and] tell someone that what you saw is not good?"



BOTH NOVA SCOTIA HALL OF FAMER MARK SMITH (LEFT) AND TASIA MCKENNA, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR OF BASKETBALL NOVA SCOTIA, RECOGNIZE THE UNFAIR TREATMENT OF BLACK ATHLETES. (PHOTO OF SMITH BY SPORT NOVA SCOTIA; PHOTO OF MCKENNA BY SMU HUSKIES)

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Dal Tigers sweep academic awards

Matt Coolen and Isabel Sarty claim national honours

BY LUKE DYMENT, SPORTS EDITOR



MATT COOLEN (FOURTH JUMPER FROM LEFT) RACES AT THE U SPORTS TRACK & FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LAST MARCH. HIS GOLD-MEDAL PERFORMANCE IN THE 60-METRE HURDLES HELPED CINCHE HIS TOP 8 NOMINATION. (PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MATT COOLEN)

Isabel Sarty had to keep a secret from almost everyone she knew for close to a month, and the excitement was almost too much to handle.

"In December, I got an email from U Sports that said 'Congratulations for winning the [U Sports] Top 8 Academic All-Canadian award for the AUS.' But I couldn't tell anyone until a couple of weeks later when they released [nominees publicly]," said the fourth-year neuroscience student. Sarty is the reigning and back-to-back Atlantic University Sport [AUS] women's Swimmer of the Year.

"I was allowed to tell my family. Keeping that secret over the next couple of weeks was a bit tough. I knew what was going on, but I couldn't share it with the people who have supported me until a couple of weeks later. It was hard not to send out thank-yous and appreciation right away with all the excitement," she said.

Sarty, of the Dalhousie University Tigers swimming team, was named a U Sports Top 8 Academic All-Canadian for the 2019-2020 season alongside Matt Coolen of the Tigers' track team. U Sports awards the Academic All-Canadian honour to student-athletes who receive an average of 80 per cent or higher in their courses while playing on a varsity team.

Coolen, who graduated last spring from his engineering program, said he remembers getting a call from Tim Maloney, the Tigers' executive director, with the good news.

"At the moment, I was so shocked. It was so exciting and I was at a loss of words," said the two-time AUS men's Track Athlete of the Year and a U Sports first team All-Canadian. "I was hopeful, but I know there are so many great student-athletes across the country, it was a tight pool. I always hoped because you never know. I'm very lucky and honoured to receive this award."

Dal takes both AUS awards

With their wins, Coolen and Sarty become the 15th and 16th Tigers to win the honour. Two awards, one male and one female, are given in each of U Sports' four conferences for a total of eight national winners. Having won both AUS honours, Coolen and Sarty become the second pair of Tigers to sweep the conference podium in the same year. The first pair from Dal to do that was Miranda McMillan and Nathan Musoke in 2011-2012. The honour was introduced in the 1993-1994 season.

"I'm honoured to be recognized for this award, but it's even more special to be recognized alongside Matt. It's a testament to Dalhousie and its programs," Sarty said. "It says something about the university. It just goes to show how supportive our university has been over the past couple of years."

"It's awesome that we were both selected. It shows we have a great athletic and academic community at Dal. It's a great showing for the school," Coolen said.

Championship effort in the classroom

Coolen earned the nomination on the strength of a 3.76 GPA, along with his many track wins. Like many Dal students, he had to finish his school year from a distance because of the first COVID-19 shutdown. The stakes were high for him though, as a graduating student in contention for awards like the Top 8 nomination he now owns.

"We were very lucky for track and field. We were able to fly to Edmonton for the U Sports Championships to compete [in early March]," he said. "Academically, it was a very anti-climactic way to

finish off, but still exciting to finish. It was tough first transitioning to virtual. But at that point, you got to do what you got to do."

Sarty, in the final year of her neuroscience degree, put up a 4.15 GPA in 2019-2020 and multiple medals throughout the year's swim meets. She said this past year hasn't been quite the same as her usual university experience.

"I'm usually always on the run, but now I'm inside my home all day until swim practice," Sarty said. "I miss competing and things like the fun team travel, like staying with teammates in hotels and going on the bus together, and getting our tracksuits on and cheering each other on. I miss that whole experience. That's one of my favourite memories in university swimming, but I'm still glad we got to train this year."

Sarty said she's interested in pursuing a career in medical science and possibly beginning graduate school next year. Meanwhile Coolen is working for Hatch, an engineering consulting firm in Halifax, while occasionally going for runs with his old team at Dal. He said he loves the sport and wants to stay involved as long as he can.

"I'm planning on staying in Halifax for a bit and I plan to keep training. I love trying to keep getting better and faster," he said. Coolen has spent the last few summers training with HaliFAST, Nova Scotia's largest track club. "As for now, I'm enjoying working and training here."



ISABEL SARTY (RIGHT) HUGS HER SISTER JULIA AT THE DALPLEX POOL. ISABEL WON MULTIPLE MEDALS IN THE 2019-2020 SWIMMING SEASON WHILE EARNING A 4.15 GPA. (PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ISABEL SARTY)

Hockey trailblazer: James Robinson Johnston

Dal alumnus made lasting contributions to the sport

BY LUKE DYMENT, SPORTS EDITOR



WHILE JAMES ROBINSON JOHNSTON LEFT HIS MARK AS A LAWYER, COMMUNITY LEADER AND ACTIVIST, HE ALSO DESERVES CREDIT FOR HIS WORK WITH THE COLOURED HOCKEY LEAGUE.

James Robinson Johnston is a Dalhousie University legend. The argument could be made for him as a Halifax or Nova Scotian legend too.

Johnston broke colour barrier after colour barrier throughout his short 38-year life. Two of his most significant milestones came as a Dal graduate: He was the first Black Nova Scotian to graduate from a university and the first Black graduate of Dal's law program. A third major accomplishment is his law career: He was the first Black lawyer to practice in Nova Scotia. Johnston was also an established community leader, notably as an advocate against the province's segregated school laws at the time.

But one of Johnston's less recognized accomplishments was his work in hockey, particularly for the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes (CHL). With the league being groundbreaking in both revolutionizing how hockey is played and as the first notable majority/all-Black hockey league, perhaps it's time to consider him for legendary status in the sport too.

Accounts of the CHL's origins and history have been gathered by brothers George and Darril

Fosty in their book *Black Ice: The Lost History of the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes*. These accounts credit the local Baptist church, of which Johnston was an active member, as a driver behind the beginnings of the CHL.

Church and player recruitment

The idea behind the CHL was to help recruit Black people to the Baptist church and then play hockey against other church teams after services. The CHL's founders were Black Baptist leaders in the community at the time, including Johnston (who still attended Dal at the time), Pastor James Borden, James A.R. Kinney and Henry Sylvester Williams. Johnston, along with his work on the recruiting side as a Baptist church member, was a league organizer and an official for league games.

The CHL began in 1895, 20 years after the first organized hockey game in Montreal. Within five years, the league began attracting scores of players and fans, with reports of more than a dozen teams in the CHL and games attracting more than 1,000 spectators. These attendance numbers surpassed those of many white leagues.

The CHL's popularity and innovative nature have been tied to its close affiliation with the Baptist church: According to the *Canadian Encyclopedia* website, CHL games were played "with no official rules other than the Bible." With that, the league was much more physical and less strict on rules than other leagues, which allowed for play to flow with quickness.

Hockey firsts in the CHL

Until the last couple of decades, the CHL hasn't been getting its due respect. Not only is it the first league in hockey history with such immense participation of Black players, but it should also be commended for the rules and playing styles that are said to have originated in the league.

For instance, early hockey rules were tough on goalies: A lot of leagues required they stay in their net and on their feet. The CHL, historians agree, was the first league to allow more of a rogue goaltending style, where goalies could do whatever it takes to stop the puck and even join into the play like passing to teammates. In their book, based on articles and accounts written when the league was active, the Fosty brothers claim the slap shot was invented by Eddie Martin, a CHL player, in 1906.

Johnston himself never played or invented a move that revolutionized the game, but maintained his full support with the CHL in its early history. A railway expansion dispute in the first decade of the 20th century put the Black community in a tense relationship with the city of Halifax. This new railway proposal entailed bulldozing through Africville, and destroying the community and homes where many CHL players lived. Johnston represented many Africville residents, including players, in court to try and stop the railway annexation.

At the same time many rink owners in Halifax, who were in favour of the railway, stopped renting ice to Black players. Without proper facilities, local ponds became the only location for games and contributed to lost interest in the sport. The railway dispute led to the end of the league, although the CHL enjoyed a brief comeback in the 1920s.

A legacy due for recognition

The CHL's history, especially its first 15-year run, was a roller-coaster. Its playing style was revolutionary and was possibly the origin of how quick and physical the sport is today, but it also opened the door for Black hockey players to play more, especially in the Maritimes. In fact, Willie O'Ree, the first Black National Hockey League (NHL) player, is from Fredericton, further highlighting hockey's growth in diversity in the region.

Nova Scotia is mentioned plenty in hockey history, ranging from being the possible birthplace of hockey (an early version was played in Windsor, Ont., years before the first game, and the Mi'kmaq are recognized as inventing the ice hockey stick) to being the home of present-day NHL stars like Sidney Crosby and Nathan MacKinnon. But seldom do we hear talk about the CHL. Considering what the league brought to the sport, you don't see it or any of its builders in the Hockey Hall of Fame like other parts of early hockey history. Last year, however, Canada Post released a postage stamp featuring CHL players to celebrate the history of Black Canadian hockey players.

The league itself was popular and paved the way for many more players — Black players in particular. It's time for the CHL to be recognized more in hockey's origins and in places like the Hall of Fame. Johnston, being so important behind the league's success, paved his way as a builder of the beloved Canadian sport.