



INTERNATIONAL  
DECADE FOR PEOPLE OF  
**AFRICAN  
DESCENT**  
2015 - 2024

# Count Us In

Nova Scotia's Action  
Plan in Response to the  
International Decade for  
People of African Descent

**2015-2024**

Government of Nova Scotia supports the International Decade  
for People of African Descent



# Premier's Message



On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, I am honoured to introduce “Count Us In: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015 – 2024”. This action plan is designed to recognize the important contributions of people of African descent living in Nova Scotia, while at the same time working to tackle the unique challenges impacting the community.

African Nova Scotians have a unique, diverse and proud history, however it is also one marked by great difficulty. We must continue to address past wrongs so that we can truly build an inclusive and equitable province.

Our government has been, and remains, committed to undertaking initiatives to address systemic racism and discrimination. We initiated the Home for Coloured Children Restorative Inquiry and remain actively involved in the inquiry process. We are working to help residents of five African Nova Scotian communities get clear title to their land. And we will develop an African Nova Scotia justice plan in collaboration with African Nova Scotians and the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs. We want to help create positive change in the African Nova Scotian community.

Last spring, I was honoured to join the international community in proclaiming the United Nations’ International Decade for People of African Descent. It was a proud day for Nova Scotia and what followed was the drafting of the action plan before you.

This action plan will be our guiding document. It will provide government with specific actions, direction and strategic priorities to steer decision making using the three pillars: recognition, justice and development. The action plan will facilitate cooperative work across government departments, with African Nova Scotian organizations and with Nova Scotians to help us achieve our goal.

There is still much work to do. The deep, longstanding, complex issues faced by African Nova Scotians cannot be easily resolved. However, we are committed to the journey of healing and resolution.

I want to thank the African Nova Scotian community for the contributions and achievements they have made, and will continue to make, to our province.

Sincerely,

Honourable Stephen McNeil, M.L.A.

# Minister's Message



It is with great pride that I present “Count Us In: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015 – 2024”. This action plan represents another step forward in our government’s commitment toward equality and a better future for African Nova Scotians.

Spanning over 400 years, African Nova Scotians have a long, impactful and rich history in Nova Scotia. Despite this history being fraught with racism, discrimination and injustice, African Nova Scotians continue to persevere with strength of character, dignity and resiliency.

I am honoured to be the provincial representative for the more than 50 African Nova Scotian communities across our province. I am proud of the contributions made, the legacies and the leadership shown by these communities.

The Decade is a reminder that when we acknowledge and understand the history, culture and heritage of African Nova Scotians, we will, through cooperation and education, be able to facilitate change in our society.

The Decade is important for all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Ince". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Honourable Tony Ince, M.L.A.  
Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs





Nova Scotia

## Proclamation

### International Decade for People of African Descent

**WHEREAS** *Nova Scotia joins the United Nations in proclaiming 2015 to 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, with the theme "People of African Descent: recognition, justice, and development"; and*

**WHEREAS** *the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to addressing the issues facing African Nova Scotians, who have a long and unique history in Nova Scotia since the 1600s; and*

**WHEREAS** *the International Decade for People of African Descent is an opportunity to learn, to be involved, to support, and to be in solidarity with African Nova Scotians;*

**THEREFORE I, Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim years 2015 to 2024, as the "International Decade for People of African Descent" in the province of Nova Scotia, and to recognize that all Nova Scotians must take action in support of our African Nova Scotian communities in their efforts for full inclusion in all facets of Nova Scotian society.**



Handwritten signature of Stephen McNeil in blue ink.

Honourable Stephen McNeil, M.L.A.  
Premier of Nova Scotia

Handwritten signature of Tony Ince in blue ink.

Honourable Tony Ince, M.L.A.  
Minister of African Nova Scotia Affairs

*Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia – May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018*





## About the design

The cover and design of the Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent was inspired by the many ethnicities and cultures found in Africa and the African diaspora. It is also symbolic of the place known as the birthplace of humankind.

The colour black represents the people of African descent, while the various shades of brown represent the variations of the African diaspora bloodline found around the globe. The colour red represents the lives lost and the blood spilled during the enslavement period and the struggle for independence.

Together, the black, green and red represent the main colours found in many flags of African nations. Gold represents the wealth of the land and the colour blue located in the outer corners represents Africa's two main oceans: the Atlantic and the Indian.

In the entirety of this design, the colours together represent elements of the ties that bind us to Africa—past, present and future.

# Introduction

Nova Scotia has been home to people of African descent for over 400 years. From the arrival of Mathieu da Costa in 1605, through four major waves of migration, to the creation of more than 50 historic African Nova Scotian communities, African Nova Scotians are part of the shared Nova Scotian story that is often untold.

*All cultures can uplift and inspire. Diverse beliefs, cultures, and experiences strengthen a modern society. We need to do more to understand, acknowledge, embrace, and share the rich, painful, and resilient legacy of African Nova Scotians.*<sup>1</sup>

*To this day, long-standing prejudices have devastating social and economic echoes and impacts, particularly in our African Nova Scotian community. This must change, and must improve.*<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of this action plan, a person who identifies as **African Nova Scotian** is any Nova Scotian who chooses to declare African ancestry, regardless of how long they have lived here and regardless of how much African ancestry they can declare.

While the racial experiences of people of African descent in Nova Scotia may differ, African Nova Scotians still live with the affects of colonialism, racism and white privilege. It is important to understand that the past cannot be changed, forgotten, edited or erased. However, we can learn from the past to help prepare and plan the future.

Nova Scotia is not alone in this journey. In December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2015–2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent recognizing that, internationally, people of African descent represent a distinct group whose contributions to society must be highlighted, and whose human rights must be promoted and protected.

The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent's report on Canada noted deep concern for the structural racism that lies at the core of many Canadian institutions, and that our country's history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization has had a serious, negative impact on people of African descent.

However, to paraphrase Nova Scotia's first female African Nova Scotian Senator, Wanda Thomas Bernard, once we recognize the problem, we also recognize the power we have to change it.

*Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015–2024* aims to reduce barriers, attitudinal and discriminatory practices African Nova Scotians face, and bring Nova Scotians together in this endeavour. This will build a more inclusive, welcoming, and equitable province with improved social well-being, population and economic growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community (pg 13)

<sup>2</sup> Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community (pg 13)



The plan reflects work already underway and breaks new ground in some areas. It offers a system-wide blueprint for lasting change by promoting the three pillars of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent: recognition, justice, and development for African Nova Scotians.

*Count Us In* builds on reports, recommendations and issue analysis for African Nova Scotians spanning the last 25 years. Reports such as:

- Breaking Barriers Report of the Task Force on Access for Black and Native People Task Force (1989);
- The Black Learners Advisory Committee (1994);
- Task Force on Government Services to the Nova Scotian Black Community (1996);
- Final Report on Consultations with the African Nova Scotian Community (2001); and
- Decade for People of African Descent Working Group of Experts Canada Country Visit Report (2017).

African Nova Scotians face a number of issues ranging from low employment, widening academic achievement gaps, and poor health outcomes. The call for a decade addressing these and other issues under the pillars of recognition, justice and development for person of African descent is timely.

Change of this magnitude does not happen overnight, nor on its own. In addition to our government partners, we are counting on Nova Scotians from all organizational, community, cultural, and personal backgrounds to come together in the spirit of trust, respect, and collaboration to realize the vision: “African Nova Scotians prosper and can equitably and respectfully access and participate in all facets of Nova Scotian society.”

In Africa, symbols have been used as unique representations of cultural expression, thoughts, values and traditions. They communicate evocative messages that represent parts of lived or interpretations of a world view.



**DWENNIMMEN:** An adinkra symbol meaning both humility and strength characteristics. The two ram horn heads symbolize the humility found in those who have strength of leadership. Dwennimmen can also symbolize the strength Africans needed in order to survive the middle passage, the strength needed to fight for their rights and freedoms, and the humility to forgive, but not forget.

# What is the UN International Decade for People of African Descent?

The United Nations has a tradition of drawing attention to important global issues that demand long-term attention.<sup>3</sup>

On December 10, 2014, the UN General Assembly officially declared 2015–2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent for these reasons:<sup>4</sup>

*ACROSS THE GLOBE, AFRICANS AND THE AFRICAN DIASPORA CONTINUE TO SUFFER INEQUALITY AND DISADVANTAGE BECAUSE OF THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM... People of African descent are among the poorest and most marginalized communities around the world. They have high rates of mortality and maternal deaths, and limited access to quality education, health services, housing, and social security. They may experience discrimination in their access to justice, and they face alarmingly high rates of police violence and racial profiling.*

The UN has identified three main objectives for the decade:

- ensure the rights of people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society;
- promote greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage, culture, and contribution to the development of societies; and
- adopt and strengthen legal frameworks to eliminate racial discrimination.

## **Report on Canada**

The United Nations Working Group of Experts for People of African Descent visited Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal in October 2016 on a fact-finding mission about issues in Canada. Their report noted Canada's history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization of African Canadians, "has had a deleterious impact on people of African descent."

The report also acknowledged positive steps taken by federal and provincial governments to address racism, and made recommendations (Appendix A) about long-standing and urgent issues.<sup>5</sup>

The report further recommended that the Government of Canada, "legally recognize African Canadians as a distinct group who have made and continue to make profound economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual contributions to Canadian society."

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<sup>3</sup> Learn more about UN observances at [www.un.org/en/sections/observances/united-nations-observances](http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/united-nations-observances)

<sup>4</sup> [www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/pdf/African%20Descent%20Booklet\\_WEB\\_English.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/pdf/African%20Descent%20Booklet_WEB_English.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Read the full report at [documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/239/60/PDF/G1723960.pdf?OpenElement](http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/239/60/PDF/G1723960.pdf?OpenElement).

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its mission to Canada, Recommendation 84b. [documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/239/60/PDF/G1723960.pdf?OpenElement](http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/239/60/PDF/G1723960.pdf?OpenElement)



# Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan

## ***The Vision:***

African Nova Scotians prosper and can equitably and respectfully access and participate in all facets of Nova Scotian society.

## ***Recognition, Justice, and Development***

The African proverb, “three stones cook the pot” refers to the practice of laying three carefully selected stones in a fire pit to provide a steady base on which to place a cooking pot.

The actions in *Count Us In* are grouped under the three pillars identified by the UN: recognition, justice, and development. These are the three steadying stones in this plan.

Something else must also work in concert with the three pillars in order for the plan to succeed: the people of Nova Scotia need to be engaged. Participation, co-operation, willingness, and patience are the keys to the positive change we need to make. For that reason, education is firmly embedded in all three pillars.

Some Nova Scotians wrongly believe that the enslavement period never flourished here, and that racism is a thing of the past. Some Nova Scotians acknowledge that historic legacies carry into the present-day, including colonialism and white privilege. Acknowledging these things can be painful and complex-and the way forward is through truth telling, education, understanding, dialogue and awareness.

That is why anti-racism education is firmly embedded in all three pillars. Education at all social levels, but especially for our young generations, is one of the most effective ways we can shine a light on African Nova Scotians' history, culture, and contributions, and build authentic, respectful connections among all our communities and citizens.

*The role of education at all social levels, and in particular of young generations, remains one of the best ways to stop the proliferation of racist and discriminatory discourses and to foster intercultural exchanges. (UNESCO.org)*



# RECOGNITION

This pillar is about recognizing and celebrating the important contributions of people of African descent, while also recognizing the long-standing prejudices and unfair treatment endured for generations.

Nova Scotia has made progress in promoting African Nova Scotian history and heritage—for example, with the opening of the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia in 1983, the Africville Museum in 2012, and the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in 2015.

Under this pillar, we seek opportunities to build on those efforts and emphasize that African Nova Scotian history is our shared history, and African Nova Scotian issues belong to and affect all of us.

**SANKOFA:** An adinkra symbol meaning the importance of learning from the past. It comes from the expression “return and get it”.



## Goals of this pillar:

- To enhance understanding of African Nova Scotian history
- To celebrate African Nova Scotian heritage
- To use data and research to understand and combat racism in all its forms
- To engage with the African Nova Scotian community to explore what it means to be a distinct group with legal recognition

## Actions:

- Raise awareness in the general public about African Nova Scotian heritage and culture. Initiatives could include education programs in the school system (so African Nova Scotian learners see themselves, their peers, life experiences, histories, and current communities represented); public service messages; plaques, memorials, etc., commemorating and celebrating significant people, places, and events.
- Determine the data government needs to better serve African Nova Scotians and develop guidelines for its collection and interpretation, and share the data back with communities.
- Create the option for African Nova Scotians to self-identify on forms and surveys related to education, health, employment, and more to improve service and program delivery.
- Develop and deliver education to combat racism in and across all government departments and agencies including crowns, boards, commissions, schools and institutions.
- Assist in the development of an engagement strategy with the African Nova Scotian community to explore what it means to be a distinct group with legal recognition.

## According to the 2016 Statistics Canada census:

- 2.4% of Nova Scotians identify as African Nova Scotian.
- The median age of African Nova Scotians is 28.3 years. For the whole population of Nova Scotia, the median age is 45.1 years.
- 71.8% of African Nova Scotians have roots in Nova Scotia going back three generations or more.
- 12.9% of African Nova Scotians are newcomers (immigrants).
- African Nova Scotians are the largest racialized group in Nova Scotia. They make up 37.3% of Nova Scotia's racialized population.



## JUSTICE

We draw on the lessons learned from the past, like the wrongful conviction of Viola Desmond and the destruction of Africville, to guide us as we work toward advancing social justice and inclusion policies, eradicating racism and intolerance, and promoting human rights.

**MPATAPO:** An adinkra symbol meaning reconciliation, peacemaking and forgiveness. It represents the knot or bond that binds parties in conflict to resolve their dispute in a peaceful way.

Although the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent praised Canada's strong legal framework and measures to combat racial discrimination and promote equity, it also called upon Canada to account for the gap between what the law promises and what law enforcement and the justice system deliver.

In Nova Scotia, that means addressing systemic racism, discrimination, and inequities that exist within our justice systems to ensure they really do protect us *all*.

## Goals of this pillar:

- To have access to a fair and equitable justice system
- To provide supportive and culturally relevant family and community services
- To assist with conversations with African Nova Scotian communities to redress historic injustice

The suggested actions will help bring the justice systems, African Nova Scotians, and the African Nova Scotian communities closer together, through shared understanding, to support justice-related initiatives for African Nova Scotians—specifically, to develop and provide culturally relevant and people-centred programs, services, and human resource (HR) practices, a theme identified in the *Culture Action Plan*.

## Actions:

- Strengthen relationships within the justice system and African Nova Scotian communities.
- Develop an African Nova Scotian justice plan in collaboration with ANSA and African Nova Scotians.
- Raise awareness among African Nova Scotians about how the justice system works and find solutions to better address the overrepresentation of African Nova Scotians in the criminal justice system.
- Continue to increase representation of African Nova Scotians in the legal community, including the number of African Nova Scotian judges, administrative tribunal decision makers, lawyers and members on Department of Justice Agencies Boards and Commissions.
- Develop and deliver educational activities to combat racism and promote cultural awareness for all levels of the justice system.
- Consider how restorative approaches could be used for African Nova Scotians in conflict with the law.
- Facilitate consideration of the impact of race and culture in connection with criminal justice proceedings.
- Continue to increase the presence of African Nova Scotians in the Nova Scotia public service, particularly in the justice system, to support better client and community services.
- Partner with community groups to provide African Nova Scotians in correction facilities with culturally appropriate education programs.

## **Social Justice**

African Nova Scotian children are 4.4 times more likely than children in the general population to be removed from their families and placed in institutional care.<sup>7</sup> Consideration needs to be given to the systemic reasons why a family may be in crisis, and more attention needs to be paid to the long-term effects of separating children from their families, communities, and culture.

Collaboration is key to improving social justice for African Nova Scotians. We visualize a partnership that includes government and the organizations, associations, and communities directly involved with these social justice issues, all working together to build culturally responsive actions that promote equitable treatment and address historic issues such as unresolved land claims and environmental racism.

### **Actions:**

- Continue to enhance the Department of Community Services' ability to address the needs of African Nova Scotian children, youth, and families. For example, dedicated services within the department to meet the needs of African Nova Scotian families (and serve as a first point of contact). Dedicated staff can provide advice and expertise to senior government leaders, to better address the disproportionate number of children in care.
- Research environmental issues affecting African Nova Scotian communities, such as the location of landfills and contaminated lands and recommend appropriate action.
- Continue progress on resolving outstanding land-claim issues affecting African Nova Scotians, including the provision of sustained financial and staff support to continue and enhance the Land Titles Initiative.
- Develop a model that helps government departments and agencies ensure policies, programs, and services are equitable, fair, and accessible to African Nova Scotians.
- Strengthen relationships between government and African Nova Scotian communities through truth telling, communication, education, understanding, dialogue and awareness.

### **According to the 2019 Wortley Report:**

African Nova Scotians in Halifax are 5.33 times more likely to experience a street check than their presence in the general population would predict. (*Source: Wortley Report Table 5.4, Page 108*)

- African Nova Scotians represent 2% of the province's population but 12% of adults admitted to remand in 2018–19. (*Source: Justice Enterprise Information Network, Nova Scotian Department of Justice*)
- African Nova Scotians' are also overrepresented in admission of provincial sentenced custody, representing 2% of the province's population but 11% of adult admissions to provincial sentenced custody in 2018–19. (*Source: Justice Enterprise Information Network, Nova Scotian Department of Justice*)





## DEVELOPMENT

This pillar is about creating healthier and more prosperous communities.

### Goals of this pillar:

- Close the achievement gap in **education** and promote lifelong learning
- Promote sustainable inclusive economic participation, including the benefit of quality **employment**
- Support **health** and well-being at all ages
- Help **communities** become more inclusive, safe, connected, resilient, and sustainable

### **Education**

*Every child and student is confident and proud, maximizing their potential and contributing to a thriving society.* That is the vision of Nova Scotia's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The current reality is that many African Nova Scotian students still experience racism and exclusion, struggle academically, and leave school with less than they need to succeed.

**FAWOHODIE:** An adinkra symbol meaning independence, freedom and emancipation. It comes from the expression "independence comes with its responsibilities".

The systemic issues were documented in the 1994 *BLAC Report on Education* and in the 2009 follow-up report, *Reality Check*. The African Canadian Services Division (acs.ednet.ns.ca) was established in the Department of Education in 1996 to address these issues. It advises the department and develops much-needed programs, resources, and services for students and families.

The African Canadian Services Branch was created as one of the recommendations implemented as part of the administrative review of Education and Early Childhood Development (Glaze Report, *Raise the Bar: A Coherent and Responsive Education Administrative System for Nova Scotia* [2018]).

## **Actions:**

- Support the *Culture Action Plan's* theme of advancing cultural diversity to improve access to early childhood development intervention programs for African Nova Scotian families.
- Encourage all service providers to incorporate African Nova Scotian history, images, and themes in curriculum, programs, services, etc.
- Support African Nova Scotian student success and well-being by developing a strategy that would result in establishing schools as safe, inclusive, culturally responsive education and equitable learning environments and systems. The strategy will reflect an understanding of the interests, strengths, and needs of African Nova Scotian students, encourage the involvement and engagement of families and community-based organizations in supporting African Nova Scotian students, and prepare students for post-secondary and workforce options that create healthier and more prosperous communities.
- Work with EduNova, the co-operative industry association of education and training providers in Nova Scotia, to enhance cultural diversity in our post-secondary institutions, as per the *Culture Action Plan's* theme of advancing cultural diversity.
- Continue research on student achievement and the achievement gap that targets specific strategies, actions, and supports for enhancing the academic success, scholarship, and well-being of African Nova Scotian students.
- Develop education tools to enhance awareness of Labour Standards to support diverse communities and youth entering the work force successfully, as per the *Culture Action Plan*.

## Employment

Much work remains to be done to build a more inclusive workforce and to meet goal #8 of the *One Nova Scotia Report* - that the employment rate for First Nations and African Nova Scotians will be equal to the provincial average by 2024.

	All of Nova Scotia	African NS Females	Nova Scotia Females	African NS Males	Nova Scotia Males
Average total income	\$41,479	\$29,622	\$34,132	\$33,456	\$49,413
Prevalence of low income (LICO* after tax)	7.8%	18.5%	7.8%	18.7%	7.8%

Source: 2016 Statistics Canada Census  
\*low-income cut off

One of the key mandates of the *One Nova Scotia Report* was to better understand the circumstances and opportunities for different regions, economic sectors, and cultural communities across the province. Supporting the following actions will help stimulate sustainable business and employment opportunities for African Nova Scotians of all ages in both rural and urban communities.

### Actions:

- Develop an inclusive economic development strategy and strategic labour market programming that supports education, training, apprenticeship, mentorship and opportunities for African Nova Scotian youth and adults.
- Encourage African Nova Scotians to become entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs. For example, increasing the awareness of opportunities regarding social entrepreneurship and/or increasing capacity of African Nova Scotians to start, run and support social enterprises.
- Support hiring, promotion and career development strategies for African Nova Scotians in private, not-for-profit, and government jobs. The strategies would also work with employers, trade unions, and employee groups to make workplaces more welcoming—for example, through cultural awareness and equity training.
- Support ways to welcome immigrants and refugees of African descent and help them overcome barriers to employment, entrepreneurship, housing, health care, education, and justice.
- Promote opportunities for African Nova Scotians in the agriculture sector through education, mentorships, and support for social enterprises such as community-supported agriculture.
- Analyze the public service employment systems for barriers in employment, particularly in career advancement.

- Strengthen community-based, employment services providers to better reflect the communities which they serve.
- Increase representation of African Nova Scotians in the public service.
- Support the efforts to increase participation of African Nova Scotians in the apprenticeship system and support building capacity with Red Seal Certification preparation programs.
- Determine the data government needs in order to better serve African Nova Scotians in the public service to inform diversity and employment equity planning.

## **Health**

Population health looks at what a whole population needs to be healthy and works to reduce health inequities among population groups. It does this by taking an equity approach to addressing the social determinants of health, which include such factors as income and social status, education, physical environments, housing, employment and working conditions, and more. Race is also a determinant of health.

The following actions urge policy makers, service providers, and community partners to work together to identify needs, evaluate what is and is not working for our African Nova Scotian population, and create opportunities for improved health and well-being.

## **Actions:**

- Co-develop a strategy with African Nova Scotian communities that results in more community-based, culturally relevant health services. Such services should be based on African Nova Scotian social determinants of health, involve community members in policy and program development, and include anti-racism education for all health-care workers.
- Determine the data (i.e. ethnic identifiers) government and the health authority need to better serve African Nova Scotians. Develop a policy for its collection and interpretation and an accountability mechanism to ensure the policies are implemented. Share data, as appropriate, with African Nova Scotian communities and researchers in order to grow collective data driven decision making.
- Increase representation of African Nova Scotians in the health workforce through focused enrollment in educational health programs.

## **Communities**

For generations, African Nova Scotians faced social and economic isolation. They survived by working together to build their own vibrant communities. Although many African Nova Scotians now live outside their historic communities, those communities continue to offer a place of belonging and support. However, as community halls close or age, it becomes harder to keep community members connected.

Volunteerism remains a vital community asset, but the numbers of volunteers are also dwindling. Supporting the following actions will encourage communities to work together to reverse this decline and make a lasting, positive difference for African Nova Scotians.



## Actions:

- Promote citizen engagement among African Nova Scotians through initiatives such as the African Nova Scotia Community Action Partnership and African Nova Scotian Affairs' (ANSA) Citizen Engagement Initiative.
- Work with grassroots learning institutions to offer training in asset-based community development (ABCD) for current and future community champions.
- Encourage community development organizations to connect provincewide so they can share ideas and build partnerships and support the rehabilitation of community halls and public spaces in historic African Nova Scotian communities.
- Develop an African Nova Scotian youth and young adult strategy that will address education, employment, health and wellness, and active citizenship.
- Increase understanding, awareness, and cultural competence of service providers through diversity, inclusion, and employment equity planning and training.

## Implementing the Plan

Government will play a key role in the implementation of *Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent*. The Committee of Deputy Ministers for African Nova Scotian Issues will regularly monitor the progress of the plan. Coordinated **community involvement** is vital to the success of this action plan.

**The Committee of Deputy Ministers for African Nova Scotian Issues** will provide leadership for government's commitment to African Nova Scotian communities. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, who reports to the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs. Membership includes, but is not limited to, the deputy ministers responsible for Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, Community Services, Justice, Seniors, and Labour and Advanced Education.

The committee will be supported by an **Interdepartmental Working Group for African Nova Scotian Issues**, which is responsible for ensuring an African Nova Scotian perspective is integrated into the work of all departments. The working group is chaired by the Executive Director of African Nova Scotian Affairs. This network of government officials will:

- advise the departments on policies and programs affecting African Nova Scotians;
- collaborate with community partners to advance the commitments in this action plan; and
- collaborate with departments to support this action plan.

**Community groups and organizations** working on advancing any of the suggested actions in this plan are encouraged to share their progress with African Nova Scotian Affairs as we work collaboratively to address issues for the success of the African Nova Scotian Community.



# Going Far. Together.

**An African proverb says: If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.**

We have far to go in realizing our vision.

We are in for a long journey, one that will take time, patience, and effort. We have already taken the first, and most important step by acknowledging the need for change.

From here on, every step, no matter how small, is progress in the right direction.

Nova Scotia has proven again and again that we have what it takes to be leaders.

Now we need all Nova Scotians to join in and add their support to this journey toward a future we all can celebrate—one that celebrates us all.

## Appendix A. United Nations Recommendations to Canada

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent visited Canada from October 17 to 21, 2016, at the invitation of the Government of Canada. The Working Group visited Ottawa, Toronto, Halifax, and Montreal to assess the human rights of people of African descent living in Canada, and to gather information on the racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia, and related intolerance that African Canadians face. The findings were published in August 2017 and presented to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017 in Geneva.

Read the full report at <https://ansa.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/files/report-of-the-working-group-of-experts-on-people-of-african-descent-on-its-mission-to-canada.pdf>

## Appendix B. Resources

### African Nova Scotian stories

Africville Museum, Halifax NS [[africvillemuseum.org](http://africvillemuseum.org)]

Anthony Sherwood Productions. 2001. *Honour Before Glory* (a docudrama about the No. 2 Construction Battalion). 67 minutes. [<http://anthonysherwood.com/portfolio-item/honour-before-glory/>]

Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia, 10 Cherrybrook Road, Cherrybrook NS [[bccnsweb.com](http://bccnsweb.com)]

Black Loyalist Heritage Centre, 119 Old Birchtown Road, Shelburne NS [[blackloyalist.novascotia.ca](http://blackloyalist.novascotia.ca)]

CBC Africville Video Archive. [<https://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/racism>]

Hamilton, Sylvia. 2007. *Little Black School House*. 1 hour. [[www.cinemapolitica.org/film/little-black-school-house](http://www.cinemapolitica.org/film/little-black-school-house)]

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### Government of Nova Scotia

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