

EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF CULTURALLY SPECIFIC COMMUNITY-DRIVEN  
PROGRAMS ON THE LIFE JOURNEY OF AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS

by

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## DEDICATION

*This research is dedicated to my parents, Reginald & Ann Boudreau, who taught me how to be community-driven and supportive to others. They also taught me to always be the best that I could be and to give my all in whatever it was that I was doing.*

*Mommy & Daddy, thank you for raising me with a solid foundation in a loving supportive, encouraging home with God at the centre. Thank you for trusting me and allowing me to take risks to explore my true identity through culturally supportive programs.*

*To my fiancé, family, friends and mentors you are so greatly appreciated. I am so blessed to have all of your support. I love you all.*

*Finally, to the African Nova Scotia community, this research is my commitment to giving back to my people. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to participate in culturally-specific community-driven programs, which have left a life-long positive impact on my life journey.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

There has been minimal qualitative research conducted with Canadians of African Descent and further, African Nova Scotians (ANS). Moreover, there has never before been research that explores the impacts of culturally specific community-driven programs on the life journey of ANSs. This qualitative research seeks to examine the effectiveness of participation in such programs as told through their personal experiences. The author also explores barriers, challenges and supports across the life journey as an ANS intersecting her personal experiences into the research as if she were also a participant in the study.

The results of this research revealed that such programs have positive impacts on the life journey of ANSs. Although faced with racism and discrimination, many ANSs are able to overcome these barriers with the aid of supports including identified programs. Overall, through participating in these programs there has been a positive impact on the health & well-being of ANSs.



## **LIST OF ABRIVATIONS USED**

ANS – African Nova Scotian

AUBA – African United Baptist Association

AT – Africentric Theory

BEA – Black Educators Association

BYF - Baptist Youth Fellowship

CRT – Critical Race Theory

NSAACP - Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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To my parents, you have been there all the way no matter what. Your daughter loves you. As well as to my fiancé, Andre, and my friends thank you for continuously supporting me.

To the cultural specific community-driven programs that I have participated in, I acknowledge you. A special thanks to the Africentric Saturday School, which provided me with some of my first exposure to the development of my racial and cultural identity. Other programs include:

- ❖ Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW)
- ❖ Black Educator Association's (BEA) Cultural Academic and Enrichment Program
- ❖ BEA Math Camp
- ❖ African United Baptist Association (AUBA) Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF)
- ❖ Kamp Kujichagulia
- ❖ Youth of Today

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*I am somebody, I believe in myself  
I can achieve anything I set my mind to  
I am proud of who I am and where I come from  
I will always respect myself and others  
I will always try to achieve my best  
I will never let anyone tell me otherwise  
I am somebody, I am somebody  
– Saturday School Anthem*

### REASONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH

When asked what inspired me to write this thesis, my first thought was that I am in a position where I can give back to the community through research and I felt it was my responsibility to do so. That feeling of responsibility to give back has been instilled in me from a young girl, participating in culturally specific community-driven programs. Participating in these programs impacted my life immeasurably and I believe that it was those among other supports that helped me to form my identity, specifically, my cultural identity. Having these experiences personally, and the lasting positive effects that they has had on my life journey, I felt it necessary to explore with others what their experiences have been.

Considering the lack of research in Canada with people of African descent, further with African Nova Scotians (ANS), this research presents the opportunity for the voices of ANS to share the impacts that culturally specific community-driven programs have had on their life journey.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Africentric Thoery (AT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) have been applied to this research as the theoretical framework. AT aligns with many of the experiences of African Nova Scotians (ANS) in their value, beliefs and overall worldview. This framework aligns with my values and beliefs and what I believe to be the theoretical framework of how I view the world and practice social work. Furthermore AT also is the foundation of many of the culturally specific community-driven programs referenced in this research. CRT will help inform my research in the area of identifying and analyzing racism in society and in particular, the education system and employment settings. This has been explored through the shared experiences and story-telling of ANS. It will be argued that racism can manifest in a variety of ways that contribute negatively to one's health and well-being. However, providing participants with the opportunity to share their experience brings a sense of empowerment, validation and serves as a form of support.

## **AFRICENTRIC THEORY**

According to Molefi Asante (1988), 'Afrocentricity is the belief in the centrality of Africans in post modern history'. It centralizes and normalizes the narratives of people of African descent within the context of community, taking into account historically rooted ways of being and knowing (Lynn, 2005). With African Nova Scotians as the study participants, it is important that their lived experiences and perception of the world be brought to light in this research. An Africentric approach incorporates a more holistic

understanding of people of African descent. The core principles of AT and practice are rooted in:

Viewing individual problems holistically and as rooted in family, community and social structures; promoting individual and collective consciousness raising; recognizing a collective consciousness; critically analyze the intersecting nature and the lived reality of oppression; focusing empowerment on both individuals and the collective, building on strengths; seeking social change and transformation (Este & Bernard 2003, cited in Njiwaji, 2012, p. 9 &10).

Scheile (1997) writes that, one aim of Afrocentric<sup>1</sup> social work is to empower historically oppressed communities by supporting their self-help efforts, institutionalization of a group's values and its political interests by establishing organizations, controlled by that group, that speak to and integrate those values and that promote that group's interests. Participants have been empowered by sharing their experiences participating in programs established by the community, thus being community- driven.

Lee asserts that an effective African-centered pedagogy: legitimizes African stories of knowledge; positively exploits and scaffolds productive community and cultural practices; extends and builds upon the indigenous language; reinforces community ties and idealizes service to one's family, community, nation, race and world; promotes positive social relationships; imparts a world view that idealizes a positive, self-sufficient future for one's people without denying the self-worth and right to self-determination of others; and supports cultural community while promoting critical consciousness (as cited in Lynn, 2005, p. 134).

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<sup>1</sup> There are two spellings – Afrocentric and Africentric- I will use Africentric, unless in a direct quote that uses Afrocentric. Both spellings have same meaning.

By exploring the impacts of participation in culturally specific community-driven programs, I centralize and normalize the narratives of people of African descent within the context of community, taking into account historically rooted ways of being and knowing. Lynn (2005) suggests that this also helps students develop a commitment to community. I can relate to this as it is my reason for choosing to complete this thesis as I see it as my responsibility to give back to my community.

## **CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

CRT frames and contextualizes the historically situated narratives of racially subjected people (Lynn, 2005). This theory recognizes the impacts that societal changing meanings and impact of race and its political dimensions in a global and historical context. Delgado and Stefancic (1991) explain that the critical race theory movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. By using CRT, there needs to be explicit in social work discourse an analysis of race, anti-racism, and processes of racialization.

Language and practices pertaining to race and racism are frequently erased when the discourse is focused on the more prevalent ideals of cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural awareness, multicultural social work, anti-oppression or anti-discriminatory practice, and diversity (Razack & Jeffery, 2002, p. 259).

Essed (1991) and Razack & Jeffery (2002) refer to "cultural racism" as the "new" racism which pervades our society. They discuss that racism as an ideology is passed along formally through various avenues such as personal discourse, the media, and education and informally through socialization. Razack & Jeffery (2002) explain concerns that in educational institutions and programs including social work that core analyses of race have been cloaked under the rhetoric of anti-oppression, diversity, cross-cultural

approaches, and multiculturalism. This theory brings forward the idea that race needs to stand alone and not be infused with other forms of oppression. Razack & Jeffery (2002) state:

when issues of race are introduced, the need to mention other forms of oppression becomes immediately apparent. These reactions deny the saliency of race and limit ways in which such discussions can be included in social work pedagogy and practice (p.251).

CRT needs to address race as a singled out form of oppression that requires analysis of the social constructs of race and how this impacts racialized groups. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1991), this theory contains an activist dimension that not only tries to understand our social situation, but makes efforts to change it. “It sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better (p.2).

Razack and Jeffery (2002) discuss Critical Race discourse and tenets for social work. Delgado explains that the second tenet explores the value of storytelling – experiential knowledge and these stories and narratives add important new dimensions to positivists perspectives (as cited in Razack & Jeffery, 2002). Through narratives, marginalized groups are preserved, their voices and stories are legitimized, which minimizes internal condemnation and promotes community. Lynn (2005) explains that CRT rejects west-European/modernists claims of neutrality, objectivity, rationality and universality. This links to education as Lynn (2005) references Ladson-Billings argument that CRT analysis in education would necessarily focus on ‘curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation as exemplars of the relationship that can exist between CRT and education (p.18) schools and the larger society (as cited in Lynn,



2005). Many of the racial barriers that African Nova Scotians face is within the educational system through the above mentioned avenues (BLAC Report, 1994).

Razack and Jeffery (2002) also talk about recognizing power and privilege as a tenant of CRT for social work practice. This is explained as having an understanding of how privilege, power, and White supremacy continue to be created, maintained, and sustained in society. These components are necessary for exploration in both curriculum and practice domains. Without an analysis of power, one cannot discuss or understand racism and oppression.

Delgado and Stefancic (1991) also explain general tenets of CRT. A more recent, development are the concerns of differential racialization and its many consequences. This can be explained as the ways the dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market. For example, at different times in society, different racial groups can be of more benefit than others. This can relate to the ideas, convenience and use of power, privilege to the benefit of the dominant group and society.

## **AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY**

Auto-ethnography as a form of methodology will be used in this study to include the researcher in the study. As a positively impacted participant in culturally specific community-driven programs now conducting research on this topic, it is necessary that I also center my own experiences within this study. According to Chang auto-ethnography “transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation” (as cited in Ellis, 2009, p.43), and it is this quality that separates auto-ethnography from other

genres. This form of methodology is also in line with the theoretical framework, CRT and AT that is used in this study.

I have chosen to write an auto-ethnography chapter (Chapter 2) which introduces my personal experiences as they relate to this topic. Throughout chapters five and six, I have demonstrated this methodology through writers' text boxes where my personal experiences and analysis' as they relate to the themes identified by participants have been reflected.

## **CONCLUSION**

Africentric and Critical Race Theory provide a culturally appropriate framework to this research as they acknowledge and give voice to the lived experiences of people of African descent. This framework also recognizes racism as a major barrier or challenge in the lives of participants. With the use of both theories, specific programs driven by community will be highlighted as leaving an impact on the life journey of ANS. In addition to these theories, using auto-ethnography as a form of methodology will also center the researcher in the research creating an opportunity to also share the experiences and impacts of these programs. Auto-ethnography is consistent with the principals and tenets of both AT and CRT.

The following chapter will provide an auto-ethnography, where I share my personal story and experiences in participating in culturally specific community-driven programs. This chapter will explore why I chose this particular topic and the relevance that it has in my life. Chapter three will present a comprehensive literature review. This literature review will explore the historical implications of inequities and inequitable

access for people of African Descent within North America and more specifically in Nova Scotia, Canada. Due to these injustices, there has been a dire need for emphasis on culturally competency within institutions, agencies, schools and forms of practice, as well as culturally specific programming, which for decades in many cases, has been community-driven. Through research, scholars have been able to identify key themes among such programs which are necessary in the development and delivery to specific ethnic, racial and cultural groups. Chapter four will highlight the methodology used in the study and discuss issues related to research design and the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter five will focus on the research findings, and Chapter six will provide an analysis of the findings. Chapter seven will provide a discussion and conclusion including implications for policy and social work practice and recommendations for future work.

## **CHAPTER TWO: AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY**

### **A SOLID FOUNDATION OF FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE**

Mazama (2001) states that “All people have a perspective which stems from their centres” (p.389).

### **INTRODUCTION TO SOLID ROOTS**

Growing up as an African Nova Scotian (ANS) youth in Truro, Nova Scotia, the availability for culturally specific opportunities was very limited. Coming from one of the historical African Nova Scotian communities, the Island, where my father was from, the meaning of unity and community has always been known. The members of the community took care of each other, looked out for one another, came together for events and functions and supported each other for the most part. There are three distinct ANS communities in Truro: the Island, the Hill and the Marsh. Although they share many commonalities, at times I felt there was a sense of division amongst them. However, one commonality was that we were all people of African descent who knew the importance of supporting one another especially in the broader community and social context such as in school.

One memory that stands out for me is the initiative to create the Stan “Chook” Maxwell memorial playground. It seemed that everyone played a role, as a committee member, Chair, or just adding a signature to the petition in support. My parents were heavily involved in this initiative, which inspired me to be involved as well. I believe that this was one of my first opportunities to fight for social justice. Stan Maxwell was a significant figure in our community and the larger Truro area, as he was one of the first

people of African descent to go to the National Hockey League (NHL). He was also very active in the community. As we did not have any type of recreational structures in our community, advocating for this playground in memory of him was more than just a playground but a call for justice and equity. Although I was very young at the time, I can remember how this brought the community together for a special cause where we were essentially fighting for change, justice and equity. Essentially, because of the unity and passion in the community we won the battle and the memorial playground continues to hold a prominent place in the community.

Seeing my parents involved in so many initiatives within and outside of the community set an example for my siblings and I. Although my father was from Truro as my grandfather was, he was not raised by him. His mother, an Acadian woman from Big Tracadie was unable to raise him. In those times, bi-racial relationships were not accepted in the Acadian community, therefore my father, a bi-racial child, was not welcomed. However, despite the disconnect from his biological parents until later years, as well as his relocating due to being a professional football player in the Canadian Football League, he always kept a tie to his community. He knew the identity of his father and family. He always made a point to give back to his community through his talents in motivational speaking with youth as well as involvement on committees, fun events, community beautification and helping out our elders in many ways.

My mother is from East Preston, Nova Scotia, another historic ANS community, unity and collectivity was a part of her life as well. Although different than Truro in terms of numbers and the more semi-urban larger area, both communities experienced similar injustices and barriers. Active involvement in the community was very important

to both my parents. Growing up, my mother was involved in many community groups and initiatives including church as a youth and as she grew into an adult she began to take on leadership roles in administering the same programs she had once been a participant. When she met my father and moved to Truro, although she was new to the community her passion for involvement continued as she served on many boards and committees within and outside of the community. My parents continue to be involved in their communities to this day, however, there is not as much happening and much of the population is relocating to different parts of the country. I am forever grateful for this early foundation they gave me in learning to fight for justice in my community.

### **EXPERIENCING SCHOOLING: THE EARLY YEARS**

There were few African Nova Scotian (ANS) learners in my school. It was not uncommon to be the only ANS in your class or one of two or three others. To have a teacher of African descent was even more uncommon. However, fortunately, I was blessed to have my first grade school experience with an ANS teacher, Mrs. Glenda Talbot Richards. Knowing her from the community helped me to feel comfortable and accepted, which helped to make my early years in school very positive. She and my mother were good friends, as were her daughters and I, although they were older. In addition, having a teacher who looked like me helped me to understand who I was, feel included and that I could be her one day if I wanted to. She was a role model to me that I could look to outside of my parents, who understood me and my worldview as an ANS learner and individual. English (1991) defines worldviews as “the ways in which people perceive their relationship to nature, other people, and objects.” They determine how people behave think and define events. Worldviews are also significantly influenced by

culture. However, worldviews are said to vary by racial/ethnic group (p.1 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003, p. 318). Having this positive school experience created a solid foundation for me in terms of knowing my identity, which included being proud of my race, culture and heritage as it was embraced and celebrated at a young age in a system that did not necessarily make efforts to do so. However, throughout the rest of my educational journey, I did not always experience this.

With the many experiences of racism and discrimination in the town of Truro both overt and subtle, the opportunities for ANS's were limited. Hearing stories from my grandfather as well as my great aunts and uncles and other elders in the community provided evidence of the inequities that existed. Comparing those stories to what I was experiencing as a youth were perhaps not as extreme and maybe more subtle however, there were commonalities among the experiences.

African Canadian students face a variety of barriers and obstacles in the education system, including the largely Eurocentric curriculum, under-representation of Black teachers and principals, negative stereo-typing of Black students, lower expectations of Black students, harsher punishment of Black students when conflict arises, and the persistence of racist incidents and name calling (James et al., 2006, p.90).

In the education system, although I was an excelling student academically there were challenges that I faced with certain teachers. Some of these challenges included being ignored or overlooked in the classroom when my hand was up, being talked to differently than my peers, and being singled out when a topic of conversation addressed race or culture. There were times that we might have talked about the Black communities or significant people and it seemed as if I was always looked to as the spokesperson to speak on behalf of the community. I was usually the only ANS in those classes.

My peers also played a role in highlighting that I was different by making comments about my hair as well as just curiosity around our appearances. Although this did not happen on an everyday basis and for the most part I felt accepted by my peers as I had a lot of friends who were not ANS from school and sports teams, I knew that I felt more comfortable around my friends that looked like me. There were things that I thought were missing for me during my school experience. It was not so much the comments of ignorance that made me feel excluded, but the lack of cultural opportunity as well as the representation of me and who I was. The early years with my first ANS teacher set a standard that could not be maintained in Truro.

As president of the African Heritage Committee at my school I felt it was necessary to bring cultural awareness to the school, but to also provide a space where the ANS could get together to just talk and socialize with each other. This group, I believe, was a great way for us to attempt to implement change within the school, which brought awareness to who we were collectively and what was important to us.

Although this group aided in filling in some of what was missing there were still gaps. I had always been involved in my school through committees and sports teams as it was important to me to be in positions of leadership. High school in Truro was a very challenging time for me as my interest in being involved began to decrease and I did not feel as though I belonged in my high school. This caused a lot of frustration and sadness in my heart as I was very unhappy and somewhat discouraged in terms of my motivation to learn and contribute. As I reflect back to that time, I believe that this was a time where my more mature identity was forming and this everyday experience was preventing it



further development. It was almost as if I was stuck between who I was at that time and who I was so eagerly striving to be.

## **EXPERIENCING COMMUNITY BASED CULTURALLY SPECIFIC SUPPORT**

My mother was from East Preston so we were familiar with that community. Our roots were there as well as the majority of our family. From visiting my cousins and friends in the community and surrounding communities I experienced what it felt like to be around people like me in more than just a church or committee setting and it felt really good. I had also attended various community based camps, such as the Black Educators Association Math Camp and Kamp Kujichagulia and events that helped me to grow a stronger sense of my identity. Also as a member of the Provincial Baptist Youth Fellowship group I met more ANS's my age that I could relate to and share that common understanding or collective identity of how we had to survive as ANS youth. I also knew of other youth groups within the community high schools that learned about race, culture and heritage and educated their students on our place in history within North America. Knowing how this felt and how much opportunity my cousins and friends had under the leadership of ANS teachers and comparing it to my everyday experience in Truro really had a negative impact on my interest in school and external involvement. I did not want to continue like that and I decided that I had to take a stand for myself and pray that my parents would understand and be in support of my request to attend a new high school. They had always been supportive of us, always encouraging us to seek every opportunity and to do what makes us happy. I believe that my parents knew the struggle that I was having each day and although they did not want to let me go they saw the bigger picture and could anticipate a positive end result. They trusted me and held me accountable to

continuing to excel academically. I did not disappoint them. I graduated from Auburn Drive High School on the Principal's list. This act of self-determination was not identified as such until later in my life however, I was in tune with my own identity and passionate about my own personal growth and its potential positive impact on my life as well as my family.

Having the community support allowed me to grow and develop my full potential. As a child, I can remember participating in programs like the Saturday school, which was my first experience outside of my family, to learn about me and my identity as a person of African descent. "I am Somebody" was the theme song we sang everyday which stated phrases of encouragement and pride in who we were. The song/poem explained that we were somebody, we believed in ourselves, we could achieve anything we wanted to, we were proud of who we were and where we came from, we would also respect ourselves and others and we would never let anyone tell us otherwise. This reading has stayed with me my whole life from the time I learned it at the age of five to now, twenty years later, where it still resides in my mind and in my heart. Participating in this program with my sister, cousins and peers with leaders and teachers from the community left a life-lasting positive imprint on my life. "Academic excellence cannot be reached without cultural excellence" (National Alliance of Black School Educators as cited in BLAC Report, 1989, p. 17). In addition to my family teaching me about the same values as Saturday School, this program created a foundation for learning about who I was and how to love myself for who I was despite being one of few ANS learners in my class and my school.

As I got older, it seems as though the meaning of unity and the community orientation amongst the ANS community in Truro was fading. With different programs

for different ages, as a teenager, the Baptist Youth Fellowship group (BYF) through my church at Zion United Baptist church was the next major program that I participated in which too helped my personal development in both whom I was and whose I was. Spirituality has always been a key component to my life as I grew up going to church each Sunday, attending church functions and getting baptized at the tender age of eleven. I have always known that God was the source of my strength and my reason behind all that I had accomplished so far, thus spirituality was a major part of my identity development, self-esteem and self-pride. Research states that, increased social support from parents and peers is significantly associated with increased self-esteem (Gaylord-Harden, Ragsdale, Mandara, Richards, & Petersen, 2007 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013).

As previously discussed, the mainstream school setting created barriers for me however, there were culturally-specific academic based community-driven programs outside of school that I had the opportunity to participate in. These programs very much supported me in my self-awareness and motivation to achieve excellence. As I reflect back on my participation in these programs, I realize what a positive part they played in my life. Being able to learn in a room full of ANS students as opposed to two or three others was huge for me. I felt comfortable, supported and included and determined to do well. I developed life-long friendships with four of my best friends to this day and keep in touch with many of my fellow campmates. They also reaffirmed me that I could achieve anything that I wanted to while embracing my racial identity and this was exemplified through the instructors and leaders of the camps. Having the memories and messages in the back of my mind throughout my educational journey helped me to do my

best even when I faced challenges. They helped me remember what my goals were and where I wanted to be and what it would take to get there. My fight for personal change only fueled my passion for systemic change.

## **EXPERIENCING HIGHER EDUCATION**

As I got more advanced in my education and attended university, support groups and programs became even more significant in my quest for support. Dalhousie's Black Student Advising Center as a program offering space served as a great support to me while studying there. It aided in providing me with access to the availability of resources such as scholarships as well as opportunities to be mentored and to mentor others. It also provided me with an opportunity to fellowship and socialize with other students of African descent from various parts of the world whom were able to educate me on their experiences and realities in different locations of the Diaspora.

Entering the School of Social Work and my career as a professional, the Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW) has been such an immense support to me. This community-driven organization offering culturally specific programs has exemplified the necessity to provide ANS's and people of African descent with specific programs that reflect who they are and how they live. This organization through its administration to its implementation demonstrates it's supportive and community oriented nature. It also exhibits the importance and validity of community development through mentorship as it not only supports social workers in their personal lives as well as in their professional practices but also serves as a mentoring organization to others. To have a supportive group of women and men who can relate to you as people of African

descent but also through a profession, whom can encourage you, challenge you and motivate you is truly a blessing. ABSW has done more than just support me as a social worker but has also trusted me in carrying out the everyday operational duties of the 35 year old organization by hiring me in the first ever Outreach Social Work position. This position has placed much responsibility and accountability on my shoulders, which I consider a compliment to me and as a result has inspired and motivated me even more in the fight for justice and social change.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although my experiences with culturally specific community-driven programs have been very positive, I understand that those of others may not be as mine was. I can attest and credit my success in where I am in my life to the support of these programs that were created for ANS learners and youth, however I recognize that there are those whose experiences differ. Through my own personal reflection I believe that it is important to share my story with others who might also benefit or share a similar experience through the aid of these programs. As a role model, it is my responsibility to mentor and help those coming up behind me but also perhaps those my age or even older. Using my voice and hearing the voices of others is very important to me personally but also in my social work practice.

Recognizing the varying experiences and opinions of such programs it is important to consider the effectiveness on a broader scale. It is key to consider what is working well but also what is missing. Are the programs enhancing the lives and success of ANS learners? What effect do they have on the development of identity, self-esteem

and overall health and well-being of those who participate? Is there a specific population that they should be reaching or are all of benefit?

As a past participant and observer, also as a present participant and observer, I recognize that for me culturally specific community-driven support is essential. With your identity always being reworked and adjusted based on personal growth and the changes in life, it is necessary to continue to self-evaluate and to also rebuild self-awareness and self-esteem. I have learned that not everyone's experience or perception of self is the same and that people's means of support can be much different. Though experiences may vary and the effectiveness of supportive systems may compare, the importance of providing and having support in a culturally supportive way was vital to my life journey and continues to fuel my passion for social justice.

This chapter provided my own personal experiences that I have encountered over my life journey thus far. It discussed the barriers and challenges that I have faced as well as the supports that have positively impacted my life. It has also inserted me into this research study. Chapter three will provide an extensive review of the literature, making connections between various studies and findings that have been conducted.

### CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has explored the impact of discrimination and racism on people of African descent in the Western part of the world, in particular in Canada and the United States, which has led to this notion of cultural competency, and cultural sensitivity in working with and meeting the needs of people from diverse groups (Este & Bernard, 2003; 2006; Pachai, 1997; Pon, 2009; Brathwaite & James, 1996; BLAC, 1994; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013; Klinck, Cardinal, Edwards, Gibson, Bisanz, da Costa, n.d.). These studies have aided in the development of policies that have been implemented in various institutions within our nation. Despite the “hype” of the topic of cultural competency and the stressed need to understand and implement these terms, the experiences of how they are used vary. Cultural competency has also been a debatable topic as it has been challenged on the effectiveness of its use and what it actually means (Pon, 2009).

A common theme in the literature is the need for culturally sensitive and specific programming for youth of African descent based on the historical inequalities and injustices that still exist in present day. With minimal research on this topic conducted in Canada, more specifically Nova Scotia, it is necessary to explore research outside of the African Canadian context. Research has been reviewed from an African American context. It is important to acknowledge that although there are differences within the African Canadian and African American contexts, there are also similarities specifically addressing race related experiences. It is also important to note that with a lack of research specifically with people of African descent, other racialized and oppressed populations such as Aboriginal and Native American are also referenced in this study.

African American studies have proven the effectiveness of culturally specific “community-driven” programs that have empowered African Americans, particularly youth (Hodge & Jackson, 2012; Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). It is evident through the research findings that the community orientation of these programs is a major part in the effectiveness and credibility of such. The formation of identity, self-evaluation, self-esteem, and feeling a sense of belonging is vital in the forming of these programs. In addition, spirituality specifically in the communities of African descent has also played a major role in coping, healing, survival and perseverance (BLAC, 1994; Este & Bernard, 2003; 2006). James, Este, Bernard, Benjamin, Lloyd and Turner, (2010) support this idea of the importance of community and how it greatly impacts one’s identity and further influences their life journey. “The idea of relying on a strong racial identity as a means of dealing with difficult times tends to be related to an individual’s sense of community as one in which there is common identity, interdependence, unity and mutual support” (James et al., 2010, p. 141).

Although it is known that there are ‘community driven’ programs in Canada, more specifically, in Nova Scotia, an identified gap in Canadian research has been the examination of the effectiveness of such initiative and their impact on the lives of African Nova Scotians. With the number of these programs that have been created for African Canadians in Nova Scotia to address specific needs for this population, there has been no research conducted on how these have influenced their life journey.

Exploring culturally sensitive ‘community-driven’ programs, this literature review begins with an overview of the history of people of African descent in Canada,



with an emphasis on African Nova Scotians (ANS). This will help to set the context for this research.

The history reveals the social, economic and educational exclusion and rejection of people of African descent as well as the impact that racism and discrimination has had on their health and well-being (Pachai, 1989; Este & Bernard, 2003; Travis & Leech, 2013). Acknowledging the importance of spirituality, included in the literature is the recognition of the institution of the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) and its pivotal role in the Black community as arguably the most crucial ‘community-driven’ organization (Pachai, 1989; Este & Bernard, 2003).

The development of resilience will also be discussed in this study as ANSs have had to learn ways of coping with and overcoming racism and discrimination as major barriers faced throughout their lives. Survival is also referenced in a number of research studies that is often referred to as a form of resilience but also an everyday challenge and an Eurocentric society.

Considering ‘community-driven’ programming inclusive of a variety of programs or services specific to African Canadians, this literature review will highlight the BLAC Report on Education specifically, which moved forward the recommendations for culturally specific educational opportunities for African Nova Scotian learners. Further, a review of number of existing culturally specific ‘community-driven’ programs for people of African descent in Nova Scotia, the broader Canada and in the United States will be presented. Specific to Nova Scotia, the literature will explore how these programs have been developed through community social action strategies for the fight for change and

social justice for African Nova Scotians as documented in the BLAC Report on Education and implemented through evidence of the Enid Lee (2009) review. The literature review will explore key themes such as how culturally specific community-driven programs seek to foster heritage and cultural restoration, the interconnection of human life, nature and spirituality, self-esteem, self-evaluation, and sense of belonging. As well, the themes of identity formation, mentorship and role modeling are also present. Finally, a consistent theme in the literature is the evident connection between identity, self-perception, mentorship/relationships and academic performance.

## **THE HISTORY OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT SPECIFICALLY IN NOVA SCOTIA**

From the time Black people were forced to leave Africa to the time they reached Canada, Blacks have had to fight for equity, inclusion, and basic human rights. Upon arrival in Canada, the majority of people of African descent desired and attempted to integrate into the mainstream society. However, the presence of the 'colour line', or what is described by scholars such as Walker (1980) and Tulloch (1975) as subtle racism, effectively excluded the majority of African Canadians from becoming members of the broader society (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003). Clairmont and Magill (1970) explain that “it is impossible to understand the contemporary socio-economic condition of Black Nova Scotians without realizing that Nova Scotia was at one time a ‘slave society’ and without appreciating the conditions of immigration and settlement of free Blacks in Nova Scotia” (p. 6). Este & Bernard (2003) explain that when they attempted to pursue their rights, African Canadians were rejected. They were fighting racist attitudes, attitudes that could not be destroyed even when African Canadians protested their secondary status.

According to a number of scholars, (Walker, 1979; Este & Bernard, 2003) and others referenced such as Winks (1997) and Walker (1995), the first person recorded as coming directly from Africa and the first known African slave in Canada, was a young male who was baptized in 1633 as Oliver Le Jeune. Records show that he worked as a household servant for approximately twenty years as slavery had ended in New France a few years prior to his arrival. Approximately 3,500 free Black Loyalists migrated to Canada, with the majority settling in the Maritimes. They ventured to Nova Scotia believing that they would receive large land grants, justice, education, and equal status with their White Loyalist counterparts. However, the British failed to live up to their promises (Walker, 1940, 1979; Pachai, 1987; Clairmont & Magill, 1970).

Several authors (Pachai, 1987; Este & Bernard, 2003; James et al., 2010; Waldron Price & Grant, 2014; Walker, 1940; 1979) explain that the majority of Black Loyalists did not receive any land. Those who managed to obtain land settled in rural and isolated communities on barren lots (Pachai, 1987). With regard to supporting their families, most of the Black Loyalists were forced to find some other means other than farming due to the poor quality of farming land. Walker (1979) notes that “most slaves were employed in the homes of their owners, there were no large plantations with gangs of field hands to be kept under control, no whips or overseers” (p.6). He goes on to say that although the experiences of slavery were not as harsh as in the South of the United States with slave-breeding plantations, serving their masters and the administration of fines, for helping a slave escape were very much implemented. He asserts that some became tenant farmers, renting land from White farmers under sharecropping agreements, while others became indentured servants. Yet, the majority of these African-Nova Scotian men and women

worked as day labourers in the major towns. Employers exploited the Black Loyalists, paying them approximately one-quarter of the rate for Whites, which Pachai (1987) attests resulted in poor wages and housing.

Authors (Walker, 1940; 1979; Pachai, 1987; Clairmont & Magill, 1970; Este & Bernard, 2003) deconstruct the effects of the unfulfilled promises of the British and acknowledge the negative experiences endured and encountered from an economic and social perspective. We can trace this back to over two centuries of racism, exploitation, and oppression by the politically, socially, and economically dominant group-White Nova Scotians. However, despite the circumstances, African Canadians were able to sustain themselves. Este and Bernard (2003) go onto explain that these experiences fostered the emergence and development of a distinctive Black culture, which helped to sustain the strength and tenacity members of the African-Nova Scotian community. This was required in order to survive and make meaningful contributions in a very hostile and demeaning environment.

The conditions experienced by the Black Loyalists became so unpardonable that in 1792 when an opportunity to migrate from Nova Scotia emerged through the Sierra Leone Company, approximately 1,200 African Nova Scotians left for Sierra Leone, West Africa. Pachai remarks the reasons for this migration, were due to “unfulfilled expectations such as free grants of sufficient land, full independence and security of life and property” (Este & Bernard, 2003, p. 20).

Writers say (Walker, 1940; 1979; Este & Bernard, 2003; Pachai, 1987; James et al., 2010) that following the Black Loyalists in 1796, occurred the arrival of the Maroons from Jamaica. Walker (1979) writes, when the British Conquered Jamaica, many

Spanish-owned slaves fled to the wilderness, where they established independent communities and became known as ‘Maroons’ meaning ‘runaway slaves’” (p.11). After the 1775 Maroon War broke out, although the Maroons were not defeated in the field they were forced to lay down their arms and weaponless Maroons were deported to Halifax which was considered a safer location. After they settled in the Halifax region, the Maroons worked as laborers in the building of the city's citadel. The Maroons had stayed in Nova Scotia for only four years before most of this community also left for Sierra Leone. Walker (1979) explains that although a short stay, the Maroons created a legend and in many ways lent a kind of dignity to the Black community in Halifax by refusing to submit to the Nova Scotia government and demonstrating unity through Black pride and power.

Finally, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Black community received another group of African Americans-the Black refugees from the War of 1812. Walker (1979) explains that the same strategy was adopted by the British during the American Revolution with the same promises made. Interestingly, Este & Bernard (2003) highlight Walker which describes the plight of this group explaining that public attitude towards African Nova Scotians became more negative, and by 1815 the Nova Scotia assembly attempted to ban further Black immigration. It was believed by White Nova Scotians that Black people were lazy and were consequently dependent on the White community, thus, they were seen as a negative influence on the economy (Walker, 1979). Housing, and wage employment were also serious issues for ANSs at that time (Walker, 1979; Walker, 1940; Clairmont & Magill, 1970; Este & Bernard, 2003).

In the face of their exclusion from the dominant group, and in reaction to discriminatory and racist behaviour by White Nova Scotians, ANSs established their own communities such as Preston, Hammond Plains, and Halifax. Rejected by and alienated from the dominant group, African Canadians turned internally and created their own institutions to help them survive and to preserve the unique history and contributions of the African Nova Scotians. Reliance on their own institutions resulted in the formation and consolidation of a distinct culture (Walker, 1980; 1995 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003).

### **THE CENTRAL INSTITUTION OF THE AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITY: AUBA**

“There is no doubt that the single most important institution in the preservation of a black culture has been the church” (Walker, 1979, p.56). Walker (1979) further explains that the establishment of the church as the first institution represented the first Black community identity. During the first half of the nineteenth century the development of churches within the Black communities occurred as a result of a Black Baptist revival (Pachai, 1987; Este & Bernard, 2003). During the period of 1854-1918, came the most important institution of the Black community, a true ‘community-driven’ organization, known as the AUBA founded by Richard Preston who arrived with the Black Refugees (Clairmont & Magill, 1970; Este & Bernard, 2003). This institution played a pivotal role in the fight for social justice in Nova Scotia. For over twenty years, Preston organized several Black Baptist churches throughout the province. “Spirituality serves as a source of strength, is used as a coping strategy in a society where African Nova Scotians

continue to experience racism and discrimination and, finally, is an important aspect of the health and well-being of this group” (Este & Bernard, 2006, p. 16)

This Association was established as the Mother Organization of nineteen Black Baptist Churches in Nova Scotia (AUBA Website, 2014). Despite the many hardships endured, African people were sustained by their deep trust in a divine providence which was central to their being. Religion and spirituality was the centre of survival with education specifically being a mean to this end. The organization was known as far more than a religious organization - it has served as a centre for education opportunities, a trailblazer for social change and remains a strong voice for hundreds of black families throughout Nova Scotia (AUBA Website, 2014). The African Baptist churches provided ANSs with a sanctuary in which to escape their day-to-day existence and, just as important, a place to worship (Este & Bernard, 2003). Walker (1979) describes the role of the Black church, “in a threatening mainstream environment the church offered security, enabling blacks to exist as a positive group rather than facing white racism as weak individuals (p. 56). Further, “the church provided a sense of pride and a sense of worth, thus preventing the demoralization of its members [...] the church offered the means for an institutional or communal response to white society (p.56).

Through the AUBA, the affiliated Black Baptist churches served as vehicle for cementing social cohesion within African-Nova Scotian communities. Este & Bernard (2003) explain that the churches served as the focal point of community members for social, educational, and spiritual purposes. In the area of advocacy, the AUBA lobbied for equitable educational opportunities for ANSs. Education was believed to be the mechanism by which community members would enhance their social mobility, and

economic progress (Walker, 1979; Clairmont & Magill, 1970; Este & Bernard, 2003). People of African descent have relied on their own creativity and self-developed institutions such as the AUBA in order to survive the harsh realities of racism in mainstream activities. “[B]eyond the family itself, for the Black pioneers and for generations of their descendants, the core of the community was the church. Church membership defined community, provided opportunities to participate in community affairs, and created networks for cooperative endeavours” (Walker, 1995, p.146, as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006).

Education was highly valued by ANSs. The link between the church and education was very strong. There was a prevalence of schools initiating from 1785 and onwards in Black settlements in Halifax (Pachai, 1987). In most schools the teacher was also the preacher making them very community oriented or ‘community-driven’ and the only formal education for Black children. It was not until 1816 that the government implemented segregated schools for Black children (Walker, 1980 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003).

The most important institution in African Nova Scotian communities was the Church (Este & Bernard, 2003; 2006; Pachai, 1987; Walker, 1940; 1979). Although church had been identified as quite significant, faith and spirituality was what the church itself sustained. Describing the difference between the spirituality and religion, spirituality can be defined as an individual’s connection with a sense of a higher power or ‘Supreme Being’, whereas involvement in a church refers to one’s commitment to an organized religious institution (Este & Bernard, 2006). Spirituality, from an Afrocentric viewpoint, can be broadly defined as that invisible universal substance that connects all



human beings to each other and to the creator which many know as God (Schiele, 1994 as cited in Schiele, 1997). If people are spiritually and socially connected, then identity really is a collective phenomenon. Schiele (1997) also affirms that one can be spiritual without believing in a specific religion and that spirituality is generally “conceived of as universalistic, highlighting the interconnectedness and harmony of all elements that constitute the universe” (p. 807).

Bernard, Maddelena, Njiwaji & Smith (2014) write about the role of spirituality in the African Nova Scotian communities. “Dating back to the legacy of slavery, the role of spirituality has been to preach a message of freedom and salvation. Whether in this life or the next, the hope for a better tomorrow has been foundational to the Black experience (Bernard et al., 2014, p. 363). More specifically, they explored how spirituality is expressed and how it serves as a coping mechanism during times of suffering and hardship at the end of life. They too acknowledge the differences between religion and spirituality. They state, “Religion is often viewed in terms of systems, social institutions that are either joined or organized by individuals who share the same beliefs, traditions and rituals” (p. 354). They further explain that, “spirituality is a “personal search for meaning and purpose in life which may or may not be related to religion” (p. 354). There is need to differentiate between religion and spirituality as they hold very different meanings to those who engage with them.

Spiritual beliefs have become a part of the survival system of people of African descent. Individuals who grew up in a "traditional Black community" are equipped with a system of core beliefs, particularly spiritual ones (Mitchell & Lewter, 1986). Boyd-Franklin adds that this system of core beliefs is the foundation of the inner strength of the

person (as cited in Little-John & Darling, 1993). Bernard (2009) highlights her research with Black men in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Sheffield, England, *Survival and Success of the Black Male* in each site, which found that, while church involvement was identified as a survival strategy for the Halifax participants, Sheffield participants named spirituality as the more salient feature that guided their experience of survival and overcoming racism. There is, however, a solid body of work that explores the experience of spirituality in the African Diaspora. Similarly, Este & Bernard (2006) make mention of Paris' suggestion that African people are united by their common spiritual strivings, and the lamentations and longings of African souls have been expressed in word, song, music, dance and story, with our spirituality reflected in each (p. 5) also discussed by Bernard et.al (2014). Finally, spirituality is also seen as a tool for healing African people who continue to be affected by racism and oppression (Bernard, 2002; Eugene, 1995; Miller, 2001; Thomas, 2001; Wheeler, Ampadu & Wangari, 2002 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006). Bernard et al., (2014) also support the role that both spirituality and religion play in healing as an aid in personal growth as well as the opportunities it gives patients and family members to reconcile with one another, connect, or reconnect with God and seek spiritual, psychological or physical healing.

For people of African descent whom have not been connected to spirituality or the church, there have been alternative factors that have been identified as building resiliency. "The qualities of resilience enable people to heal from painful wounds, take charge of their lives, and go on to live fully and love well" (Walsh, 2006, p. 5). Many scholars (Utsey, Bolden, Lanier & Williams, 2007; Bernard & Este, 2005; Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert & Stephens, 2001; Bernard, 2009; Bernard, 2004; Scott, 2003;

Walsh, 2006; Gilbert, Harvey & Belgrave, 2009) have named factors such as familial support & values, a strong racial identity and education and employment as contributing to resiliency development. Scott (2003) discusses race as emerging as a central feature of the self-concepts among African American preadolescents with high racial salience. He goes on to explain that racial saliency refers to the extent to which being Black is meaningful in a particular context or situation. In comparison, racial centrality refers to the extent to which being Black is a normative aspect of one's self-conception and identity. Gilbert et al. (2009) explain that,

resilience rests on the development of an identification and acceptance of a culture based on knowledge of its African heritage and the promotion of behaviours, thoughts, and emotions that foster the liberation of African people from oppression and repression. The reclamation of African culture is key to the survival and positive existence of people of African descent and is a healing phenomenon (p. 245).

Bernard & Este (2005) discuss the use of Hill's (1998) comprehensive framework related to resiliency at the individual, family and community levels. Hill (1996) examines the interconnections of internalizing positive values, enhancing social competencies, and fostering academic orientation as three protective mechanisms that foster resiliency on the individual level. Resilient youth of color are more likely to have "respect for family, high regard for the elderly, strong religious orientation, personal responsibility, and a concern about the welfare for others" (as cited in Bernard & Este, 2005, p.444). Hill also explains that resilient children and youth see satisfying the wishes and desires of their parents and other family members as high priority. Additionally, youth who are able to resist negative influences from their peers in relation to school performance, substance abuse and delinquency can be related to their strong social competencies, self-esteem and self-concept. Moreover, those youth who have a strong commitment to academic success

have more resilient outcomes through completing their homework, attending class regularly, responding to questions from their teachers and engaging in extracurricular activities.

Walsh (2006) presents the idea of family resilience as “an approach that aims to identify and fortify key interactional processes that enable families to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges (p.3). Similarly, Hill (1998) explains that beyond individual resiliency building, family also plays a part by instilling values. “Respect for parents and the elderly while stressing and demonstrating the importance of children, the provision of mutual support and the need for reciprocity in social relations” (as cited in Bernard & Este, 2005, p. 444). Also contributing to this resiliency is parents demonstrating discipline and control through provision of emotional nurturance for strong character development and monitoring of in-home and out-of-home activities of children. As well, the need for provision of supports to enhance academic achievements of African American children including parental involvement is included. Scott’s (2003) study found that African American adolescents who received more frequent messages concerning racism from their parents or guardians tended to use more self-reliance/problem-solving strategies to cope with perceived discriminatory experiences as a form of building resilience.

Writers (Bernard & Este, 2005; Essed, 1991; Bernard, 2004; 2009; James et al., 2010; Este & Bernard, 2003) discuss the notion of survival as a person of African descent in a society where racism exists.

Survival means being able to wake up everyday, going out and trying to make it, without letting the stress of racism and racial pressure get you down... part of

surviving is dealing with racism every day of your life with your dignity intact (Bernard & Este, 2005, p.448)

Another explains it as,

Survival... is not to be suppressed by all the negative connotations that society imposes on black men... surviving means reclaiming the ability to be self-sufficient and claiming a structure that will enable black people to have a voice (p.448).

Studies have found (Gilbert et al., 2009; Bernard & Este, 2005; Bernard, 2004) found that positive racial identity has also been noted as a contributor to one's resiliency. Murry et al. (2001) define resiliency as, "the ability to recover from negative experiences and situations" (p. 137). They discuss the notion of protective factors which are the specific behaviours and circumstances that decrease the likelihood of negative outcomes, which include individual and family resources, skills and abilities. Family and community also have been identified as survival and resiliency contributors.

There is a connection between positive racial identity and the development of resiliency with African principles and beliefs with others of the same racial identity. As well as the development of love and respect for oneself and others, a positive value system, and a connection with a Black, African community and culture. Gilbert et al. (2009) outline five Africentric based programs that foster African centered principals, values and worldview.

Structural racism, poverty, high rates of violence in the community, and poor racial and ethnic identity are some risk factors that work against positive well-being among African American youths. However, strong racial and ethnic identity and Africentric values among children and adolescents have been shown to be positively correlated with healthy development in several studies (p.247).

Bernard (2009) also emphasizes the importance of racial identity through history. “Our major source of strength is embracing our African roots, history, and culture... it is important to know our history... if we don’t know our history it is difficult to plan our future” (p.448). Furthermore, Bernard (2009; 2004) exemplifies the sense of pride that study participants found in their racial identity which helped them to fight and resist the racism around them.

Equally important to racial identity identified in Bernard & Este (2005) and Bernard (2009) as a factor in the development of resiliency was the presence of positive role models and mentors. A study participant identified a role model as “someone whose principles I can copy” (p.449). The authors continue to write about the impact of seeing other Black men in their communities contribute and give back as being essential to one’s ability to keep moving forward. Scott (2003) asserts that study participants who reported a high frequency of racial messages were more likely to cope with perceived discriminatory experiences by telling friends or family members what happened which can also be referred to as social support or relying on their own personal resources and knowledge to deal with it.

For the men in Bernard & Este’s (2005) study, their mother figures were central to recounting contributions to their lives however, it was also noted that their father’s role in their lives was a significant factor in Black men’s success. Extended family within one’s community was also identified as essential to the development of resiliency through a sense of comfort, support, and love (Bernard & Este, 2005; Bernard, 2009).

Both Bernard & Este (2005) and Bernard (2009) discuss education, skill building and meaningful employment as also fundamental to survival as a Black man. Emphasized

were the challenges that go along with this. “The Black man must, in my eyes, work harder than the white man. He must be always covering his back to ensure that everything is done right and not take anything for granted” (Bernard, 2009, p. 91).

Writers (Essed, 1991; Murry et al., 2001; Bernard, 2004) have looked at the survival of the Black woman, in particular the Black mother. Bernard & Bernard examine the politics of Black motherhood and acknowledge the contradictory nature of this notion while suggesting that the Black mothers’ ability to cope with race, class, and gender oppressions should not be confused with transcending those conditions (as cited in Bernard, 2004). This study also examines the contributions that Black mothers make to the survival of their sons, “I would not have survived if it had not been for my strong and supportive family, especially my mother... I could not have coped with all the racism in the world without them as my safety net” (Bernard, 2004, p.333).

Authors (Scott, 2003; Walsh, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2009) also make the connections between resilience and mental health. “Many current health and mental health problems of black Americans can be traced to historical trauma resulting from slavery and persistent societal oppression” (Gilbert et al., 2009, p. 244). Resilience has become an important concept in child development and mental health theory and research. Further, mental health outcomes linked to racism and discrimination are likely to be affected by the coping strategies used. Walsh (2006) suggests that with concern for early intervention and prevention, attention of mental health professionals has redirected to understanding protective factors that fortify children’s resources and encourage their resilience in addition to vulnerability and susceptibility to risk and disorder.

Research supports that there are many factors that contribute to one's resiliency and sense of survival as men and women, children and parents of African descent. It has been found that often times, there is a blend of supports that aid one in their survival. People of African descent have had to fight for survival in many areas of their lives including employment and economic development which contributes greatly to one's quality of life.

### **THE ECONOMIC EXCLUSION OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

“People of African descent represent the largest minority population in Nova Scotia” (Waldron et al., 2014, p.18). As noted above, African Nova Scotians arriving in Halifax did not have equal access or opportunity as White people. This is reflected in the types of employment available to them, the wages and lack of educational opportunities that have put persons of African descent in Nova Scotia at an even further disadvantage, which continues today. Walker (1979) discusses the challenges that Black people faced when they did not receive the land promised to them.

Without land to farm, most of the blacks had to find some other means of supporting themselves and their families. Some became tenant farmers, renting land from white farmers under sharecropping agreements. Others signed themselves into indentured servitude. But most became casual labourers, settling around the fringes of centers like Shelburne, Halifax, and Annapolis in Nova Scotia, Saint John and Fredericton in New Brunswick, and Kingston and Newark in Upper Canada (p.10).

Racism and discrimination continued to exclude members of this community from mainstream society. Further, writers (Este & Bernard, 2003; Pachai, 1990; Walker, 1940; 1979; Clairmont & Magill, 1970) note, descendants of the Black Loyalists or refugees did not hold the majority of these professional positions; rather, they were held by individuals who migrated to Nova Scotia from the Caribbean or Africa while indigenous Black



worked in farming and seasonal employment. Ruck (2014) also alludes to Pachai's statement that the division among Black communities is apparent,

“the Black community in Nova Scotia in particular, and I think in Canada, is a divided one. Terribly divided. Those who come from Africa have a place, those who come from the Caribbean have a place, those who come from the U.K. have a place and so on” (Pachai as cited in Ruck, 2014, p.44).

The prolonged segregation of school opportunities for African Nova Scotians meant that members of the community continued to be consigned to the lower end of the socio-economic ladder. Clairmont and Magill (1970) write about the educational deprivation that has historically characterized Black communities. These historical factors contributing to deprivation to ANSs and their socio-psychological implications have combined to keep Black people in poverty and to make it exceptionally difficult for them to acquire an equitable share of society's wealth. Nonetheless, as part of a consistent pattern of behaviour, ANSs persisted in their fight against racism in the areas of education, employment, and housing. Este & Bernard (2003) pose that the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NSAACP) was instrumental in advocating on behalf of the ANS community. “Full citizenship" for Black Nova Scotians, meaning that the same standards of rights and responsibilities must be applied to Blacks and Whites was something that they fought for. They promoted education for both children and adults (Walker, 1995 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003).

Ruck (2014) writes about her grandfather, Calvin Ruck, an ANS leader and mentor who was also involved in the NSAACP. Ruck (2014) highlights community members' memories of him and how he always sought to expose youth from the Preston areas to things throughout the city, such as the NSAACP. He was also the founder of Youth on the Move and the East Preston Majorettes, which made a big difference for the

younger generations of these communities. “Calvin’s ability to discover skills in young people was innate” (Ruck, 2014, p.39). Although these efforts resulted in change, ANSs continue to experience racism and discrimination. The continued exclusion of ANSs from equitable employment, education, and other forms of social and economic opportunities has contributed to a series of challenges such as poverty, structural barriers, oppression and lacking a sense of entitlement that are confronting the ANS community (Este & Bernard, 2003).

Despite the accomplishments made, ANS continue to experience racism and discrimination. Este & Bernard (2003) reference an example from Torczyner of a demographic analysis of African Nova Scotians in Halifax in comparison to African-Canadian communities in Toronto and Montreal, which found that African Nova Scotians had the highest percentage of people who did not complete high school and the lowest levels of people attending university. James and Lloyd (2013) also found that African Canadians in Halifax compared to Calgary and Toronto, experienced the greatest levels of racism- related stress. It is important to note that within the Canadian context, African Nova Scotians represent one of the most exploited and oppressed groups (James et al., 2010; James & Lloyd, 2013; Este & Bernard, 2003).

“Class is often the glue that helps to keep oppressive structures in place” (Bishop 1994 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003, p. 324). African Canadians who live in Nova Scotia are disproportionately represented among the economically and socially disadvantaged. “Structural conditions existed in Nova Scotia which forced Blacks, from their first settlement, to the bottom of the social hierarchy (Clairmont & Magill, 1970). Living in poverty is not just about economics as it involves systemic exclusion from

ordinary things that many take for granted. Further, because African Canadians are overrepresented among the poor, economic deprivation is not only part of their legacy, but it is part of their present (Este & Bernard, 2003). Waldron et al. (2014) further state that racialized communities in Nova Scotia experience some of the lowest income levels.

According to the National Household Survey from Statistics Canada, in 2011, there were 20,790 ANSs residing in the province. ANSs had a rate of unemployment 14.5 % higher than not only the rest of Nova Scotian, which was 9.9% but also African Canadians across Canada at 12.9% (Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, 2015). Yet, while men had a lower employment rate than women, their annual income rate was higher. Further, this gap is greater amongst males, with a rate of 17.2% for ANS compared to 10.7% for Nova Scotians and 12.9% for African Canadian men across the country. The average income for ANS males were \$29,837 and for females \$24,929. In comparison, the average income for Nova Scotians was \$42,545 and \$29,460 respectfully (Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, 2015). Finally, it was found that 34.8% of ANSs had a prevalence of low –income versus 16.5% for the rest of Nova Scotia (Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, 2015).

The low income rate among African Nova Scotians is significantly higher than the average Nova Scotian low-income rate” (p.16). Waldron et al., (2014) explains that compared to White Nova Scotians, ANSs experienced higher rates of unemployment, educational underachievement, illiteracy, incarceration and poor housing in 2003. In additions ANSs with a university degree were earning on average \$12,000 less than other Nova Scotian graduates. Educational attainment does not explain the differences in low income between groups, however. Saulnier (2009) found that the income gap for African

Nova Scotian men and women with a university degree can be attributed to persistent systemic social exclusion (as cited in Waldron et al., 2014).

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women's most recent findings in 2013 indicate that the rate of employment for Nova Scotian women in the province has increased by 20 percentage points since 1976. This has narrowed the gap between men's and women's employment rates, however, on average women make \$15,000 less a year. It was identified that women in Nova Scotia represent 100% of those employed in 6 of the 10 lowest paying occupations in Nova Scotia (NSACSW Website, 2014).

The Council (2013) explains that poverty is linked to various forms of inequality and inequity associated with, but not limited to, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, (dis) Ability and geographical location, in that they are all contributing factors (NSACSW, 2013). Authors (Waldron, 2014; Este & Bernard, 2003) also suggests that when gender intersects with race, it creates disproportionately high levels of low income and poverty for ANS women, which is double the Nova Scotian average for all women. Waldron et al., (2014) further explains that women in all groups experience higher low income rates than their male counterparts. In 2006 low income rates were higher in women than in men, at 10.3% and 8.9%, respectively (p.17). Noteworthy, Waldron et al., (2014) reports, in elderly residents (65 years or older) in Nova Scotia, women had a higher incidence of low- income (17.4%) than men (7.5%). The Task Force of Government Service reports that the challenges faced by ANS seniors, in particular, can be attributed to little or no access to quality education or decent employment opportunities when they were younger (Saulnier, 2009 as cited in Waldron et al., 2014).

Este & Bernard (2003) also state that according to Coleman, African-Canadian women in Atlantic Canada are disproportionately listed among poor and single-headed households. It is important that we understand the impact of living on the margins which contribute to social and economic exclusion.

### **IMPACTS OF RACISM AND OPPRESSION, THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

Evident through the literature is that marginalization from the political and economic mainstream has had a devastating impact on African-Canadian societies. The history of marginalization and oppression, in addition to the systemic barriers to social and economic resources and power, has had a devastating impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of African-Canadian people (Bernard & Bernard, 2002). Christensen refers to these phenomena as the cycle of unequal access, and argues that extraordinary interventions are required if the cycle of psychological trauma that results from such limitations is to be broken (as cited in Bernard & Bernard, 2002). Cross (2003) also talks about myths of Black history being a form of violence against Black culture and Black people as a whole (p. 69).

Research has proven that ANSs are at greater risk for major health problems and systemic racism is reflected in the overrepresentation of African Canadians in mandated services such as child welfare, and underrepresentation in voluntary services such as counselling (Este & Bernard, 2003; Waldron et al., 2014; James et al., 2010).

Este and Bernard (2003) found that for ANS women, the cumulative effect of systemic racism in their lives puts them at an increased risk for a number of chronic diseases and other mental health problems. Such risks include depression and suicide, fear, mistrust, despair, alienation, loss of control, damaged self-esteem, drug and alcohol

abuse, violence, high stress and stress related disease. As well as short lifespan, poor paediatric care, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, stroke, psychological stress, diabetes, lupus, and breast cancer (Waldron et. al, 2014).

Bernard and Este (2003) note that some studies show (Moore, Diez & Roux, 2006; Travis & Leech, 2003) that in the United States, race and socioeconomic status are heavily conflated by historic and present-day racial dynamics. The wealth gap is persistent between African Americans and other groups (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2011 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013), which leaves African American children and adolescents living below the poverty line. Similarly to what was found with ANS households, there is disparate number of African American youth raised in female-headed homes with household incomes often substantially lower when there is a single wage earner, a gender disparity in income, and a trend toward service-sector jobs, often described as factors in an overall feminization of poverty (Brady & Kall, 2008).

Travis & Leech (2013) explain that poverty linked with income disparities, are associated with a range of undesirable outcomes including immediate and cumulative stress. The authors further explain that some research suggests that for African American youth, pressures around status consumption are high, “influencing self esteem and self-acceptance” (Sweet, 2010 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013, p. 95). They also allude to the pressure of competencies and success within education. Although the majority of African American teenagers managed to graduate from high school, the rate that did not, is double the percentage of Whites. It is factual that educational achievement associates with future income generation and other correlates of wealth (Centers for Disease Control

& Prevention, 2011 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013), which evidently impact the health and well-being of people of African descent.

Throughout the United States, residential segregation further concentrates the effects of poverty and under education which is quite similar to the Nova Scotian experience. One of the most known stories of residential segregation based on unequal resources as basic as running water is the story of Africville. Clairmont and Magill (1999) describe Africville as a depressed community both in physical and in socio-economic terms, relatively invisible in the city of Halifax. Located next to a dump and divided with railroad tracks, sewage, lighting and other public services were conspicuously absent. Many Africville community members had minimal education levels, very low incomes and were unemployed.

Residential segregation transforms communities as it identifies the advantages and disadvantages associated with race in the United States thus Black and White communities become differentially shaped by social problems as a result of racial inequity. This limits Black families' access to resources such as housing which can have a range of environmental influences. Such influences include exposure to violence, environmental hazards, lower quality institutional resources (Bennett, 2011), and limited opportunities to maintain healthy levels of nutrition and physical activity (Travis & Leech, 2013). Moore & Diez Roux (2006) assert that,

the presence of strong residential segregation by income and race/ethnicity in the United States also suggests that the local food environment may contribute to socioeconomic and racial/ethnic differences in health. Healthy foods including whole-grain products, low-fat dairy foods, and fresh fruits and vegetables, may be less available, and relatively more costly, in poor and minority neighbourhoods than in wealthier and White neighbourhoods. (p. 325)

Conversely, they have greater proximity to hazardous waste sites and the release of other toxic pollutants (Bullard, 1990) which are trends that are long-standing and persist today not only in the United States, but also in Canada, more specifically, Nova Scotia. Further, Waldron et al., (2014) examined the health experiences of ANS residents of the North End of Halifax. Residents in the urban core of the city were provided the opportunity to share their experiences in the context of the socio-economic transformation this area of the city has been undergoing over the past several years (Waldron et al., 2014, p.6). They continue to write about the expropriation of many ANS from Africville to this area in 1966 and housed in public housing complexes. Prior to the move, there had been a decline in the number of retail and commercial services in that area and were replaced by vacant buildings, empty lots and social services (Beaumont, 2013 as cited in Waldron et al., 2014). The researchers explain that today, the social and economic changes that the North End has been experiencing can be attributed partly to the gentrification, the dynamic process that seeks to restore a less affluent or working class neighbourhood through migration and upper-class individuals, including local government, business groups and community activists (p.12), of the area. By this occurring, low-income and poor individuals have decreased accessibility and experience feelings of resentment of these changes as well as the displacement of residents who can no longer afford to live in that area (Beaumont, 2013; Roth, 2013; Silver, 2008 as cited in Waldron et al., 2014).

This study used a social determinant of health approach to determine that these do put individuals at risk for a number of health and mental health problems. Waldron et al. (2014) state that it also moved beyond analyses of individual health risks acknowledging



how the health of a community may be impacted by these determinants (p.12). Waldron et al. (2014) found through this study that community members faced barriers engaging in meaningful activities at community agencies such as lack of inclusive services and programs; not feeling welcomed and accommodated by community agencies; exclusion and discrimination in the wider society and at community agencies; lack of interest and motivation; lack of affordable childcare; scheduling conflicts and lack of time; lack of access to affordable transportation; and fear of violence and crime (p.21). The study also examined that especially within rural and remote regions there were more barriers with accessing culturally specific health care services to those living in urban environments. These issues contribute to higher incidents of heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes and death in this community compared to White Nova Scotians (Saulnier, 2009).

Discussing health and well-being in relation to the life journey of people of African descent, spirituality serves as a key coping mechanism. Wheeler, Ampadu & Wangari state “[s]pirituality is deeply embedded in the healthy life-span development of people of Africa and the African Diaspora” (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006, p.77). Not only is spirituality integral to a healthy life-span, Bernard defined spirituality as “the essence of our survival, our being,” and that which keeps us committed to working through the struggle and pain of race oppression (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006, p.77). Furthermore, Schiele explains that when we place spirituality at the centre of human development that we gain a better appreciation for the enormous influence it has on our cognitive, social and emotional development (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006). hooks asserts that African centered spirituality serves as a form of resistance, a tool for coping and healing (Bernard, 2002; Wheeler, Ampadu & Wangari, 2002), and a strategy for

promoting health and well being (Bowen-Reid & Harrell, 2002; Chase, 2001 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006).

Este & Bernard (2003) and James et al. (2010) write that oppression, in addition to the systemic barriers to social and economic resources and power, has had a devastating impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of African Canadian people. This is further argued by Christensen who refers to these phenomena as the cycle of unequal access, and argues that extraordinary interventions are required if the cycle of psychological trauma that results from such limitations is to be broken (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003). James et al. (2010) state that the results of the daily coping with everyday trauma faced by ANS has put them at greater risk for major health problems, such as diabetes and hypertension; family and social problems, including violence and abuser identity, and self-esteem problems; and mental health challenges. Also identified is the psychosocial impact of racism on mental health such as the development of depression (James et al., 2010, p. 116).

Travis & Leech (2013) also argue that absolute poverty and relative poverty, linked with income disparities, are associated with a range of undesirable outcomes including immediate and cumulative stress. Further, some research suggests that for African American youth, pressures around status consumption are high, “influencing self-esteem and self-acceptance” however, strategies of avoiding social exclusion have shown a uniquely negative physiological influence on blood pressure among low-income adolescents in comparison with higher-income adolescents (Sweet as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013, p. 96).

In a research study that was conducted by the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers (ABSWS), “Out of the Shadows: Creating Awareness around Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Gambling in African Nova Scotian Communities”, participants spoke about their mental health experiences, substance abuse and gambling issues. Many of these issues were identified as coping strategies in dealing with racism and unequal access but also as a result of the lack of accessibility for services (Boudreau, Berry, Bernard & Dantzler, 2014).

### **UNEQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION & RESOURCES**

Until recently, the historical experiences of African Canadians remained virtually neglected, despite the fact that members of this community have been recorded as part of Canadian society since the seventeenth century. Este & Bernard (2003) acknowledge the work of scholars such as Fred Landon and William Riddell who wrote extensively on various aspects of the African-Canadian experience. However, the majority of Canadian social scientists ignored the contributions of African Canadians to Canadian society, which reinforced the image of African Canadians as the ‘invisible people’.

ANS had a high quest for education as it was believed to be the means by which community members would enhance and increase their social mobility, and economic progress (Este & Bernard, 2003). Cross (2003) also writes about the historical, sociological and psychological materials that provide evidence that people of African descent exited slavery with necessary social capital, inclusive of proactive family attitudes, and patterns as well as high motivation for achievement (p. 67).

Acknowledging the role of the church, there were also opportunities for African Nova Scotians to enhance and develop their leadership skills through that ‘community-

driven' institution. Despite the work done by the AUBA in the area of education, the resistance put forth by the dominant culture for equitable education opportunities proved to be strong. With the introduction of segregated schools, community leaders and parents realized that the presence of segregated schools meant unequal standards and inferior education. Black children did not generally receive an education equivalent to the one obtained by Whites. Yet, they entered the workforce, which limited their occupation horizons, their incomes and their status in the broader society (Este & Bernard, 2003). It is recognized that the education system is one key social issue that has a significant impact on African people.

James et al., (2010) discuss the variety of barriers that African Canadian students face in the education system with all having a racist undertone. James and Lloyd (2013) explain that the under-education at different ages may be a reflection of their racialized experiences at all levels of the education systems as a result of the history of racism and discrimination. Black high school students tend to be stereotyped as not-academically-inclined and therefore, they are neither encouraged nor assisted to work to their educational potential.

Similar to Canada's history and current day challenges regarding education, Travis & Leech (2013) explain that the persistent poverty and wealth gap that exists between African Americans and other groups also adds pressure to the mastery of functional competencies and success within education. They reference a 2011 study conducted by the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, where a majority of African Americans eighteen years of age or older (82%) completed high school. However, 18% did not, which is double the percentage of Whites. Through these findings the Centre

concluded that educational achievement associates with future income generation and other correlates of wealth (Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2011 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013).

One of the most important structural limitations is school quality (James & Lloyd, 2013; Gulson & Webb, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013; Brathwaite & James, 1996; BLAC, 1994; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008). It is repeatedly argued that culturally specific education and curriculum is a necessity in an educational institution. James and Lloyd (2013), Gulson & Webb (2013) and Brathwaite and James (1996) discuss the ideas and implementations of culturally specific education through Africentric Educational programs in Ontario, Canada. This type of schooling has a heavy focus on parental involvement and community driven establishment. Gulson & Webb (2013) explain the myriad of moves to create these schools between 1992-2007 as sites for Black role models, and ways of engaging Black students who were not completing school.

Despite the barriers and the disappointments, the African Canadian community has made and continues to make a remarkable contribution to educational thought and critical pedagogy in Canada, probably because of our concerns and fears about education have been so strong that we constantly raise the issue, ask the questions, and make suggestions to institutions for arresting a condition that has produced in us strong headache (Brathwaite and James, 1996, p.125).

Travis & Leech (2013) suggest that African American youth experience different educational contexts, which threaten school engagement and subsequent competency attitudes and beliefs. They further explain that from this lens, it is not the students that cause the problems intentionally, but rather that the students learn within environments of compromised quality. Grant found that teachers, on average, hold lower expectations for

Black males. And, teachers' low expectations often lead to student disengagement which, in turn, lowers the teacher's expectations further—a vicious cycle downwards (as cited in Strayhorn, 2010). Travis & Leech (2013) use the example of the impact on an African American youth of low academic expectations from teachers and staff, which is especially evident in boys. Scott also discusses the low expectancy with an example from a parent who describes how teachers treat African Canadian students,

Teachers take it out on the Black kids. If they do well, they are wrong. If they do it right, they are wrong. When the kids do good, nobody believes them. My son did a great assignment. The teachers did not believe that he did [it] himself. His self-esteem dropped (as cited in Bernard & Este, 2005, p. 437).

Taylor and Payne (as cited in Cross, 2003) explains that Black youth, in particular, Black males as originating from broken and unstable families, and exhibiting certain negative psychological traits such as low achievement motivation, negative self-concept and negative self-esteem and a propensity toward delinquency and crime (p.68). Some Black males internalize such negative beliefs, which in turn, become “self-threatening” and work to compromise his success (Strayhorn, 2010). The oppression that these young adolescents face in the educational system and in the culture they live in at large “fosters self-hatred and self-destructiveness” (Harvey & Rauch, 1997, p.1). Further, Christensen writes that the cycle of unequal access can lead to low self-esteem, a sense of hopelessness, internalization of oppression and racism, anger, anxiety, and the destruction of self and/or others (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003). Cross (2003) further contends with the claim of Ogbu that slavery blocked the development of positive Black achievement motivation and turned Black self-concept into a site of racial self-loathing as well as hatred of anything White (“oppositional identity”), and that such factors cause Black youth to drift away from mainstream models of success and toward involvement in

delinquency and crime (p.71). However, upon exiting slavery, people of African descent had a passion for education and learning. The authors write in certainty that low achievement motivation and undervaluing the role of education were not cultural themes carried over from slavery.

Similarly to the Canadian experience, Travis and Leech (2013) explain that African Americans continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system, and these elevated rates are highly skewed for young African Americans. Evidence continues to emerge highlighting the contribution of disparate school suspension and expulsion policies to involvement in the criminal justice system. They further attest to the findings of Kim & Geronimo and Skiba, that due partially to this school to prison pipeline, students of color, including African American youth are overrepresented in juvenile detention and eventually prison.

Without adequate education, young people cannot get jobs or are limited to minimum wage jobs, which do not allow them to support a family. In order to supplement or to earn an adequate income, some can be easily tempted to engage in criminal activities. (James et al., 2006, p. 96)

For some, survival is by any means necessary, while for others, strategies of survival and notions of success are rooted in African-centred values and traditions (Bernard, 1996 as cited in Este & Bernard, 2003). For many, the struggle to survive is reflected in the overrepresentation of African Canadians in the negative statistics on high school dropout rates, the prison population, and people living with addictions.

Travis & Leech (2013) assert that race and socioeconomic status are heavily conflated by historic and present-day racial dynamics in the United States. Socioeconomic status, access to resources, and institutionalization each have substantial

implications for a theoretical framework of positive youth development that relies heavily upon youth's attitudes toward institutions and normative beliefs. The structural realities paired with historic inequalities create a context of risk that has led to relatively unique cultural adaptations seeking to promote resiliency and thriving among African American youth. This is measured through attitudes toward academic achievement and future economic productivity.

Worth noting is what Travis & Leech (2013) indicate, as a group, African Americans' social and economic status often limits available structural resources, including those related to educational achievement. This structural disadvantage could weaken the perception of education as a viable path to economic success. Limited access to high-quality education could further marginalize African American adolescents' perceptions of legitimate educational opportunity structures.

Este & Bernard (2003) note that in Nova Scotia, the community experiences the impact of a resource drain as many of its highly educated young people leave the area for permanent jobs in other parts of the country, or in the United States, because they cannot get jobs in the province (p.327). As a result of the limited access to education, resources and opportunities, people of African descent had to develop their own institutions. The AUBA has been discussed as one of these, however, there have been many community-driven initiatives and programs created to enhance the cultural nurturing of African Nova Scotians and to provide opportunities that they were typically excluded from.

## **EXPLORING CULTURALLY SPECIFIC COMMUNITY – DRIVEN PROGRAMS**

What can be argued is that “education is where we find the most significant manifestation of colour prejudice in Canadian history” (BLAC Report, 1994, p. 4).



African Nova Scotians have been oppressed by society regarding many social issues in various ways. Specifically, ANS have experienced great oppression within the public education system across the spectrum from administrative and teaching roles to the experience as a learner or student. The social issue of inequity within the education system has also contributed to other social issues such as our socio-economic status, health and well-being, which has been relayed throughout this literature review.

Recognizing that access to education for ANSs was not only challenging but also unequal, drawing inward, the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC), of 12 members from diverse backgrounds, was formed. They formed to resolve the deep rooted problems that existed for almost two centuries within Nova Scotia in relation to unequal access to quality education (BLAC Report on Education, 1994). BLAC's mandate included advising government through the minister of education, on the development and implementation of policy for all levels of education; developing systems, generating statistics and relevant research to determine the effectiveness of educational services and programs for Black learners; reviewing and commenting on issues as they affect accessibility and quality of education for Black learners at all levels; liaising with the Black communities, organizations, and appropriate provincial and federal government departments regarding education and the training process; and undertaking specific projects and tasks in keeping with its overall terms of reference (BLAC Report, 1994, p. 32).

Prior to the establishment of BLAC, the department of education offered limited efforts directed to addressing Black educational issues in Nova Scotia. One of the major accomplishments of this committee was the renowned *BLAC Report on Education*, which

in turn would produce new policies that favoured ANS learners. At the time in Nova Scotia, there were numerous studies conducted addressing the situations faced by Black students particular to a region or community however, there was no comprehensive or provincial analysis that looked at education holistically. BLAC's vision in creating the Report was of an education system which would be equitable, accessible, and inclusive for all learners within seven years of submitting the report. According to BLAC, both academic and cultural excellence for ANS students would be a reality and mastery of basic skills. The total school environment, including the academic content, would reflect sensitivity to ANS students. The BLAC Report on Education stressed the importance of developing a positive self-concept and self-esteem among Black learners, as a child's ability to succeed in life increases when their self-esteem increases.

Systemic and social issues such as racial discrimination, overt or covert, have played a major part in the denial of equal opportunities to education for people of African descent. As a result, from birth, most African Canadian children are trapped in a vicious cycle of societal rejection and isolation, poverty, low expectations, and low educational achievement (BLAC Report, 1994).

Due to the historical implications that had surfaced into present day, there were various events that occurred in which influenced the urgency to conduct research in order to implement the supported BLAC report on education. Such events also created new policies that have been implemented within the education system. Literature demonstrates that the Donald Marshall Jr. Case highlighted that "racism permeates the entire social, economic, political and cultural environment of NS and Canada" (BLAC Report, 1994, p. 34). It discussed how Blacks have had to bear almost unbearable burdens

with reference being made to the segregation of many Black children in all-Black schools until the mid 1960s. From the recommendations brought forward supported by this case, the government in partnership with Dalhousie University created a policy that would financially support ANS and First Nations law students (Hickman as cited in BLAC Report, 1994), the IB & M program.

To further illustrate the development of policies as a response to the social issues addressed within the BLAC report, in 1989 at Cole Harbour High School snowballs were thrown at Black students by White students which resulted in a full-fledged confrontation followed by almost 300 Whites antagonizing Black students outnumbering them 3-1. Some Black students were sent to hospital but also were suspended from school for the remainder of the year, and had charges laid against them. However, the White students did not experience the same consequences. Following this critical incident, the Black students and Black community at large were enraged with the unjust repercussions and called for a public meeting with approximately 1500 students, parents, and teachers present. As a direct response to the incident came the establishment of the Parents-Students Association of Preston whom later held a public inquiry to examine racism and discrimination in the education system; high school drop-out rates; the streaming of Black students into non-academic courses; the absence of Black and ethnic content in school curriculum; the under representation of minorities in teaching positions and administration; and how quality education can be delivered to ethnic communities. Although as the literature explains, there were many mixed feelings about this incident and action taken by community to create change, the struggle for change and justice did not come until two years later in 1991 when finally, the Halifax County-Bedford District

School Board's initiative on Race Relations was established which created policies and procedures in addressing race relations.

Brathwaite and James (1996) also write about African Canadian students organizing for quality education. In 1983 ANS students established the Cultural Awareness Youth Group (CAYG) to foster the educational and cultural development of Black youth in the metropolitan Halifax- Dartmouth area by focusing on Black cultural and Heritage. They also reference at Queen Elizabeth High School, dissatisfied with the Eurocentric curriculum and decided to organize their own afterschool Black history classes in the 1990's to learn about their heritage and to develop and promote Black identity and pride.

From the numerous findings that the BLAC Report on Education identified, there were thirty recommendations brought forward to be implemented within eight years after the report was presented. The overall recommendations stressed the necessity of the participation of the Black community in the decision-making, planning and delivery of educational services. "Academic excellence cannot be reached without cultural excellence" (National Alliance of Black School Educators as cited in BLAC Report, 1989, p. 17). The recommendations were broken up into various categories including: focusing on how racism is manifested in the education system and how it has impacted on Black learners and the Black community. Other areas covered included: The minister of education (Government); Cultural education and self esteem; Underrepresentation of Black teachers and administrators (which includes social workers); Need for multicultural/Anti-Racism policies; Learning/teaching materials; Access to higher education and financial support; Mobilization and training parents for advocacy; Teacher

education and professional development; School discipline; Low teacher expectations and insensitivity; Community and parent involvement; and Support for youth organizations and programs (Black Report on Education, 1994, p.17-27).

With government considering the various recommendations put forward, in June 1995 there was a government response to the BLAC report on Education from the Honorable John MacEacheran, who was the Minister of Education and Culture at the time. The response acknowledged the complexity of the issues, the racism and historic failure of the education system to address the needs of the ANS community as well as the thoroughness and major efforts to address such social issues. It is evident that through this report, the importance of culturally sensitivity was recognized. Of the thirty recommendations of the BLAC report, the Minister responded to all.

## **SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

Brathwaite and James (1996) exert that African Canadians organized self-help associations and took initiative to help to counteract the mis-education of Black children through remedial programs teaching Black history and culture, facilitating Black students' access to post-secondary education, as well as educating Black parents and the community about the school system and politics of schooling. As a result of a 'community-driven' organization that acknowledged the need to provide documented evidence that change needed to occur, their voices were heard. The responses to the recommendations of the report elevated BLAC to a Council on African Canadian Education, which has been legislatively mandated through the Education Act of 1995. One of the major responses of this significant report was the establishment of the African

Canadian Services Division (ACSD), established in February 1996. The division has its own Executive Director whom is a member of the senior administration team of the Department of Education. Its major objectives are to develop, promote and deliver programs, resources and services for ANS students; encompass all levels of education; advise and guide other divisions of the Branch, and the Department of Education, regarding African Canadian Education; promote understanding of African Canadians and their history, heritage, culture, traditions and contributions to society recognizing their origin as Africans; ensure African Canadian students have greater access to post-secondary institutions; and work with staff in Branch and across the department to address systemic racism and discrimination, by facilitating implementation of the *Racial Equity Policy* (African Canadian Services, Province of Nova Scotia).

The division offers a scholarship program to ANS (Black) students who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada whose parent(s) is/are of African descent (Black) and is a resident of Nova Scotia (African Canadian Services, Province of Nova Scotia Website, 2014). They also offer scholarships specifically for students who attend Dalhousie University or Kings Collage. Scholarships have been also made available for Black students to enter professional programs such as law and engineering where Black people have historically been excluded. ACSD has also been able to fund various Africentric Summer Immersion and March Break ‘community-driven’ programs that focus on math, science and literacy across the province for students in low-income communities.

From the BLAC Report on Education there has also been the establishment of many initiatives and programs to aid in the successes of ANS learners. Among many, the following are some of the specific initiatives identified through the BLAC Response (1995) that serve as responses to the BLAC Report (1994) recommendations and are most significant to this study. The development of programs, resources and learning materials on Black people, history, tradition and culture within educational settings which has been administered through the establishment of the African Canadian Serviced Division. The Department of Education is required to ask publishers to provide learning materials on the history of people of African descent and also provides funding and other assistance for Black writers/publishers to produce and distribute materials to Nova Scotian schools. Financial support for Cultural, Academic and Enrichment Programs (CAEP) within communities facilitated through the Black Educators Association (BEA) whereas the budget is reviewed each year and actions are taken to improve the program across the province each year. The implementation of Affirmative Action committees within the School Board which supports the hiring of Black teachers, guidance counsellors, and administrators to serve as role models as well as cross-cultural training for all teachers and staff. In addition, the introduction of Student Support Workers in the school to whom Black learners can go for assistance. With teacher education recognized as a need, an opportunity for 20 Black youth annually for 10 years to undertake teaching training through scholarships where universities have also reserved seats in their teacher education programs was created. Also recommended were adult literacy programs that were to be owned by the community for the community and funded through the Community Learning Initiative to provide upgrading and skill training. Within the

community colleges, Black studies coordinators were appointed to strengthen communication with the Black communities and develop and implement a recruitment strategy. Also, to establish a support system for Black students, specifically focused on improving the transition of Black students to the campus as well as student retention, and success. With this was the development and implementation of race relation policies for the college system. In addition, granted was an increased budget for the Black Incentive Fund as well as a scholarship program for Black students pursuing studies in professional areas such as medicine, pharmacy, dentistry and engineering. Additionally, establishing enhances parental and community involvement in children's learning through heritage schools for African Canadian children on Saturday's and to provide programs for youth to build self-esteem and awareness about life choices. Finally, an Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) led by the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), supported the Africentric Masters of Educations on Life Long Learning Program in partnership with Mount Saint Vincent University.

Although founded prior to the development of the Black Report on Education, the BEA a community-driven, grass roots organization coordinates it's efforts with ACSD. Brathwaite and James (1996) describe this organization as an African Canadian communal strategy to work for educational equity for students, and employment equity for teachers, particularly Blacks. The association advocates for institutional changes, provides remedial education to Black students and professional development to teachers and also educates the community about the school system. BEA facilitates two major culturally specific summer camps, Math Camp and Kamp Kujichagulia, that put emphasis on motivation for ANS learned to attend university/college through positive



exposure and participation in university campus life; reflect and provide education from an Africentric perspective; demonstrate the possibility of combining sports, technology, culture and academics into one's life; stimulate consideration of future employment/career options; provide opportunities to interact with other ANS learners and with ANS role models (BEA Website, 2014). The BEA also offers a scholarship program; adult learning program; cultural academic and enrichment program; and regional educators program.

Through a huge response from government regarding the concerns around quality of education for ANS learners, it was made clear that there would be a government committed to the improvement of learning opportunities for Blacks of all ages. This would be possible by addressing the systemic issues that have disadvantaged the Black community with efforts to develop innovative approaches to creating new opportunities and ensuring Black youth benefit from a fully supportive learning environment (BLAC Response, 1995).

### **REVIEW OF EXISTING CULTURALLY SPECIFIC 'COMMUNITY-DRIVEN' PROGRAMS**

With major efforts in the enhancement of educational opportunities for ANS learners, it was necessary to assess if what was implemented was indeed making a difference. In 2009, Reality Check, a review of key program areas in the BLAC Report was conducted for their effectiveness in enhancing the educational opportunities and achievement of ANS learners. The review was undertaken to provide direction for focused improvements on the current practices and policies. The report explains that in

Nova Scotia many resources, both material and human, have been provided, with a goal to achieving success for ANS students.

Effective programs and services such as the African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship program, the Student Support Worker program, and the English 12: African Heritage course, which have been put in place by the African Canadian Services Division and school boards for African Nova Scotian students, are making a positive difference to the academic achievements of African Nova Scotia student. (Lee, 2009, p.1)

There are still many ANS students who are not achieving as much success as they should. Some institutional barriers and realities such as the number of ANS students who have an Individual Program Plan (IPP), the caseload of the Student Support Worker, or unaddressed racism may prevent access and limit achievement for ANS students. As well, the limited official quantitative data available on ANS students in terms of their opportunity to learn and their achievement make for inconclusive results. Lastly, there is a pervasive perception and a vigorous claim in ANS communities that there is an over-representation of ANS students who have an Individual Program Plan (IPP), which is seen by some to restrict access to educational opportunity (Lee, 2009). The education system as a whole does not have a response to this claim (Lee, 2009). Most recently as 2015, data is being collected regarding race and academic performance through efforts of ACSD.

It was identified that there were specific areas where improvements could be made, such as better alignment and communication among the various groups working for African Canadian students; better communication between ANS communities and schools and between communities and organizations working on behalf of ANS students; continue to provide training/learning opportunities in the area of anti-racism; and remaining vigilant in enforcing anti-racism policies (Lee, 2009). Overall, the conclusion

that can be drawn from the report is that the task of achieving better results for ANS students has largely been delegated to specific organizations and individuals. The challenges have not become embedded in the daily thinking and activities of everyone in the education system, from the very highest positions of administration to every person working at every level in the system—The Department of Education, organizations, boards, and schools (Minister Response to Reality Check, 2010).

The Reality Check report brought forward sixty-eight recommendations, including key findings, which were organized into key themes in relation to communication, professional development, curriculum, student and community engagement, program review and roles and responsibilities. The government responded to fifty of those recommendations.

Gulson and Webb (2013) and Brathwaite and James (1996) explain that culturally specific education and curriculum requires parental involvement. “For African Canadian parents and community, educational involvement has now assumed the status of an imperative which we must obey if we hope to improve our students’ school experience and counter the trend of poor performance among them” (Brathwaite & James, 1996, p. 108). Travis & Leech (2013) through their research provide an example of a culturally specific ‘community-driven’ model which references education as well. A similar theme within the literature, this model highlights the significance of the community dimension along with the Five C’s construct of: Connection, Competence, Confidence, Caring and Character. Each element of the Five Cs is critical to every other developmental dimension within the model.

Travis and Leech (2013) write that young people's ability to sustain positive bonds with peers, teachers, and other supportive adults, influence empathy and pro-social decision making. The literature claims that the value of strong, positive relationships is most evident within risky contexts, thus promoting resilience through the ability to overcome adversities. That said, the qualities inherent to caring and character produce what is commonly understood as morality, and this morality is at the same time dependent upon and a determinant of the connections that produce a moral identity.

Research has found that, increased social support from parents and peers is significantly associated with increased self-esteem (BLAC Report, 1994; Barthwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013). Similarly, increased confidence predicts several youth development dimensions including academic competence. Low academic confidence is also associated with low emotional support from peers, parents, or other adults (Travis & Leech, 2013).

Travis and Leech (2013) describe that a sense of community and active and engaged citizenship are important constructs to integrate with the model of positive youth development for African American youth. Considering 'community-driven' programs and initiatives that have been effective, youth have been able to connect and identify with a strong, positive, and supportive African American or Canadian community. They suggest that youth that increase their sense of community and become more engaged citizens can reinforce their moral identity and mastery processes. In addition, new, culturally specific empowerment-based positive youth development manifests as an interactive, empowerment-based identity and relationships-driven youth development model. This links empowerment to community and citizenship as "the process by which

adolescents develop the consciousness, skills and power necessary to envision personal or collective wellbeing and understand their role within opportunities to transform social conditions to achieve that well-being” (Travis & Leech, 2013, p. 103).

Now, twenty-one years since the BLAC Report on Education was published, there have been both positive and negative changes and implications with the approved recommended programs and services. These changes are in regard to government commitment, community support and internal challenges. A controversial relationship was formed between the ALI and the new formed “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute with both organizations having similar mandates advocating for their positions with the leadership of this institute. In December, 2014, after celebrating the twentieth year anniversary of the BLAC Report on Education, CACE was found by NDP Liberal government and Education Minister, Karen Casey, to have exceeded it’s mandate and has no legislated authorization to hire new staff or fund it’s current staff positions resulting in cease of funds due to an audit from previous years (Willick, 2014). As a result of the challenges with CACE, the initial ALI is no longer government funded and there has been a new partnership established with the department of education through the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Africentric Learning Institute (DBDALI) (Willick, 2014).

## **DISCUSSION OF KEY COMPONENTS OF CULTURALLY SPECIFIC PROGRAMS**

Many authors (Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Hodge & Jackson, 2010; BLAC, 1994; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013; Klinck et al., n.d.) suggest that culturally specific programming must encompass a number of key components. These primarily include identity and cultural identity formation, self-esteem and self-evaluation, sense of belonging, mentorship, the

interconnection of human life, nature and spirituality, and fostering heritage and cultural restoration. A consistent overall theme in the literature is the evident connection that the key themes have to academic performance (Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Hodge & Jackson, 2010; BLAC, 1994; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013; Klinck et al., n.d).

## **IDENTITY/ CULTURAL IDENTITY & SELF-ESTEEM**

James et al., (2010) support the idea of the importance of community and how it hugely impacts one's identity and further influences their life journey. "The idea of relying on a strong racial identity as a means of dealing with difficult times tends to be related to an individual's sense of community as one in which there is common identity, interdependence, unity and mutual support" (James et al., 2010, p. 141).

As discussed, identity formation is influenced by history, culture, environment and guidance. Brathwaite and James (1996) discuss the initiatives implemented to address the need for culture and racial identity for ANSs. Bernard and Este (2005) and Bernard (2009) argue the importance of racial identity, knowing one's history and culture in order to know where you are going. Travis & Leech (2013) explain that an often-prioritized community of identity for African American youth is cultural, based on race and ethnicity. Disentangling and quantifying the perceived meanings of and influences of racial and ethnic identity among African American youth has been an active area of research for a substantial period of time.

Connected to cultural identity is self-esteem and self-evaluation. In contemporary times, African American youth require cultural affirmation as well (Alford, 2003). This is also true for African Canadian youth (BLAC, 1994). Pseudo-affirmations that are

normative do not provide the cultural specificity needed to help people in this population achieve their full potential. As Gavazzi et al. suggest, African American youth have different identity and personality formation patterns stemming from cultural differences and societal oppression (as cited in Alford, 2003). It is important to note that the African American social context is the primary source of social comparison in relation to self-evaluation and self-esteem for many Black children and adolescents (Alford, 2003). Maintaining a positive culturally responsive social context through well-crafted service delivery is critical for African American youth who bring with them distinctive socio-cultural experiences (Alford, 2003).

Well documented in the literature is that achievement through education and passing knowledge and encouragement to others are essential to African American survival. “Family Solidarity and Cultural Interconnectedness, along-standing cultural strength, distinguishes itself through the voices’ concentration on familial and cultural cohesiveness. Considering familial connectedness and practices Tanyi (2006) also supports this by explaining that family spirituality can be much broader than individual spirituality, as it encompasses individuals’ distinct spirituality and that of the family unit.

## **MENTORSHIP AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Several writers (Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008; Klinck et al., n.d) discuss the importance of academic achievement in regard to African Canadian learners. Tied with their success is the role of familial and communal mentors and role models. Klinck et al. (n.d) discuss the role of mentorship for Aboriginal youth. They explain that successful Aboriginal mentorship programs must be developed in collaboration with community

members from the outset and built on existing strengths and programs within the community. Also, they must include the mentee's family, traditional values and culture, and adequate resources for sustainability. Connecting to the African American context, researchers of youth and adolescent development seek to describe the complexities of this identity trying to measure the uniqueness of being a young African American living within present-day United States who feels a part of the historical and present-day experiences that coexist with that status. Researchers suggest that the main progenitors of cultural identity tend to be parents and mentors as socializing agents (Hurd, Sanchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013).

The literature bridges the link between cultural identity being also associated with increased academic engagement and performance (Travis & Leech, 2013). The oppression that these young adolescents face in the educational system and in the culture they live in at large "fosters self-hatred and self-destructiveness" (Harvey & Rauch, 1997, p.1). This idea holds true exploring the BLAC Report on Education as well. Bernard (2009) also highlight this idea of mentorship through a study with Black men. "If black men can provide negative influences, then they can provide positive influences by diverting their energies. Even without full opportunity, Black men have potential. Couple that with motivation and you have a positive role model" (p. 87).

Further evidence suggests that racial, ethnic, and cultural identity can strengthen during adolescence, via socialization by parents (Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013). Mentors and community leaders also play a vital role in strengthening racial and cultural identity as they hugely impact the lives of youth. Hughes et al. describe "ethnic-racial socialization as the transmission of messages to



children about ethnicity, race and the meaning of their group membership, including pride, history, traditions, awareness of discrimination and appreciation of diversity” (Humphries & Jagers, 2009 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2003 p. 105).

Stevenson and Arrington (2006) found that increased cultural socialization has been associated with increased esteem and lower lethargy. They also found that those students with high rates of cultural pride showed high levels of peer self-esteem whereas those students with high rates of main-stream fit socialization showed low academic self-esteem.

Overall, the research results suggest that positive and supportive adults such as parents or natural mentors may nurture a stronger sense of identity through socialization, whether based on race, ethnicity, or culture; an identity that buffers societal stigmas and promotes stronger educational attitudes, engagement, and achievement.

Similar to the BLAC Report on Education (1994) and its emphasis on community involvement as it related to education for ANS learners, existing theoretical and empirical literature provides reason to believe that a sense of community is important for positive youth development among African American youth and my belief is that it would be similar for African Canadian youth. The model proposed in this literature ties in community and reinforces the recursive relationships we refer to as mastery and moral identity. Travis & Leech (2013) explain that when “considering race or ethnic identity as a prioritized community, an explicit recognition exists to the potential benefits and risks associated with racial or ethnic socialization, and racial, ethnic, and cultural identity among African American youth” (p.107). Social network driven pathways to engagement including peers, school-based community service, community-based youth organizations,

higher education, the military, and social media–driven engagement also exist (Brathwaite & James, 1996; CCL, 2008; James & Lloyd, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013).

Mentoring, education, and employment programs are relationship-based experiences and must be developmental in their focus, which encompass the cultural aspect to aid in the healthy development of health, and well-being. Educational initiatives, mentoring, and other out-of-school time programs must incorporate programming criteria that explicitly highlight how positive youth development outcomes are recursive, activity driven, and influenced by developmental assets (Travis & Leech, 2013).

### **INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE, NATURE AND SPIRITUALITY**

Este & Bernard (2003; 2006), Bernard (2009) and Bernard & Este (2005) discuss the role of spirituality as a form of coping with racism for African Canadians. Bernard (2009) found in a study with Black men that spirituality was often a source of survival in a society that puts the odds against them.

Scott (2003) found that Black youth who perceived discrimination in their immediate environments and who had higher levels of racism-related socialization were more likely to use coping strategies seeking social support and the use self-reliant problem solving. James and Lloyd (2013) also state that African Canadians that experience high levels of racism-related stress can be a result of having lived for generations in Canada. This does not rescue individuals from racism, but instead it affords them, especially the young and educated, “a sense of awareness and sensibility” (p.29).

Considering ‘community-driven’ programming, the literature reflects programs such as RITES (Rites of Passage) which have been historic in community. Historically, RITES have been viewed as ritualistic acts or rituals of initiation that occur throughout the life cycle (Vivelo, 1978 as cited in Alford, 2003). They are symbolic and meaningful events that mark transitional periods for individuals as specified stages of life occur. In primary cultures, RITES were used to facilitate the transition from childhood to adulthood status. Alford (2003) explains that the African concept of rites of passage or initiation can be traced to Ancient Kemet (Egypt) where Egyptian society required its neophytes to undergo an elaborate, extremely intense, and difficult process before they could be considered eligible for initiation. The necessity to endow the interconnectedness of human life, nature, and spirituality was pervasive in ancient Africa, which sought to accomplish this task through the ceremonial tradition of RITES.

The literature claims that as it was in ancient Africa, it is today, that RITES emphasize the importance of a youth’s preparation for adulthood status. Historically, African people have taken responsibility in preparing their progeny for adulthood. Separation, transformation, and reincorporation have been distinguished as three essential stages that comprise Rites of Passage (Alford, 2003). Given the tremendous familial and social hardships faced by African Americans there is a certain Reverence for the Creator” (Alford, 2003, p.11). The AA-RITES program highlights in Alford’s (2003) work is a notable example of culturally specific intervention at work.

## **CONCLUSION**

Acknowledging the history of treatment of people of African descent in Nova Scotia provides an understanding of the challenges and barriers that they had to endure

and overcome over their life journey. However, it also gives attention to the community orientation of this group as well as the importance of spirituality specifically through the AUBA in Nova Scotia. Many scholars have written about the economic exclusion of people of African descent in the Western parts of the world due to racism and discrimination and the impact that this has had on the health and quality of life for this group of people. They have also written about unequal access to education and resources.

Reviewing the number of ‘community-driven’ programs and the importance of such as a result of the historical and present day realities of discrimination and racism, but also of resiliency and survival, provides evidence for the recognition of the need of culturally sensitive initiatives. The literature review has reflected the importance of these programs in the advancement of ANS youth and to their sense of identity, health and well-being and community belonging. The research has presented positive evidence of ‘community-driven’ impact on individuals of African descent and on the Black community. The community orientation of these programs has contributed to the survival and success of ANS people and the impact they have had in Nova Scotian. To engage people in a culturally sensitive program, self-evaluation, self-esteem, and feeling a sense of belonging is necessary in the development and delivery.

Although there have been reviews conducted, such as the Enid Lee Review (2009) of programs identified through this literature review, specifically through the BLAC Report on Education (1994), there has been no research to explore the impacts of these programs on ANS. An important component to the advancement of ANS learners is the qualitative experiential accounts of how culturally specific ‘community-driven’ programs have impacted the life journey of ANS. Communities and groups of interest to

youth need to be recognized, but also reinforced be it a sports team, out of school time program, identity-based program, health related program, educational program, employment program, or simply a youth-friendly space. It is evident through this literature review that the impacts of culturally specific ‘community-driven’ programs are positive and empowering.

Many studies (Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Hodge & Jackson, 2010; BLAC, 1994; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013) have explored how culturally specific community-driven programs have sought to foster heritage and cultural restoration, the interconnection of human life, nature and spirituality, self-esteem, self-evaluation, and sense of belonging. As well, identity formation, mentorship and role modeling also present throughout the literature. Finally, a consistent theme in the literature is the evident connection between identify, self-perception, mentorship/relationships and academic performance. Recognizing this relation provides evidence to support the work of the research explored through the BLAC Report on Education (1994), for example, which affirms the need for culturally specific community-driven programs.

Chapter three set the context for the study population and the need for culturally specific community-driven programs. It linked themes in previous research around what needs to be fostered in these types of programs. Chapter four will discuss the methodology used to complete this study. It will identify the research study design and the process of collecting and analyzing the data.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the methodology used to conduct this study. It will explain what qualitative research is and why it was chosen. It will also explore the use of auto-ethnography which reflects the personal experiences of the researcher. The sampling choice will be discussed followed by an in-depth rationale. Finally, the collection of data will be discussed, the recruitment instruments, as well as ethical consideration and trustworthiness.

In order to provide an in-depth understanding of how culturally specific ‘community-driven’ programs impact the life journey of ANSs, a qualitative study design was used. Qualitative research is geared to towards understanding how people interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p.7). This type of research can produce a richer understanding of many social phenomena that can be achieved through other observational methods (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Using a qualitative research method provides a better understanding of the experiences of ANSs who have participated in culturally specific community-driven programs and how they have impacted their lives. Qualitative research is not only a data collecting process but typically a theory-gathering activity where a researcher makes sense of an ongoing process that cannot be predicted in advance (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). With a small sample size, this qualitative research designed was effective.

As a researcher whom has also participated in culturally specific community-driven programs, auto-ethnography was also used to include myself as the researcher in the research. According to Chang auto-ethnography “transcends mere narration of self to

engage in cultural analysis and interpretation” (as cited in Ellis, 2009, p.43), and it is this quality that separates auto-ethnography from other genres. Although Chang acknowledges other approaches to auto-ethnography and is sympathetic to the argument that personal narratives may be therapeutic and evocative for self and others as well as further understanding on a personal and societal level, she argues that without “profound cultural analysis and interpretation,” this kind of writing “remains at the level of descriptive autobiography or memoir” (Ellis, 2009, p.51). Auto-ethnography also reflects on personal experience in a systematic way (Ellis, 2009, p.362). “Good realist ethnography often positions the author and starts from the author’s experience, or investigates a group or activity in which the author has participated. More and more, authors are becoming characters in their texts, even in realist accounts” (Ellis, 2009, p.362).

Critical Race Theorists and writers, Delgado and Stefancic (1991) discuss the notion of a unique voice of color. They further explain specifically related to the legal realm that “the “legal storytelling” movement urges black and brown writers to recount their experiences with racism and the legal system and to apply their own unique perspectives to assess law’s master narratives (p.4). Putting this in the context of social work, this encouragement for writers to write about their own experiences in relation to race is in line with auto-ethnography.

Acknowledging the importance of oral storytelling within an Africentric framework also supports the use of this methodology in this study. With the use of auto-ethnography, I have shared my own personal experiences participating in culturally specific community-driven programs, which is what fuels my interest in this topic.

Within the auto-ethnography chapter, I shared my answers to the research questions asked of participants. This helps me to be authentic in my choice of topic, my reasoning for conducting the research, the research approach and the analysis of the data. These experiences are intersected within the presentation of the data, as a way to include myself in the study findings as if I were also a participant. Having experiences of my own in relation to culturally specific community-driven programs provides another layer of analysis for me as the researcher. To address the perception of any biases because I have had my own experiences in these types of programs, I acknowledge my own experiences through this form of methodology, as I believe they are an important part of this research.

Many of the themes that have been found through the research findings are themes that have resonated with my reflections of my own personal experiences participating in culturally specific community-driven programs. Auto-ethnography has been intersected with thematic analysis within the thesis specifically in chapter two and also within chapters five and six through writers' text boxes which separates the researcher's reflections from those of the participants.

Auto-ethnography is also consistent with AT, which centers both the experiences of the researcher and the researched. AT also seeks to practice from a holistic approach, recognizing all the needs of the individual or group one is working with. In addition, this framework looks at more than just the individual but the whole group and how they are positioned within the Western society. In addition, AT does not discriminate against any other group, rather it can be applied to any population. Connecting to auto-ethnography, this form of methodology also acknowledges various worldviews and how



certain experiences are interpreted based on one's social location. Thus, both AT and auto-ethnography can be applicable to various groups and individuals.

As defined by Creswell (as cited in Blackwell & Pinder, 2014, pp. 47), this study can be described or defined as a "backyard" study. This study is called a backyard study because the primary researcher also experienced the same phenomena as was identified within this study. The primary researcher also participated in culturally specific community-driven programs. Thus, the "inside/insider knowledge" that the primary researcher brought to the study helped all of the participants to better understand the plight and experiences of the study's participants. Thus, the researcher effect here was seen more as a positive effect than as a negative one as no biased views or perspectives were brought into the study.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This qualitative study was designed to explore the influences that culturally specific community-driven programs had on the life journey of ANS. It sought to obtain the perspectives of these programs and the effectiveness of such on the participant's life journey. Dilthey believed that the human sciences involved the understanding of human behavior and social phenomena from the perspective of the participant rather than from the perspective of the observer (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). The emphasis of this study was placed on the perspectives and interpretations of the lived realities of the participants. It also examined the challenges and barriers that ANS have faced such as racism, discrimination, unequal opportunities and overall inequities, that as a result, culturally

specific community-driven programs have been created and implemented. Refer to Appendix D for interview guide.

“The qualitative interview involves asking questions, listening, expressing interest and recording what was said. It is a joint production between the researcher and interviewee. Interviewees are active participants whose insights, feelings, and cooperation are essential parts of a discussion process that reveal subjective meanings” (Neuman & Robinson, n.d, p.268).

Participants were given the opportunity to review the questions before the individual interviews were conducted. This provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on their life experiences as for many, the questions required them to think back years ago and for some even decades ago. This also gave participants the chance to also think about the impact that their participation in these programs had on their life as they reflect back to how they were able to be the person they are today. Finally, it also presented the opportunity for participants to be prepared as well as on an equal level as the researcher in terms of transparency and the questions that were being asked. With the opportunity to review the questions, the interviewee had the opportunity to be prepared for what would be asked by the researcher to give them time to reflect back on their life journey. This provided a fair exchange of opportunity to information sharing on the part of the participant and collection of information by the researcher for a clear purpose.

## **SAMPLING**

Purposive sampling was used in this research study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability type of sampling. The researcher selects a sample of observations that they believe will yield the most comprehensive understanding of their subject of study consists of selecting a sample based the intuitive feel for the subject that comes from extended

observation and reflection (Rubbin & Babie, 2014). Faulkner & Faulkner also say that it is drawing a sample with some predetermined characteristics in mind as cited in Njiwaji, 2012, p. 52). Participants chosen for this research study were ANS between the ages of twenty and sixty-five who had participated in a culturally specific community-driven program. These participants were recruited with the use of a poster (see appendix 2) developed by the researcher and distributed through email, social media avenues and community/ church bulletin boards.

Thirty - One (31) participants were recruited for this study from the ANS community across Nova Scotia. Research participants were made up of different age groups, different genders who have participated in a culturally specific community-driven program. The programs attended varied.

This number was determined by the need to gather various experiences of participants of different ages and generations from ages twenty to sixty-five whom could have participated culturally specific 'community-driven' programs. The ages were divided into three (3) categories: twenty to thirty four (20-34), thirty five to fifty (35-50) and fifty-one to sixty five (51-65). The aim was to interview ten (10) participants from each of the three age categories to capture responses across generations although this was not achieved exactly. This has also ensured enough examples to draw themes from culturally specific community-driven programs that have impacted the life journey based on the sample across generations both positively and/or negatively recognizing that there are criticisms. Expressed through verbal accounts within the ANS community is that there are notable variances of core values and perception of self amongst age groups as minimal as a difference of five. It was found worth analyzing the differences in the age

range chosen for this research. This number has sufficed in an analysis of how generational periods may have also impacted the effectiveness of the programs or supports on the life journey depending on age and generation. There were seventeen (17) female participants and fourteen (14) men, which provided scope for a gender analysis. An age analysis was also conducted with eleven (11) in the 20-34 age category, twelve (12) in the 35-50 age category and eight (8) in the 51-65 age category. Considering the vast amount of ‘community-driven’ programs identified and their identified impacts, an analysis was also conducted on these to analyze how gender, age and program experiences may impact participants differently. Lastly, it is worth noting the representation of participants from both rural and urban ANS communities across the province and the impacts of such on participants. Seventeen (17) participants were from Urban communities and fourteen (14) were from rural communities.

With this project focusing heavily on ‘community-driven’ programs created specifically for ANSs, this group has served as the only participant population. Although this is only a sample of the population and this has been acknowledged, it is used as a basis in sharing the accounts and experiences of ANSs and their experiences with accessing culturally specific community-driven programs. This number of participants has given us enough data for analysis on how the sampled life journeys of ANSs have been impacted by the identified programs. This study is not expected to generalize the population, as it is a sample of information to build upon and rather a reflection of those who participated, which can be further researched with a larger population as a follow up project.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

In-depth interviews with ANS people were conducted to understand their experiences and the why's and the how's of the impacts of these programs on their lives. An eight-question interview guide was developed (see Appendix D) to conduct in-depth individual interviews with participants selected.

These questions have explored whom the participants of the study are such as where they are from or where they grew up, and their family structure. They invited participants to reflect on what their experience has been as an ANS generally, but also specific to education, employment, recreation, community, and healthcare, for example. Participants were also engaged in exploring challenges and barriers that they have faced in their lives in relation to the above examples. In addition, they had the opportunity to reflect on what has supported or helped them in their life as an ANS as well as where they may have found supports. Such supports could be within the community, the education system, or recreation systems, for example. Participants were invited to name the culturally specific community-driven programs that they have participated in, what stood out about them and overall how their life was impacted by the program(s). Finally, participants were invited to imagine what they would change or reshape based on their experiences to enhance the experiences in attending community driven programs for those of the next generation.

A demographics survey was used to capture ages, gender, education level, occupation, and programs participated in. Participants were invited to communicate their

life experiences, which led them to participating in culturally specific community-driven programs that as a result impacted their lives.

The research was conducted in an ethical manner within a private setting with only the primary investigator and participant present. Out of province ANS participants were also offered the opportunity to participate in the study. This process was facilitated via a telephone interview with participants being required to sign an informed consent form that was sent and returned prior to conducting the interview. All participants also had the option of reviewing the interview questions prior to conducting the interview.

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent document, which was explained to them prior to beginning the interview then asked to participate in a sixty (60) minute interview which was audio recorded. Participants were required for up to ninety (90) minutes, maximum, considering the external time of the interview to explain what will happen, signing of the informed consent form, filling out the demographics survey and to thank the participant for participating in the study.

All of the individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by a hired transcriptionist. The transcriptionist was required to sign a confidentiality form.

## **RECRUITMENT INSTRUMENTS**

Participants were recruited through a general poster (see Appendix B) that was distributed widely through social media venues such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and community websites. In addition, the poster was also sent via wide email distribution and posted in various ANS community bulletin boards within the Preston area and churches such as New Beginnings Ministries, Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia, Halifax North Branch

Library, Dartmouth North Community Centre and NSCC Akerley Campus, as well as larger community organizations and universities.

## **DATA ANALYSIS - THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. According to Boyatzis, (1998),

thematic analysis is a way of seeing; a way of making sense out of seemingly unrelated material; a way of analyzing qualitative information; a way of systematically observing a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organization, or a culture; a way of converting qualitative information into quantitative data (p.4).

It is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires and explicit “code”, which could be a list of themes; a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are casually related; or something in between these two forms. A theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. A theme may be identified at the manifest level directly observable in the information or at the latent level underlying the phenomenon. These themes may be initially generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research. The compilation or integration of a number of codes in a study is often called a codebook (p.4). Coffey and Atkinson say that “Coding can be thought about as a way of relating our data to our ideas about these data” (as cited in Boyatzis, 2013, p.4) whereas coding provides many benefits in the organization, processing, and analysis of qualitative information (as cited in Boyatiz, 2013).

Thematic analysis requires a number of competencies such as pattern recognition, openness, flexibility, planning and systems thinking (Boyatzis, 2013, p.10). There are

four stages in developing the ability to use thematic analysis that are sensing themes; doing it reliably; developing codes and interpreting the information and themes in the context of a theory or conceptual framework (Boyatzis, 2013, p.11).

Transcripts were coded through the Atlas TI software based on identified themes and novel or unique narratives. The objective of this analysis was to explore the various dimensions and rationale for the respondent's experiences. This was accomplished through thematic analysis and through critical reflection of the interview transcripts and the researcher's field notes.

The overarching mode of analysis for the interview data was to engage in a critical analysis of the impact of the participant's experiences with culturally specific community-driven programs. Critical analysis was formed using CRT, Africentric & Auto-ethnography. Through the development of themes and the coding process used through thematic analysis, this has allowed the analysis of specific impacts of culturally specific community-driven programs on the life experience of ANSs, the challenges and barriers that have been or need to be addressed as well as to identify any gaps that may exist.

## **DEFINITIONS**

There are two key terms used in this research that will be defined. The first, participation, is referred to as *having a part in a program as learner or facilitator where learning was encountered and an impact was left on one's life journey*. The second, Community-driven refers to *any culturally specific program that has been developed and/or implemented by a community based organization including government or*



*institutional services and resources that have been implemented as a result of a community-driven initiative.* These terms will be used throughout the remaining chapters.

## **ETHICS CONSIDERATION**

A research proposal was submitted to the Office of Research Ethics at Dalhousie University for review. All relevant documents and material (i.e. recruitment poster, informed consent, individual interview guide, demographics survey, and a transcriptionist agreement) were attached and submitted to the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board at Dalhousie University. The research was conducted in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and ethics approval was granted on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 (see approval letter in appendix A).

During the data collection process, transcribing process and reporting of the findings, a number of measures were taken to maintain confidentiality and to ensure safety and comfort for all participants. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research and made aware that they would be audio recorded for the use of direct quotation in the report findings. They were also invited to choose a pseudonym for themselves for direct quotes to be attributed to for protection of their own identity and personal identifying information in the report findings.

Participants were given the option to do either an in-person face-to-face interview or a telephone interview to ensure their comfort. Out of town participants participated in telephone interviews. Additionally, all participants were informed that they were not obligated to answer all of the research questions and that they were free to withdraw from

the study at any time. They were made aware that if they disclosed any knowledge of child abuse or neglect or abuse to an adult that it would have to be reported.

All participants were invited to sign an informed consent form to participate in the study to provide evidence that they understood the project. The form was read by the researcher prior to each interview with participants. Though this, participants were informed of retention and destruction of the data with the deletion of audio recordings after transcribed and the electronic transcriptions stored on the researcher's personal locked computer. They were also made aware of the potential benefits and risks of the study as well as how to obtain the results. Clarification was given to participants when requested during the interview as well as a summary of what they have shared after each question to ensure that it was captured correctly.

## **TRUSTWORTHINESS**

With efforts to establish trustworthiness within this study with participants, a literature review, auto-ethnography chapter, pilot interview with field notes and the option to be sent their transcripts were made available to participants in this study.

I began by conducting a literature review which provided the rationale behind this topic specifically in Nova Scotia, based on the historical implications that have had a negative impact on ANSs in this province. This review also provided evidence of what has been found by participants of African descent and ethnic backgrounds involved in community-driven culturally specific programs specifically in North America. In addition, the literature highlighted some of the community driven research initiatives that

have been conducted with ANSs in order to address the culturally specific needs of this population.

The topic of community –driven culturally specific programs is a relatable topic to myself not only professionally but also personally. I have been a participant in these types of programs in various capacities and have had overall, positive experiences, which have led me to explore the experiences of others through this research study. By writing an auto-ethnography chapter, which has explored my own experiences and the passion that I have behind this topic, I was able to own any biases. This was also done by naming my own experiences throughout the research findings and analysis chapters to follow, which supported many of the experiences of study participants. Through this chapter, I have also placed myself as the researcher into the study as I felt that to be an important component to this work.

Prior to the preliminary interviewing, I felt it necessary to pilot test my interview guide to ensure that the questions were clear to the participants. Although I used an interview guide, I had the flexibility to also ask follow up questions to participant's responses while they had the option to respond or not and that would be respected. This gave me the opportunity to get comfortable with the interview guide as well as to ensure that each question was leading to the specific research question. During the interviews, I acknowledged the use of field notes that would aid me in the analysis process to ensure as much clarity as possible without solely relying on technology through the audio recording. Participants were also given the opportunity to review the notes if requested upon completing the interview.

Finally, the informed consent document where participants were required to sign, explained that they could have their completed transcript sent to them if requested to ensure accuracy. None of the participants requested this.

This chapter provided the research methodology used to conduct this qualitative study. It outlined the research objectives, sampling, data collection, recruitment instrument, and data analysis. Also included was ethics consideration and trustworthiness. Chapter five will present the research findings, which will include the participant's profiles as well as major themes identified from the study.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the themes emerging from the individual interviews based on the life experiences of ANSs. As participants shared their experiences, many themes and narratives developed. This chapter identifies themes deriving from the data analysis. The following themes are presented and augmented by what participants have identified as the barriers that have been faced throughout their life journey, the supports present and available to them throughout their life journey and the impact that participating in culturally specific community-driven programs has had on their life journey. Through this, participants have identified what those specific programs have offered and taught them. I begin with an overview of the research participants and a general profile.

### **PARTICIPANT'S PROFILE**

This study included individual interviews with thirty-one (31) participants in total, seventeen (17) female and thirteen (13) male. Participants were given the option to choose pseudonyms to identify themselves. Due to the study population limitations, all participants were required to identify as ANS to participate. The participant's ages ranged from 20-65. Participants had varying education levels however, all indicated that they have had some post-secondary. Additionally, employment status and occupations varied nonetheless, all participants indicated that they have been employed at some point in their lives. Finally, participants had the opportunity to share which culturally specific community – driven programs led them to participate in the study. Overall, there were common programs identified. The table below (Table 1) provides a detailed view of the participants and their profiles.

**Table 1 - Participants Profiles**

Gender:	
Male	14
Female	16
Age:	
20-34	11
35-50	12
51-65	8
Post-Secondary:	31
College Diploma	3
Undergraduate Degree	8
Graduate Degree	10
Other	10
Currently Employed:	
Yes	29
Casual	2
Part-time	4
Full-time	21
Seasonal	2
No	2
Currently a Student:	
Yes	5
College	
Undergraduate	4
Graduate	
Other	1
No	21

**Table 2 – Participant Profiles Cont’d**

What is/was Your Occupation?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (12) Human Service Workers (Social Workers, Community Workers)</li> <li>• (6) Educators (Classroom Teachers, Student Services)</li> <li>• (2) Retail &amp; Sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (3) Federal Government</li> <li>• (2) Provincial Government</li> <li>• (1) Research</li> <li>• (2) Food Services</li> <li>• (2) Contract Workers</li> </ul>

**Table 3 - Participant Profiles Cont’d**

Which Culturally Specific Community-Driven Program led you to participate in this study?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Community YMCA, George Dixon Centre, Halifax North Branch Library</li> <li>❖ BEA</li> <li>❖ BEA Tutoring Program</li> <li>❖ TYP</li> <li>❖ ABSW</li> <li>❖ CAYG, NIA Centre, Melmick Hall, Youth Program</li> <li>❖ Program coordinator for ABSW Summer Program, Recipient of Black</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Math Camp, ABSW Summer Program</li> <li>❖ Saturday School</li> <li>❖ HAAC – Health Association of African Canadians</li> <li>❖ CAEP, Math Camp, Kamp Kuji, CEA</li> <li>❖ All the Black Education Programs</li> <li>❖ Math Camp, Kamp Kuji</li> <li>❖ Math Camp, Kamp Kuji, BSAC, BYF, From the Ground Up</li> <li>❖ Community Board non-profit youth</li> </ul>

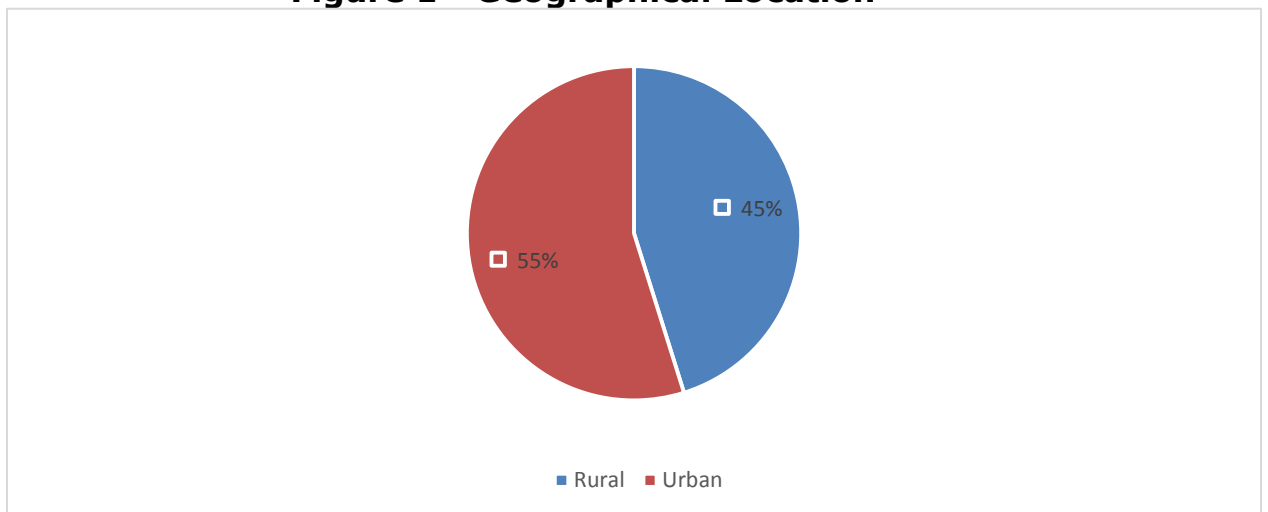
<p><b>Scholarships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Baptist Young People`s Association</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Ceasefire Halifax</b></li> <li>❖ <b>North Preston Bulls, BYF</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Youth Leadership Program</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Community programs, CGIT Leader, Sunday School</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Community YMCA Sports Team Coach BYF, Explorers, Jr. Choir, Africentric M.ED Cohort, Student Support Worker Program</b></li> </ul>	<p>center, Member of NS Community Boards and projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Mentorship program for Black offenders in the justice system</b></li> <li>❖ <b>C.A.E.P, Dalhousie Math Camp, Masters of Lifelong Learning Africentric Cohort</b></li> <li>❖ <b>Africentric summer camps, church &amp; community activities</b></li> </ul>
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**Table 4 - Participant Profiles Cont'd**

Name	Gender	Age
1. Toni	1. Female	1. 20-34
2. Sunshine	2. Female	2. 20-34
3. Jasmine	3. Female	3. 20-34
4. Simone	4. Female	4. 20-34
5. Shawn	5. Female	5. 20-34
6. Sophie	6. Female	6. 20-34
7. Omar	7. Male	7. 20-34
8. Nick	8. Male	8. 20-34
9. Tyler	9. Male	9. 20-34
10. Carlos	10. Male	10. 20-34
11. Adam	11. Male	11. 20-34
12. Cassidy	12. Female	12. 35-50
13. Imani	13. Female	13. 35-50
14. Lee	14. Female	14. 35-50
15. Sherry	15. Female	15. 35-50
16. Betty	16. Female	16. 35-50
17. Anne	17. Female	17. 35-50
18. Tammy	18. Female	18. 35-50
19. Wade	19. Male	19. 35-50
20. Sean	20. Male	20. 35-50
21. Jude	21. Male	21. 35-50
22. Chester	22. Male	22. 35-50
23. Malik	23. Male	23. 35-50
24. Marilyn	24. Female	24. 51-65
25. Veronica	25. Female	25. 51-65
26. Melanie	26. Female	26. 51-65
27. Star	27. Female	27. 51-65
28. Robert	28. Male	28. 51-65
29. Kaleb	29. Male	29. 51-65
30. Ben	30. Male	30. 51-65
31. Bertram	31. Male	31. 51-65

Although participants were not asked what community they most identified with on the demographics survey, the preliminary question in the individual interview asked the participant to identify where they grew up. Participants were from various ANS communities across the province. All participants referred to their communities of origin but also to their new communities, if applicable or the community that they most identify with. The figure below (Figure 1) displays the geographical locations of participants as either rural or urban communities.

**Figure 1 - Geographical Location**



The research findings in this chapter explore the experiences of the study participants across their life journeys thus far through their own voice. These narratives are significant because they reflect the lived experiences of those interviewed growing up, living and journeying in Nova Scotia, Canada. They also bring to light their experiences of participating in culturally specific programs community- driven programs and their reflections of the impact that those programs have had on their life. It also explores the impacts of current participation in programs as all participants speak to currently participating in culturally specific community-driven programs and/or



organizations. In addition, the narratives signify the view of males and females who come from diverse backgrounds that range in age, generation, gender, education, employment, family structure and specific communities. It became apparent through the interview process that the interview was helpful for participants to intentionally reflect on their lived experiences and what they have learned from them, which have left impacts on their lives. The interviews began with participants reflecting back to their childhood, which for some was up to 60 years ago. It is important to acknowledge the preliminary questions which included involvement in community, family structure, education and employment experiences. As well, the barriers/challenges experienced throughout their life in relation to the fore mentioned and the supports available throughout the participant's life journey.

### **BARRIERS/CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED THROUGHOUT THE LIFE JOURNEY**

The results revealed that participants experienced various barriers/challenges throughout their lives that have impacted them in some way. The barriers emerged into the following themes:

- Coping with Racism
- Internalized Racism
- Education
- Employment
- Unequal Access

Each of these is discussed in detail with first voice accounts from participants. The figure (Figure 2) below also provides a visual of the themes identified.

**Figure 2 - Barriers/Challenges**



## **COPING WITH RACISM**

Delgado & Stefancic outline through the discussion of CRT what the everyday experiences of racialized people are like.

Think of events that can occur in an ordinary day. A child raises her hand repeatedly in a fourth grade class; the teacher either recognizes her or does not. A shopper hands a cashier a five dollar bill to pay for a small item; the clerk either smiles, makes small talk, and deposits change in the shopper's hand or does not. A woman goes to a new car lot ready to buy; salespeople stand about talking to each other or all converge trying to help her. A jogger in a park gives a brief acknowledgment to an approaching walker; the walker returns the greeting or walks by silently. You are a person of color and these same things happen to you and the actors are all white. What is the first thing that comes to your mind? Do you immediately think that you might be treated in these ways because you are not white? If so, how do you feel? Angry? Downcast? Do you let it roll off your back? And if the responses come from fellow persons of color, then what do you think? Suppose the person of color is from a group other than your own? (as cited in Harris, 2006, n.p.)

All thirty-one (31) participants identified their community to be one of the historically African Nova Scotian communities. Some of the participants' memories of

racism stem back to their childhood where they were called names and referred to in negative ways.

*“I remember in grade 2 at that time the popular advertisements were about red rose tea. So red rose tea was at the time kind of a monkey who plays the piano then the monkey sort of shows it’s teeth so that was a very popular commercial. I guess at the time and people at times, would try to get you to do that as sort of under the understanding that it was a cute thing to see you do but you knew that there was a lot of racism attached to it.”- Kaleb*

At times, there were no consequences for these actions. Another participant said:

*“when I went to school on the bus I got teased a lot right. And the kids started with like every day teasing, what have you but when I think about it now and I think about how I was treated. Anyways, they used to call me Whoppi all the time and you know they weren’t talking that in a good way but it was just something that I learned that I had to put up with every day. Whoppi as in Whoppi Goldberg and I know they weren’t saying it in a flattering way [...] but now looking back I’m thinking like that was not acceptable behavior but there was nobody to say that was not acceptable behavior [...] As a child you don’t know that kind of stuff and if you don’t have somebody that tells you that it’s not appropriate then you just accept it [...] I just accepted it. I didn’t stand up against it [...] I just figured if I ignored it long enough it would go away.”- Tammy*

Others experiences are more identifiable at an older age, Sophie shared, *“I do remember in High School I felt racism for the first time, not necessarily for the first time but really hard core.”*

*“there’s still some, some, you know, name calling and things. I still remember vividly different things. I remember being called, you know, a zebra, the N word, all kinds of different things that, you know, that we would get from, you know, from some of the White people that lived, going to school within and went around.”- Star*

Only one participant explained that their experience was different in that they had not experienced racism within their home community.

*“growing up for me I didn’t even experience really any formal racism until I came to [new community]. That’s the truth because the other thing within my family*

*structure there's a lot of interracial marriage in my family and so you know, I grew up with White aunts and uncles and cousins and cousins, nieces and nephews that looked right so that whole Black, White thing wasn't really a big deal in my family. [...] My principle was Black. One of my teachers - we had several teachers- from India, one of them wore a Sari and she had the dot in the middle of her head that was just natural to me, that was just how it was right. Like our gym teacher was openly gay, our civics teacher was openly gay you know, he lived with his boyfriend." –Cassidy*

About half a dozen participants shared experiences of leaving their home communities and moving to another ANS community. They explained that although there were similarities in the ANS experience, there are also differences specifically, with feeling a sense of belonging.

*"I'm not from here and because I'm not from here as I said earlier, I come into it with a whole different mindset right. I come in with a whole different experience and this community here had already shaped itself to be guarded right. I wasn't guarded so when I was in that community I suppose on some level, I allowed myself to conform to that but when I was out of that, when I went to work and when I was getting my education at business college, I was more me." – Cassidy*

Another participant said:

*"when you come to a larger community - African Nova Scotians communities are tight as if you probably know so I was a Truro girl and at times- well back in that day it was a challenge to integrate yourself into the community as an outsider even though you may have a similar life experience, even though you may even be related somehow but because you were an outsider from a different black community sometimes that is presented as a barrier in terms of integrating into the community and being an accepted community person. So, sometimes it's demographics that present the barrier, coming from a different community and trying to integrate into another one is a challenge." - Sherry*

I have also experienced this feeling of difference when coming to a more urban centered ANS community from a more rural ANS community. In many cases I would be referred to as the "Truro girl" and several people would attach my home community to my identity and as a result view me as an outsider. Interestingly, I found myself identifying more with these communities and over time community members began to see my place within. It is important to recognize the similarities but also the differences that exist with lived experiences among ANSs. Although an overall common or shared experience there are also differences that must be considered within the ANS culture and experience.

About six (6) participants shared experiences of racial stigma, discrimination and generalization as a result of the community that they were from. This can be linked to the preconceived discriminatory thoughts, beliefs and assumptions that the larger society has on these communities as found by writers (Este & Bernard, 2003; Waldron et al., 2014; Pachai 1987; James et al., 2010).

*“well, growing up in the North end of Halifax and being African Nova Scotian and being in the province of Nova Scotia, the reality is that given our history, being African Nova Scotian comes with a number of barriers including our history in this city and this province. My parents moved -I was born on Creighton St. in Halifax and moved to Bowers St. at the age of 1 and it wasn't until I was a full adult that my parents let me know as well as the rest of our family know that there was actually a petition that went up and down the street when we were moving into the neighborhood not to allow us to live there so that was 1968.” - Wade*

For some this presented quite a dilemma around trying to maintain a sense of community pride and sense of belonging but on the other hand battling the experiences of discrimination, judgement and shame. Omar and Tyler share examples of this:

*“well, um being from North Preston you know it's always kind of been us against everybody else and so I felt like it was always a barrier within itself like being proud to be where you're from was a good thing until you get outside the community and people kind of look at it different. Just simple stuff like when you go to apply for jobs or fill out applications and different stuff like that I always felt like people would kind of pre judge you for being from the community type of thing like not only are you black but you're from North Preston so it's like a double negative.” – Omar*

*“once I got past you know, my community in the North end, I started to expand into other communities. I definitely didn't feel as welcomed as I did in my own community and such and I also was – I defiantly recall times of feeling ashamed of who I was- coming from a low income community, being of African descent so I didn't feel as welcomed” – Tyler*

I have also experienced this dilemma on different occasions; however, for me the struggle lied in not having as much pride in my home community, where I grew up as opposed to my mother's home community, which I identified with more. Finding pride in being Black was instilled at an early age, however, community pride in the sense of geographical location was not as emphasized in my home community compared to others across the province such as within the Preston and Halifax ANS communities. I found a stronger connection to East Preston than Truro as a result of a myriad of factors such as the representation of more of my family, extended family and peers. As well, the exposure to more community events and initiatives that were available for youth within the community. Also contributing to this feeling of pride was the stronger sense of collective identity that seemed to bloom in a more rural setting. Living in a society that paints a particular stereotypical picture of one's community can cause great conflict for community members who are unsure how to demonstrate their community pride without the fear of being judged and rejected.

Participants were able to connect race and class to what they were experiencing by being from a certain community. Sean and Nick highlight this specifically in the North End

Halifax communities:

*“maybe towards that community there might be, in terms of racism and in terms of employment or maybe getting into programs or even just because you're from that area, Uniacke square, somebody may perceive you as not just being poor but not being worthy of having a higher education or being part of programs because that's the you know the stigma you know, applied to that school. Uniacke Square or Maniacke Square they used to call it you're close to Gottigen they used to call it Got a Got a Gottigen Street.” – Sean*

*“I found that there was a stigma around the park. I guess there was a pre-conceived notion of how people were coming out of my community and how you know, oh, they're all drug dealers and criminals that kind of thing so just kind of having that label from living in the community that I did. I mean, it's been a lot better in recent years but back when I was younger that was it, it was you know, you're living in this area so these are the things that you're involved in and I mean in some of my early employment opportunities that I had, that kind of even came across. There were times that supervisors would assume by the way I dress, or even the community that I'm coming out of oh, I have to be a drug dealer or I have to be in some kind of criminal activity so there was that kind of dealing with that image that the larger community of Halifax had of kind of the smaller community of Mulgrave.” – Nick*

In contrast, some participants alluded their social networks to their more positive experiences being from a specific community in the larger community. Participants who discussed their social networks based on the smaller demographics of their town seemed to have more opportunities outside of their ANS community. It was found that sometimes it is about whom you know and not necessarily where you come from. However, this does not hold true for everyone. Anne shared her experiences with this being from a small town:

*“let's say my mom or my uncles or my aunts because of the work they did and how, you know, what they went through and the employment that they had, they became very well known in the community, it was almost like having that, a blanket layer. In a small town Nova Scotia if people know ya, then it's easier for ya [...] But because of their struggles, I think it was, I just had a little bit easier because they laid the ground work and paved, did a lot of work, you know, to make things better for us growing up.” – Anne*

Similarly stated by others:

*“in the community, I was pretty involved and I think people knew me so sometimes I didn't face that many barriers out of there.” – Simone*

*“like if you are friends with this person then you have better chances of getting the scholarships or acceptance into programs or you have a leg up on other people applying for those positions based on who you know.” – Adam*

Growing up in a small town, it was common that many of the opportunities available to people were through their social networks. At times it was hard to decipher whether you may have been hired or provided a specific opportunity because you were the top candidate or if it is because of who you knew. I see this as of course, a blessing or advantage in many ways but in my experience at times, it also caused some questioning of self and even self-doubt. This also holds true within the ANS community where I grew up, even though I was known. I will never forget the first job that I was unsuccessful in obtaining at age 15 through an ANS community organization. I knew that I was qualified for the position however, the successful recipient was more known to the organization than I was and this was evident based on their role within the organization.

Being from a small town and ANS community, it does not take long for information to circulate and it was shared that this person was actually not as qualified for the position as they had hoped. This example demonstrates for me, availability of opportunity or success based on social network. For ANSs in this study, it seems as though building social networks is a necessary component for exposure and opportunity.

The impact of racism on health and well-being was also directly identified through participants' experiences across the life span. For example, Tammy states *"I'm sure if I was a different race and if I was part of the majority, I'm sure I wouldn't feel half the insecurities that I feel right now."* This connection presented itself in different ways based on different experiences. Imani intersects the concept of trauma and race and how that impacts ANS on a daily basis.

*"I think racism everyday impacts our well-being. I think micro aggressions are a daily occurrence. I think being black and growing up in Nova Scotia or being Black by definition is a traumatic event because people have knowingly or verbalizing or non-verbalizing have expectations or are curious about who you are so I'm mindful of how racism has shifted over my 40+ years of living you know."* - Imani

Another participant expressed her challenges with self-perception, self-esteem, confidence and feeling inferior.

*"Like you know they talk about White privilege and like I don't know what that is because I'm not White but from what they say about it I don't think people really have an appreciation for how quickly you can go from being confident to being – to feel like – like I feel like over the last 3 years I struggled in how I felt about myself [...]like I always felt inferior, I always felt like I didn't measure up, and I always felt like I was being held to a different standard [...]maybe it's just me.. maybe I'm going crazy and maybe I'm being too sensitive because you know people like to say that you're being over sensitive."* – Tammy



For other participants, racism and discrimination motivated them to prove wrong those who were discriminating against them. With the development of resiliency through family and community love, encouragement and affirmations to aid in their abilities to cope with discrimination and their strength to persevere beyond the assumptions and expectations put on their lives, participants were able to empower themselves to continue achieving their goals despite the judgemental attitudes towards them. Three participants explained similar experiences within their formal education where proving those opposed wrong was their mission:

*“I always felt like they always expected certain students to do better and certain students to do worse and I think that it would always be shocking to my teachers that I was such a good student academically based with my background [...] I remember I would just do stupid stuff just to kind of like not show up to class but then get a 90 on the test or whatever like just stuff that I kind of wanted the teachers to see like oh yeah, he’s just a smart kid period like don’t see me as a smart Black kid, see me as a smart kid [...] I took academic math and enriched math and stuff and I remember this specifically in high school, you were allowed I think 25 absent classes for a year and I think it was like in total and I think I had um 125 absents. I remember the principal always threatening to expel me for a year but they never would because my marks would be high because in high school they only really marked you on your assignments and tests. I would get high marks on my tests and do my assignments just enough to pass and I did it because I wanted the teachers to see that cause I was the only Black student in enriched math. So everybody else is showing up to class every day and they’re struggling on the tests minus the odd kid like there was obviously some kids that didn’t but I wouldn’t go to class and I would score like the highest marks on the test and I did it because I wanted the teachers to see my smartness as oppose to like I’m working hard to get it.” –Omar*

*“it definitely pushed me to work harder. It pushed me to work harder especially in academics because I didn’t want to be looked down upon, I didn’t want to feel belittled because I wasn’t as smart as those other folks and whether or not that is true I don’t know but I felt that way that I wasn’t as smart so it pushed me to work harder, to be successful, to pursue post-secondary education, to get good grades in school. It was almost to prove a point.” – Tyler*

Reflecting back, I can recall situations where I too, felt belittled in education settings. I can remember in grade primary raising my hand to answer a question that the teacher asked and then being the last to be picked if at all and wondering why. Thinking back to this incident, which occurred over 20 years ago reassures me that this left a lasting negative impact on me. It also encouraged me to continue to challenge myself and do what my parents expected of me even if the teacher did not expect the same.

Participants shared a common experience of self-challenge through the acknowledgement of disbelief or support from non ANS teachers. I categorize this as a positive way of coping with racism and discrimination as opposed to other ways of coping such as anger, substance abuse or criminal activity, for example.

Participants were able to identify racism and discrimination committed against them through the beliefs and assumptions of those from outside of their community. However, for some, questioning themselves and their abilities as a result of these assumptions and beliefs began to shape their reality. Participants shared the impact that negative interactions and engagements with people from outside of their own communities or racial group have had on their own self-esteem and self-perception.

### **INTERNALIZED RACISM**

*"you always thought, "Oh would they treat me that way if I wasn't Black."  
Simone*

Many participants shared their feelings of uncertainty around issues that possibly could have raised as a result of race or perhaps not. Although racism may not have always be the reason for unfair treatment, there is evidence through literature as well as through these lived experiences that racism, discrimination and prejudices are present within Nova Scotia.

*“I find more so with my mind because before I would be so scared like worrying about what does this one think of me or what does this one- if I say this how will I be looked at now or whatever and now it’s just like you can’t worry about” – Adam*

*“ I remember when I filled out the application I didn’t really want to put that I was from North Preston on there cause I kind of wanted to go to the school but I didn’t want them to like deny me just because of it like or whatever. I did end up putting North Preston and I didn’t go to the school, I don’t know if that was the reason but I just felt like yeah, stuff like that.”-Omar*

Similarly Jude and Kaleb expressed:

*“well, I mean we grew up being validated by our parents and loved unconditionally [...]when you leave that community you’re forced to kind of reconsider what you thought was true about yourself because people weren’t giving you that same validation.”- Jude*

*“if you go to the stores people followed you around, they’d check on you, it felt like they didn’t take their eyes off you until you left the store [...] I wasn’t always sure if it was about my skill set or if it was about my race so those are kind of the general things that I can think of.” - Kaleb*

On many occasions, I found and still find myself wondering if the actions of others toward me directly and indirectly are due to my race. I wonder if they are questioning my abilities. Why are they following me, do they think that I cannot afford anything in here? I wonder, why they are staring at me so hard? These questions among many others have crossed my mind on numerous occasions. When these types of questions become beliefs and begin interfering with one’s ability to function outside of groups of their own race and culture, they could be at risk for developing a sense of paranoia and this can have a negative impact on one’s self-esteem and mental health.

Identified were also concerns younger participants had observing the lack of ANS people successfully completing post-secondary education for example, and the effects that this had on their confidence in regard to completing academic goals. Carlos explains:

*“I think not knowing anybody that went away to do their undergrad and I guess not being able to identify or even self-identify with somebody that looks similar to me that went away to get their undergrad and seeing them finish was something*

*that I was like well maybe you know, maybe this is not what people that look like you do right.”*

Through these shared experiences, it was also found that in the community and among the ANS population, there were also barriers for participants in their sense of belonging with their fellow ANS peers based on their different interests. Simone stated:

*“because I was involved in stuff and because I was, as they would call smart, sometimes people would, you know, pick on you for that or like make comments about that because I was involved in things and I did things within school and I did my work and stuff like that. [...] as a kid sometimes you don't really know how to take that or it can be something that really bothers you and it can be discouraging for you to want to get involved and stuff like that.”*

Sophie also had a similar experience:

*“a lot of people would laugh and call me a teacher's pet and stuff like that but I didn't mind because they needed the help right, so it was fine.”*

Differences among ANS experiences based on skin complexion, hair texture, geographical location, and racial identity also emerged through participants' narrative.

Some discussed the concepts of Black, ANS, being of African descent, biracial, and mixed raced. Anne, Star & Tammy specifically talk about skin complexion as a potential barrier when discussing identity development and sense of belonging.

*“I didn't know exactly where I fit in [...] I wanted to explore that but I didn't necessarily feel that I could. I felt kind of, I wasn't sure if I was Black enough and I knew that I definitely wasn't White. You know, so I struggled from how, to kinda fit in. [...] Although, I was guided my whole life to feel comfortable in the African Nova Scotian community but I still had this internal struggle of, you know, I had light skin, didn't know where I really fit in. I don't know, I think that was kinda my own internal struggle.” – Anne*

*“we still haven't gotten rid of those perceptions and ideas that we had way back when I was a kid in the 60s about, you know, skin colour, hair texture all of that stuff, it's still exist today. It still permeates our discussions, permeates our communities... yeah. You know, we need to get past this kind of thing.” – Star*

Participants have experienced the manifestations of racism from people outside of their communities but also from within. One of the major places where both racism was experienced and often internalized is in school.

## **EDUCATION**

*“I can remember one other Black students being in one of my classes in three semesters.”- Robert*

Education was found to be where participants experienced a great number of barriers and challenges as a result of the perceptions, assumptions and expectancies that teachers have of ANS learners. Participants’ experiences include systemic and institutional barriers and challenges faced due to the lack of representation of people of African descent in the school but also in resource material and curriculum. Betty shared her experience going to school in a rural community:

*“well I mean, you know, I did, elementary I was in Cape Breton and in New Glasgow, I was there from junior high to high school. So, and that's where, you know, there are very few Black folks in my class. I think in my whole graduating class, to be quite honest, there might have been 6 of us, I mean less than 10 anyway, in the whole school, like in our graduating class [...]you know, and very few teaches, we might have had maybe 3 Black teachers, eventually, in my final years, in high school. ”*

Sherry also shared that as a result of not seeing herself reflected in school this had a negative impact on well-being.

*“there were times when I would be the only person of color in my class or there may be two of us right [...] there were no opportunities to learn about yourself. You know, Black history wasn't taught, African Canadian studies wasn't taught, any books that you read they didn't have Black people in them. You didn't see yourself reflected in any material- it just didn't happen [...]when you don't see yourself reflected positively in the education system it takes a toll after some time.*

*[...]I actually only had one Black teacher in my entire career and that was in grade 7, that was it. I never seen another Black teacher in front of me throughout my whole education and that says something as well [...]the impact of not being reflected positively, not being seen on the walls in posters, not seeing yourself anywhere when you're going to any of those institutions.” –Sherry*

When there is a lack of representation and nothing for a learner to identify with over the course of their education, this puts their learning at a disadvantage and they are not given the same opportunity as their White peers who see themselves reflected in every aspect of the school experience. This also affects the learner of color in more ways than just their learning experiences but also with their self-esteem and self-perception and potentially, their overall health as Sherry explains the impact of not being reflected positively.

Attending elementary school in the 1990's, it was still not uncommon to be the only or one of only under five ANSs in the classroom in my home community which is similar to the experience shared by Sherry. Opportunities to learn about self were very few unless you had a teacher who was ANS such as my first elementary teacher or someone who understood the true importance of having diverse culture a part of curriculum.

When people of African descent are not reflected positively or even at all, this can leave a negative impact on participant's self-esteem and ability to learn.

Additionally, a number of participants identified themselves as being the first in their family to attend post-secondary education, which resulted in feelings of uncertainty in navigating the education and further the professional employment systems. Anne uttered her experience:

*“I was the first person, you know, in my immediate family to graduate from university and you know[...] not really sure what to do [when I finished University]. I was just kind of struggling in the sense of not knowing what to do with it. Not having anybody really to talk to, as to where I could go.”*

I too, was the first in my immediate family to graduate from University. This was a new experience for me as well as my parents but they encouraged me and quite frankly, not attending post-secondary was not an option. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to participate in a mentorship program through the Dalhousie Black Student Advising Center, which aided in my transitioning and support.

Participants from each of the age categories were the first to attend University in their families and all identified this as a positive thing but also concerning with varying levels of uncertainty. These feelings of uncertainty were tied to not knowing what to expect, fear of failure, and negative effects on one's self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

Others discussed the low expectations that teachers had for African Nova Scotian learners and the lack of support from school staff. Also, participants highlighted the importance of seizing opportunity and the availability and accessibility of supportive services with each new generation. Malik and Jude expressed specifically the low expectancy that teachers placed on them:

*“the standards were low for me, like it’s funny that I’m a pretty smart guy, right like you know, book read and all that kind of stuff and street smart and all that kind of stuff but when I look back on it, I don’t really know how many teachers I really had to push me.”-Malik*

*“not feeling validated, not being affirmed, the direct acts of racism or teachers lowering expectations and that follows me from elementary school at Willow St. right to the Maritime school of social work so yeah.” – Jude*

Betty and Malik also have parallel experiences with school staff:

*“growing up, you know, I wasn't, you know we weren't or I wasn't viewed or guided towards, by counsellors, to go on to post-secondary. You know, that was something that my White counter class mates had but we weren't, I wasn't encouraged to go to, you know, post-secondary university. If anything I would do, maybe go on to vocational school, take a secretarial course but never to become any type of professional.”- Betty*

*“I never really had conversations with anybody about post-secondary or what type of job I wanted to do or anything. [Never had] no Black teachers, none of that stuff.”- Malik*

Another finding was the minimal education levels of participants’ parents and their encouragement for their children to work as opposed to pursuing post-secondary education.

*“in terms of going to school I remember when I got accepted into Dal [my mother] was like well you know, you need to stay working, you don't need to be going to school, stay at work, make the money and I was like no, I'm going to school and it was just the difference in where they were I mean, having grade 2 education and wanting more like why do you want more? You have a job now, stay there” – Veronica*

*“the fact that my parents didn't encourage post-secondary education.. I mean I see that now as somewhat as a barrier because I believe had my parents had been with me like I was with my boys, I think I'd be doing something very different right now.”- Cassidy*

Education was identified as being one of the first places where racism was experienced for both men and women participants. It was shared by participants that racism also followed them into their places of employment.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

*“There's going to be some jobs that you get because you're Black and there's going to be some that you don't get because you are Black.” - Bertram*

Employment presented as another area where barriers and challenges were experienced by participants in relation to racism and discrimination. Toni states, *“in Nova Scotia, being an African Nova Scotian and all this historical stuff that continues to happen we're over represented in underemployment.”* For some participants, the barriers began even before the job interview process. This also can be linked back to discrimination based on the community one comes from.



*“Yeah, I think what is faced now or what the young people are plagued now by is a lack of education, employment and with that. I think that although there are a lot of more resources addressing these issues I think the wider picture is that the reality is when they do merge into the workforce where they’re not within these programs there’s a lack of employers wanting to hire these individuals so having a lack of employment is I think one of the major barriers that the current society is facing and it’s particularly within the Black communities, within your streets or wherever – if your street says you live on Lahey or Pinecrest drive or Demetrious lane your application is automatically screened out and you’re not quote on quote qualified for that position [...] Now change the address at the top yep, calls back immediately so that’s how I know people are screening like just looking at your address and seeing where you’re from and I’m just like shocked that people sort of have that time to do.” - Carlos*

Others explained that as a result of their education, they were able to secure an interview however, once meeting the employer face-to-face there was a sense of resistance on their part.

*“I find like now where I have furthered my education and on paper and everything, I’m finding the interview, I’m fine, but I find once they actually see me it’s like doors are closing right there or oh yeah we are going to get in contact with you and then when they do it’s through email saying sorry, it’s already been filled and I’m like how can this- I mean there could be a strong pro applicants but I find as soon as I sit down it’s okay, we don’t know” - Adam*

Some participants also identified dealing with racism as a common theme within their place of employment. This could be with employers, colleagues, clients or within the governance of the workplace. One participant identified their workplace as such *“it’s been marked with instances of racism both direct or institutional or systemic” - Jude.*

Another stated that, *“you know that you’re always on the watch.” – Veronica.*

*“Well, it’s interesting when I came on as the developmental position there was a time when government department was downsizing and there was a rude comment people say, “what do you have to do to get a job in here? Be Black or disabled?” and when you hear those things, you never forget those like did I just hear that? And is somebody not going to say something? So when you hear those sorts of things as Black people “– Sherry*

Tammy explains her experience with the inequitable opportunities for growth in her workplace:

*“I haven’t been provided the same opportunities as others have been provided in the work place. I’ve seen people come in supposedly with higher credentials than I have and given opportunities that I’m still waiting for after being employed there for 16 years. [...] I was always the- seems like especially when I got into government I was always the only Black one in the office so if it was clients, you know Black clients then I can't say that I would be the only one to get them but Black issues would be brought to my attention so again, you're always expected It's not just in social work, it's in any field, if you're the only Black one you're expected to be the Black voice everyone, for all the Blacks and that gets a bit tiring at times.” - Veronica*

Omar talked about his experiences with clients:

*“a big part of selling stuff to people is identifying with the respected purchaser and you know, right away there’s a color barrier so I’m limited to my perspective clients. So after I sell to all the people I’m like friends with and then I go outside and when I roam with friendship then I’m just in the open world and it’s hard to kind of find a common ground with White people, like what’s the icebreaker to sit down and talk and find the common ground.” –Omar*

A theme that was of concern to participants is that ANS professionals and graduates are relocating due to the lack of employment opportunities in Nova Scotia.

Although a common barrier for many Nova Scotians, when you are ANS it presents as even more of an issue. Toni shared:

*“I mean, our generation is moving away for job opportunities because we can't find work here and that's just what that is. So that's a barrier, finding a job, finding, not just a job- a job that is in my field, something that I can enjoy, I don't want a job, I want a career. – Toni*

In my experience, at times not only is it difficult to find employment in one's field of study but there are also barriers when it comes to required experience and the question of what is considered adequate experience. A question that my friends and also colleagues have quite often is, how can we get the post-graduate experience to be qualified for the position according to the hiring agency when the majority of positions require the same experience and therefore cannot hire you. This presents as a barrier for participants in this study but also for other ANSs according to the employment history in Nova Scotia (Pachai, 1987; James et al., 2010; Este & Bernard, 2003; Walker, 1979).

Imani and Tammy also explained that there is even more of a gap when it comes to management positions:

*“there's very few of us who are able to stay in this province because of issues of race and underemployment or lack of employability or the a glass ceiling for black women in health care. It's very visible, the ceiling is- you know, you don't see Black women in executive positions or managerial positions even though we are qualified for them.”- Imani*

*“I don't see middle managers of African Nova Scotian descent that can identify with the issues or the feelings that I may be having in the workplace or personal.”  
- Tammy*

Interestingly, one (1) male and three (3) female participants, Robert, Tammy and Sherry, talked about their challenges in their employment sector based on race and gender and the need to work twice as hard. This is framed as an expectation that they have for themselves as a result of previous encounters and experiences where they were not evaluated solely based on their work performance but also the historical implications of racism and the value of people of African descent. This was identified for participants prior to even entering the work force and certain occupations.

*“I mean I could tell almost all the time when I was meeting principals especially, they would fold their arms and I could see the question on their face- what as a young Black boy going to tell me about education”.- Robert*

*“it’s challenging being one of the few females working in a predominately male environment that primarily deals with male clients and male institutions [...] I was setting up an appointment to go interview someone in the community on behalf of a client and so you call and have a discussion like “this is the reason I am calling, and can we set up a time, great, I’ll come by what time will be convenient” and when I showed up, the person opened up the door and said “I had no idea you were Black” and I said “excuse me, is that a problem for you? And he said, “no, no, I just had no idea you were Black.”– Sherry*

*“I had to strive harder to progress further or even get the same acknowledgment as somebody else and those kind of things. I find hard and I find it hard to explain it to somebody who isn’t maybe feeling that.”– Tammy*

## **UNEQUAL ACCESS**

Participants identified the lack of access to resources and services, funding or financial supports and general information but also to culturally specific conscious raising information as a barrier. This presented by varying participants based on their own personal experiences within their community. There were participants across all generation age groups that expressed that they had been the first in their families to attend post-secondary university. Carlos shared his experiences of his thoughts of treatment in society:

*“I always thought racism was someone calling directly out and ignorantly calling you whatever they wanted to call you to degrade you and I think some of my barriers were being in a society that doesn’t treat everybody equally, having a lack of resources available within my community and within my home.”*

He also expressed the lack of information and education that his parents had which contributed to his upbringing:

*“having the resources – resources for education. I think that if back when, I think my parents would’ve went to school if there were resources available to them and that would essentially break the cycle or even having I want to say more access to healthy nutritional snacks and stuff like growing up - it’s like disgusting food like*

*very unhealthy and that's because that's what you could afford and a lack of education for your parents mean that they don't see nutrition as a priority."*

Similar to Carlos, Betty also shares her thoughts on the barriers that present when there is a lack of funding in the community:

*"I think the key, the thing that's missing in our communities, it's you know, all comes back to funding. And I think that's a major piece of it and recognizing that, you know, the lack of resources that are needed to continue on with these programs because most often any sort of program that we have is limited and it's only a few years in existence. Which really isn't enough time to scratch the surface, you're just getting into it and it's only a temporary solution and not a permanent fix. In my eyes." - Betty*

Toni talked about the lack of access to information about post-secondary and career options:

*"another barrier is, just access to knowledge in general, about career paths or different things I can do. Because when I went to university, I had a clear vision of what I was going to do and then all these other options came open to me because you learn more and you understand."*

Some participants shared examples based on their experiences of how as a result of the lack of access they had to leave their community to access services. Some also talked about observing their peers and their struggle to adapt outside of their own community. Kaleb talked about having to leave the community to access services:

*"you have your primarily Black community and then adjacent to that you would have your White community and when you wanted services you would leave your Black community and you walk into the white community." -Kaleb*

Similarly, Shawn talked about the larger community apart from the ANS community and her connection to the ANS community. However, she also discussed her feelings of disconnection to the ANS community by not living directly in the geographical community:

*“ within the Afircan Nova Scotian community it was just the fact that my residential mailing address was not directly within the community so I found in my youth and still now I was always looked at as somebody who may or may not have chose to live outside the community for specific reasons but as a child you can’t really determine things for yourself because your parents make those decisions. It’s just trying to fit in with your peers and when you’re young that’s not always easy.”*

Although I lived directly in an ANS community, I have observed the divide between each small community but also with those living outside of the communities. One could argue that this might suggest that ANS community member’s identities are perceived to be directly linked to their community.

Omar had experiences where he observed his peers having a challenging time adapting outside of the community for school especially after their first schooling experience was in the ANS community:

*“Nelson Whynder is an all Black school so there was no white kids really. So you got 2 to 3 hundred students that are all the same race basically cousins, family and friends and like we all knew each other and then when we went to Ross Road it was like a culture shock because now we got students who are completely different people that gotta kind of bind together and so, and even for them like the white kids that came to Ross Road they never went to school with any black kids before so now you got like half and half and so I think that was a big barrier like in the beginning and even right up until high school for like a lot of the other students to kind of like adapt to each other [...]I knew certain kids couldn’t be in my group because I knew that they couldn’t identify with each other so just not being able to like freely be like you know what I mean.”*

## **SUPPORTS**

*“I believe that no person gets to where they are unless you have some help along the way.”- Sean*

*“My family, you know, the church, my peers, my friends, you know, and then that carried on and then that base got bigger when I got older. So, they were the foundation that supported me.” - Toni*

Supportive people, programs, or services were almost always referenced by participants as they shared their experiences of growing up in their community but also when discussing overcoming barriers and challenges faced. Participants referred to their supports as absolutely necessary in their lives at each point that they may have been present. Figure 3 highlights themes that derived from participants supports followed by a list and more detail for each.

**Figure 3 - Supports**



- Family
- ANS Community
- Faith
- Peers
- Representation of people of African Descent
- Mentorship/Role Models
- Community Driven Programs

## FAMILY

*“I think number one would be my family. My grandmother was a rock in our family.” – Sean*

Every participant acknowledged their family as being a support to them in some way. Many shared about the significance of their parent’s support by teaching them life skills but also encouraging them in their life endeavours. Melanie and Veronica shared how their parents taught them work ethic:

*“my parents were a big help to me to support, being there and they were both two strong people, worked all the time and showed us good work ethic so it starts there because I believe it starts from home so I had a solid foundation.” – Melanie*

*“definitely, my parents, my foster mom in particular, even though she was old school she was of the age that you know, go and work hard but when I look at some of my work ethics today, it's all her, it's her.”-Veronica*

Lee and Malik shared how they developed their values and worldviews:

*“my family dynamics or values like instilled on me from my parents.” – Lee*

*“family. It first starts with the family because like I said, this stuff that I talk about, this stuff I see around, I was exposed to that at like a very early age so that seed was planted.” – Malik*

My parents’ teachings of family values has shaped and currently how I present myself as a young Christian ANS female, who is now also a professional. I believe that as a result of my upbringing which was founded on family values, that I have found great support and resiliency. Family support is one of the key contributors of survival and building resilience within this study.

Often, participants would connect the supports of their family directly to their involvement in the community and the nature of the community being like a family.

Adam talked about extended family:



*“family definitely is the biggest support and the extended family and community really supports you [...]Aunts, uncles, even cousins, even people who aren’t related to me I would say are extended family in the community.”*

Nick, and Sean for example, discussed the importance of witnessing their family giving back or serving the community as supportive.

*“So a lot of my elder family members, you know, mom, dad, aunts and uncles were always kind of heavy into helping out with the community and doing different things. So kind of growing up seeing that it's something that I wanted to do as well too.” - Nick*

*“I would say that I was fortunate enough to have family members that were supportive and the fighters for the community whether that was for support, or a shoulder or just like an ear to help push you in the right direction or get you back in the direction and to path that you want to be on. [...] it’s always been instilled in us that we can do as well as anybody else if we worked hard, be respectful, and believe in yourself.” – Sean*

Jasmine was able to share her experience of how supportive it was to have a family member who was the Principal of her high school:

*“for me, overall, I just always had a strong support through my family so they’ve always been there and then my aunt being the principle at [high school] she really helped me especially with applying to universities, kind of like reminding me that I needed to do that.”*

Supports were identified as starting as early as with their parents and families and further within some of their educational settings. With supports required to cope with the challenges of racism and discrimination, the ANS community is where many participants experienced their preliminary forms of support.

### **AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITY**

Similarly to family, the support of the ANS community was also found through participants experiences. A few participants framed it as *“it takes a village to raise a child.”* Participants used the village reference of their communities as a safe place where

everyone participated in their upbringing as their family would. Sherry and Jude have shared similar experiences:

*“I mean when you’re in a community where your paternal family lived there and you’re raised by aunts and uncles, cousins and everybody is family. [...] I consider myself grown but when I need to replenish my spirit, I go home and home will always be home where I can be yourself, and be supported and feel good about who you are” –Sherry*

*“my community, the core values, beliefs, um, expectations that my community had from me, it’s shaped me more than anything [...] I’m a direct result of what I’ve lived so I think it’s impacted everything, being black and the way that I was raised has impacted absolutely everything.” – Jude*

Chester and Veronica talk about the safety within the ANS community:

*“the community and giving back so that played a major role in my life, you always had that safe haven to come back to in the community [...] I am a product of myself today and through my strong parents that I have plus the community that kind of lifts you up and keeps you stable kind of thing .” Chester*

*“the community was a safe place you knew that when you went home even if you didn’t get along with a kid, you know you might not get along with him one day but the next day you’re playing with him so it was very safe to be at home” - Veronica*

Also in common, was the notion of the ANS community being the foundation for learning about one’s self and identity, pride and history, as well as for opportunity such as employment and volunteering. Toni alludes to her first educational settings being within her community:

*“my elementary was in my community, my junior high was in my community, so I guess that influenced how I learned about my history and my identity as African Nova Scotian. And I went to my, my church was in my community, so that, being a part of the church within my community, you learn a lot more than school about African Nova Scotians and African Nova Scotian history. So that lays the foundation of your identity, well some part of your identity.”*

Similarly Omar stated:

*“our coaches would always talk about like the name on your chest, the North Preston Bulls and so like when we played we represented that you know what I mean we always represented North Preston. [...] in relation to BYF the same thing there’s a lot of BYF’s but we were the North Preston BYF.” – Omar*

Ten participants discussed their first opportunities for employment and volunteering being within the community. Imani and Sophie shared similar beginnings:

*“I got my first job in a Black community because my uncle was one of the directors of the board, you hired the kids whose parents or grandparents or family worked on the board.”– Imani*

*“I worked as a youth leader at St. Georges Youth Net for about 2 or 3 years starting from the time I was 13 until I would say about 15, 16 and then I went and had my own youth group at boxing gym along with 3 other people.”– Sophie*

Tyler and Toni explain that after their volunteer duties were fulfilled they were able to gain employment:

*“So, I got involved in that program, the youth leadership program at around age 14 or 15 so very close to the same time I was finishing up the one that was directly in the community and then about a year after that I finished up my volunteering there. I actually got a position at X [community center] centre so they hired me as a Daycare youth leader counsellor coordinator so that was my first experience with volunteering and that led to employment.” – Tyler*

*“I went to Boys and Girls club so that helped me, in just creating also a peer base and you know, working on leadership in that when I volunteered and then I became a leader.” - Toni*

I share a similar experience as the study participants quoted above with both my first volunteer and employment experiences being within the ANS community. These experiences provided me with an opportunity to develop my skill set in a safe nurturing environment that was reflective of me, my identity and my lived experience. The community offered opportunities for ANS youth where they may not have had them otherwise, which left a significant positive impact on many participants.

The ANS community provided many opportunities for participants which supported them in various ways. Another common support was faith and spirituality. Many participants spoke of their spiritual needs.

## **FAITH & SPIRITUALITY**

*“it was from the church, that was the foundation of our African Nova Scotian communities.” - Chester*

Acknowledging what has been referred to as the central institution of the ANS community, the church, faith and spirituality were expressed by participants as common forms of support for participants. More than half of the participants identified a faith, spirituality and in particular church involvement as being a great support to them throughout their life journey. Eight (8) participants also referenced the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) particularly. With a body of churches creating the Association, participants specifically talked about their faith in God and their spiritual fulfillments through the church as being essential to their survival. Although finding support in faith avenues was not the experience of all participants, most made mention of how that has been a form of support for the overall ANS community.

*“so the church was a strong foundation in my life from a little girl, beginning with Sunday school and then I became involved with the youth choir and then the women’s missionary society.” – Melanie*

*“hands down the first is God. Just having the faith everyday praying and just having that firm belief that you can do it and even like my church family, they have supported me along the way.” – Jasmine*

Similar to those who shared about their spirituality, it has been for me, the primary source of my strength. Through constant prayer and faith in God, I have been able to press on despite any adversities that have come my way. It is through both the challenging times as well as my achievements and successes that I have grown in my spirituality. Although spirituality is not everyone's source of survival, it was identified as such for the ANS community as a whole, which it was originally designed to be through the AUBA (AUBA, 2014).

Not everyone referred to the Baptist church as their place of spiritual satisfaction in their adult life. Anne shared her experience:

*“Definitely my faith, spirituality, [...] Those spirituals give me that sense of, you know- and I'm not a Christian, I converted to Islam over 20 years ago, but I still have that solid foundation of God and faith and you know, of knowing that this world is not my home.” – Anne*

*“our family faith like I was raised Roman Catholic and faith was a big part of our family so prayer life was something we could expect just about every night by the time dad got home when dad got in the door that meant it was automatically pray time so we would prayer together for whatever length of time.” – Kaleb*

As participants reflected on the support of their families, community and their faith, those who also used these support systems were also mentioned. Many identified their peers as part of the supporting system.

## **PEERS**

Peers were identified as considerable supports to many participants. For some participants, this was recognized early on in their life journey through classmates and community friends.

*“I think having positive peer influences around me, I think who you surround yourself with definitely does depend on a lot of your success so having productive people around me helped me in a way.” –Carlos*

*“I mean we had a good support in terms of... you know, my folks, my peers, well mainly my Black classmates, helping each other.”-Betty*

*“I think my friends. I didn't share a lot with them but I had a few that I could share some stuff.” – Marilyn*

Several shared the experiences of having great peer supports throughout their life journey that they are still connected to:

*“ I also had supportive friends, I really had supportive friends even when I left my home community and came here, I had supportive friends that would keep me in check, let me know you can't do this, let me know you should do this, I surrounded myself with supportive individuals.” –Sherry*

*“I guess the beauty of it all is that the friends that are within my community that I would've hung with since 8, 9 years of age are all great friends to this day, are all professionals, who are all people that seek each other and get together from time to time.”- Wade*

For others, it was not until later in their life journey that they found peers and colleagues that they could identify with and have truly supported them. Jude and Anne contributed to the study their experiences of finding peer support through post-secondary educational opportunities and being able to identify with other students:

*“I never felt validated or intelligent [...] until I got to university and saw other individuals that were struggling with the same things that I was struggling with. [...] it was all inspiring experience for me to be in university. – Jude*

*“I was a student of the masters of lifelong learning cohort, the Africentric cohort. [...] fellow students and we all continue, not all of us, but most of us continue to be very close and still connect to each other just to chat, those types of things”. – Anne*

Some participants also identified that it was in culturally specific community-driven programs that they were introduced to their peers:

*“math camp - that was where I pretty much met my closet friends that I have presently. [...] Since math camp my strong circle, my group of friends that I’ve been super, super close with and we all went to university, we all went to Dal so from them that strong connection with them.”-Jasmine*  
– Jasmine

*“being able to go and be around students that were from other black communities and build relationships among friends like Math Camp is significant and Kamp Kuji.” – Sunshine*

Peer support was common among participants’ experiences whether it was identified early in their life or later on. Some shared that it was through culturally specific community-driven programs in particular where they built some of their most sacred friendships. These programs were also referred to as great supports.

### **CULTURALLY SPECIFIC COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROGRAMS**

When asked to identify supports, often times, participants specifically referred to culturally specific programs and organizations that they have participated in over their life journey. Reference was made to a variety of programs but all offered a substantial amount of support to participants.

Through community sports, in particular basketball, much support was found. This was a common theme among some of the male participants.

*“I mean again, basketball was one of my hobbies, a big hobby of mine so again, previous coaches who coached me when I was younger and talking to them about life choices was another form of support so I had tons of support.”– Sean*

*“what I’ve learned and of course at a young age was how to conduct myself outside my community through sport because there was a high expectation that we would go out the community in rural Nova Scotia and people were hostile, racially towards us and that we were expected to continue to conduct ourselves as gentlemen and leaders throughout the experience.”– Wade*

Some even expressed that these community driven programs are what shaped them into the individuals that they are now.

*“one of the main things I guess sports and activities like I think that’s one of the main things that helped shaped me into the person that I am outside of like family and stuff.” - Omar*

*“it shaped me as a person because you’re in and out of different environments and those are things that you don’t reflect on until you’re much older about your abilities to sort of you know, roll in certain environments and be comfortable you know” – Wade*

Many other participants paid tribute to culturally specific community-driven programs that they have participated in through sharing their reflections of supports.

*“a lot of those programs raised the foundation for kind of who I am today and I’m still involved as much as I can be and I’m not sure if I would’ve come as far as I come without those programs in place and those people in the community” – Tyler*

*“I just like to stress the importance to me, that the importance that I feel of culturally specific programs and also just trying to create more opportunities for those programs to be offered.” – Simone*

Some participants also referenced their participation in community-driven programming and organizations from a professional lens where their participation contributed to their career and profession choices. Nick and Malik talked about the support these programs provided in their career ambitions:

*“I would say the BEA was helpful in some areas as well so tutoring for me early on, being involved in the tutoring program and then also becoming an employee of that program and then I also received a scholarship going into university from BEA which was helpful.” - Nick*

*“if it wasn’t for the programs, I don’t know if I would be teaching or even be involved.” – Malik*



As both a learner and leader in community-driven programs, I have found support through these two different roles. Through the BYF, I was able to explore career opportunities through a mentor who was a social worker. This was my first exposure to the field of social work and she was able to aid me in pursuing it. When discussing supports to ANSs, it is the people involved that truly bring a sense of value and appreciation for what is being taught and learned and what the outcomes are.

In addition, one participant directly connected the presence of one culturally specific community-driven program that provided her with that sense of belonging that she was lacking in her new community. This was a significant recognition in her life.

Cassidy shared:

*“I think that it brought me closer – it did bring the community closer together. I think there was a time I came to look at this community as my community, I did. I started to feel like I belonged here and I referred to it as my community and I developed an affection for this community that I wasn’t even from “ – Cassidy*

Through culturally specific community-driven programs, participants identified obtained the necessary skills to advance in their lives both personally and professionally. Not only did the philosophy of the programs support them but also those involved as well as the content presented.

## **REPRESENTATION**

With reference made to culturally specific community-driven programs as supports, frequently mentioned was the representation of people and content that was reflective of the African culture and history. Malik spoke about his experience as a youth:

*“ Cultural Awareness Youth Group and linking up with students from other high schools in and Halifax and Dartmouth, going to different communities throughout Nova Scotia, going around Black students of the same age and similar mindsets you know, people conscious, people being pro-black, also being academically driven and socially driven.” - Malik*

Similarly Carlos stated:

*“anybody who goes to these programs you are surrounded by people that you can identify with just makes you internally, you just get a feeling of self-worth right. Because sometimes although you may not be the instructor but seeing somebody that is the instructor who you can self-identify with, it makes you feel happy inside and it’s almost as if you’re doing it but you feel as if you’re doing it because you see the possibility that you can become it [...] I think anytime you have people working in the community and they see someone that they can self-identify with, I think that gives them an internal feeling of happiness and makes them feel more worthy” - Carlos*

Other participants shared experiences of having this same presence in their education experiences which provided support as well and gave them a new experience:

*“our elementary school was in [ANS community] so when you went to school you knew pretty well everyone and everyone looked like you, you know, there were a lot of cousins and family and friends and majority of the teachers were Black teachers so that was a good experience for me.” - Melanie*

*“finding support within your school whether in high school it would be the African Nova Scotian student support worker or guidance counsellor.” – Shawn*

Similarly stated:

*“I’ve had 2 Black teachers in my life and so the first Black teacher I had was like my favorite teacher and a lot of it stood out because she reminded me of my mom you know, like her hair was like my mom and just her mannerism is like my mom so that was a really comforting feeling.” – Lee*

*“I think I was blessed because I had Black teachers early in my life [...] they were there and they attended to me” - Imani*

Sean shared an experience where more local representation was even greater appreciated seeing ANS representation.

*“It’s funny I went to Dal, I had one professor who was Black, he was from a part of Africa but then when I went to Mount Saint Vincent I had another professor who was Black from North Preston and you know that was the first time in over 15, 20 years that I’ve seen a Black professor who was locally you know from the area. It inspires you right because you know, seeing that person there means you*

*can get there which means somebody else after you can get there and again, it's a cycle and we got to keep that cycle going."*

Many participants shared the value of having this representation early in their life but also as they became older and exposed to new learning opportunities. The individuals referred to as supportive in the programs were often identified as mentors and role models.

## **MENTORS/ROLE MODELS**

*"he re-instilled into me what my mom and dad first did that I thought I had lost through my journey." - Bertram*

In addition to representation, mentorship and role modeling were also common among supports for participants. In many cases, these mentors were professional leaders but also community leaders. Sherry and Imani, shared their experiences.

*"I had two mentors who were African Nova Scotians who took me under their wing and allowed me to flourish or gave me you know, clear direction, clear mentorship in terms of collective mentorship all for the greater good. Understanding yourself, standing up for yourself, giving you the courage to that, but also watching their journey and then sharing that journey with me, allowed me to see things and be involved in the system that is pretty much [homogeneous]." - Sherry*

*"for me, going to Dalhousie and go to the school of social work early in my career Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard was a primary support. She is a founding mother for lots of young Black social workers who came out of that school and for me, I think I was the only Black person in my program in the 90s and she remains a mentor and so in my schooling years, I was blessed to have her as a professor and blessed to call her a colleague today so I think again, it only requires one and I'm really blessed now to have you know, I think Dalhousie is lucky to have the cohort of Black professors and doctorates that they have, I think that they don't understand their power." - Imani*

Robert and Sean also reflect on his career supporters:

*"I had a charmed career and the director of [professional] program I graduated from continues to be a mentor and a friend." - Robert*

*“in the education system going through as a student, as a mature student going to the Mount um, there were numerous Black educators that were already in the system that I could go to and talk to for guidance and assistance” - Sean*

Chester, Nick and Wade also shared the support received through mentors and role models within the community but also with family.

*“the opportunities weren’t there for several African Nova Scotians but looking at some role-models within our own communities that knocked down some of these barriers.” –Chester*

*“so for me, family was a big thing like I said, I’ve always had my family as role-models so like watching them growing up yeah, they were big supports for me and always encouraging and positive.” – Nick*

*“ I had support from the community Y with a number of other Black males outside of my family that had high expectations of me as a man, as a young man.” –Wade*

Having parents that provided my first example of role modelling in my life gave me the exposure that I needed to identify the importance of role modelling specifically observing the lack of such with my peers. Further, with community role models being available and present in the community indirectly role modelled to me that I too had to be one of these people. This can be identified as leading by example.

The support of individuals was greatly appreciated by participants in the enhancement of their personal and professional lives. However, funding and financial support was also referred to as excellent supports in this same aspect.

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Finally, with all of the participants having some post-secondary education, the support of finances/funding was also commonly shared. Financial means was identified as a barrier for higher education however, participants shared experiences of receiving financial support from ANS organizations as well as post-secondary institutions that

provide scholarships to African Nova Scotians. Toni and Jasmine are both University graduates:

*“university is very expensive and you know, being a first generation student, scholarships and funding is essential for me to go to university. And which university.” – Toni*

*“with undergrad I actually was able to get a scholarship to attend Dalhousie university.” – Jasmine*

Lee and Adam talk about the aid of funding from community organizations to attend post- secondary institutions:

*“ I got the Black Nova Scotian Entrance Scholarship so the \$4500 scholarship so that helped me go to Dalhousie because I was really worried about how I would be able to afford tuition. Being aware – like not just hearing that there is access to scholarships but knowing why it’s there, knowing that it’s there because there is a underrepresentation of Black teachers in the system and just being aware of seeing schools that have high percentages of black students and there’s zero Black teachers.” –Lee*

*“bursaries and scholarships to pay for post-secondary [through] Department of Education through the African Canadian Services, the BEA gave some and AUBA and the Laymen Council of AUBA. [...] You had to have I think it was a 75 or higher average and had to be a full time student and even my church gave me one too as well so yeah, full time student, 75 or higher average and you had to be involved in the community as well and how you plan to give back to the community once you receive your degree or diploma or whatever” – Adam*

Tyler also discusses the role of scholarships as being essential to his opportunity to obtain post-secondary education:

*“I was a recipient for the African Nova Scotian scholarship and I continued to get it for the following 3 years and then there [are] a couple more bursaries and scholarships along the way for being African descent and academic award. So those really helped me as well and allowed me to push through because there’s no way I would’ve been able to afford education as much as I wanted to. You know, having a few thousand dollars at hand was something that my parents never had. When we had money it was more for necessities but for post-secondary education*

*there was never a savings account or anything like that for myself of course I was not able to save that up so getting those awards and scholarships really helped me to pursue my education....” – Tyler*

Much of my decision to go to Dalhousie University was also as a result of scholarship opportunities available through the institution. As well, external scholarships only applicable for local universities helped. For me, and many of my peers, it was these scholarship opportunities that influenced our decisions to attend Dalhousie as a post-secondary option.

Although strides have been and are continuing to be made for ANSs to pursue post-secondary education, there are still limitations based on financial availability which determines where students can study, based on affordability.

Funding through scholarships removed financial burdens for many participants. For others, it actually provided them with the opportunity to obtain post-secondary education where they may not have otherwise as a result of the required tuition fees. Participating in culturally specific community-driven programs also offered the opportunities for further learning, support and relationship building.

### **CULTURALLY SPECIFIC COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROGRAMS**

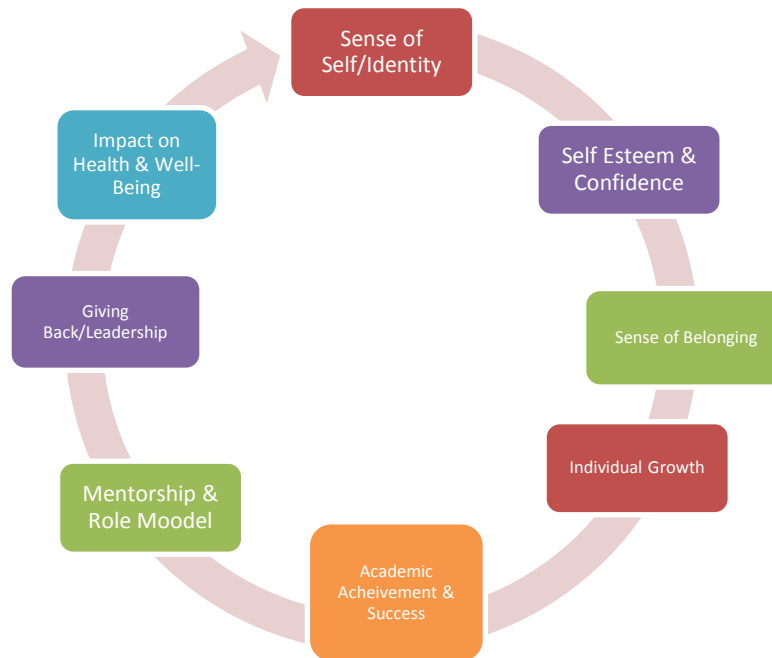
Most participants proudly shared their experiences in a number of culturally specific community-driven programs. Many of these programs have been developed and established through the findings and recommendations of the BLAC Report on Education (1994). There has also been reference made to faith-based associations, specifically through the AUBA, as well as other long standing ANS community-based organizations and also government implemented resources for ANS learners. Below is a list of all of the programs and organizations referred to by participants:

- ❖ African Canadian Services Division – Scholarship, Academic Immersion Summer Camp

- ❖ African United Baptist Association - Sunday School, Baptist Youth Fellowship
- ❖ Association of Black Social Workers
- ❖ BEA Cultural Academic & Enrichment Program, Teachers Scholarship, Adult Literacy Program
- ❖ BEA Math Camp at Dalhousie University
- ❖ Dalhousie University Black Student Advisor/Advising Centre
- ❖ Canadian Girls in Training
- ❖ Ceasefire Halifax
- ❖ Community YMCA- Halifax
- ❖ Community Enhancement Association - Truro
- ❖ Cultural Awareness Youth Group
- ❖ Dalhousie University Transition Year Program
- ❖ From the Ground Up – Victoria Road United Baptist Church
- ❖ George Dixon Centre
- ❖ HAAC – Health Association of African Canadians
- ❖ Halifax North Branch Library
- ❖ HRM Youth Leadership Program
- ❖ Kamp Kujichagulia at Acadia University
- ❖ Masters of Education in Lifelong Learning Africentric Cohort at Mount Saint Vincent University
- ❖ Nia Centre
- ❖ North Preston Bulls – Basketball Team
- ❖ Saturday School - Truro
- ❖ ANS Student Support Worker Program in local schools

Specifically seeking to identify the impacts the participating in culturally specific community- driven programs have on the life journey of African Nova Scotians, the themes below resulted from a process of bringing the shared voices together and identifying some of the core and most common factors contributing to such. These factors resulted in the following themes as illustrated in Figure 4. These are listed and discussed in more detail below:

**Figure 4 - Impact of Culturally Specific Community-Driven Programs**



- Sense of self & Identity
- Self-esteem & Confidence
- Sense of Belonging
- Academic Achievement Success
- Individual Growth
- Mentorship & Role models
- Giving Back/Leadership
- Health & Well-Being

### **SENSE OF SELF & IDENTITY**

It was a unanimous experience that what left an impact on participants after participating in culturally specific community-driven programs was that as Chester framed it, “*we were talking about us for once, we were learning about your own culture*”. The learning about ANS history, culture and people was discussed in a way that helped participants to form their identity and sense of self.



*“It’s nice to see our culture not pushed aside or pushed behind you know, to be out there.” – Chester*

*“I would say that my awareness, my racial identity and my awareness of racial issues certainly has deepened as I functioned in my engagement of some of these things. I would have to say that my racial identity has been further developed and affirmed.” - Robert*

Veronica, Sunshine & Simone discussed how they began to know themselves:

*“it’s definitely made me more aware of who I am, as a Black female in Nova Scotia.”*

*“I was able to kind of like really find my identity or feel like I could be myself which has helped me.” – Sunshine*

*“you’re kinda leaning about who you are as a person, it can really help you with your identity and who you are as an African Nova Scotian person. Because a lot of times in the different groups or things they talk about, a variety of different things, they do a variety of activities and I think it’s important for kids to and youth and people that maybe are not necessarily very connected with their roots, to kind of get back and just to be a part of something with people that look like them. Because, it’s just a good feeling.” – Simone*

According to Omar and Chester, sense of pride is also a key factor:

*“they all kind of had like a sense of pride like it all kind of helped give me a sense of pride in myself and the community like um just not being afraid to kind of be yourself like to be that person from North Preston .” – Omar*

*“so looking back it builds strong self, it builds your own character, you take that pride in yourself and in your culture.” –Chester*

Finding pride in myself has never been something that I struggled with and I believe that this has to do with the pride that was instilled within me through my family, spiritual affiliations, and as a Saturday School program participant. Attending this program two decades ago and having vivid memories of my experience is evidence that this program meant a great deal to me and the development of the pride that I hold around my identity even as one of the few ANS students in my classes. Through a strong racial identity comes self-pride and self-acceptance which aids in one’s character and sense of self.

By developing a sense of self through learning about yourself and your history, participants shared that it also raised awareness around their consciousness regarding racism and discrimination in the larger society and how it affects the ANS community.

Robert, Lee and Malik shared:

*“I think my awareness of how profoundly racist our society is, how deep that racism is has been heightened [...] I think I’ve also gained a deeper, deeper, deeper insight in the challenges and difficulties that exist in the Black community and I gained a much deeper awareness of the complexities that are Black politics in Nova Scotia and I think that I have learned to reach out to my small circle of Black folks, it helps me manage all that stuff.”- Robert*

*“It definitely gives you a better understanding of yourself and kind of where you fit in within society, it helps with your own personal confidence building. It’s being aware of stuff and being able to[...] you can put someone in their place and say this is why this is why it’s like this.” – Lee*

*“cultural awareness youth group[...] that was pretty big for me because that was a big avenue to kind of open up my consciousness a little bit more.”- Malik*

The identified programs fostered a sense of self and identity formation with participants that also made them more aware of society and their place within. Along with knowing who one was, being proud and confident in whom you were was also identified by participants.

## **SELF-ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE**

Participants also identified self-esteem and confidence to be positive effects of the impact of these programs. According to some participants, through affirmation, feeling valued and loved, is how self-esteem and confidence were developed. Adam & Nick shared their experiences of noticeable changes in their confidence specifically:

*“they made me feel included and my ideas were valued because in class when they would call on speakers to raise their hand I would never do that and then after going to those programs I found myself in class started to raise my hand or expressing my opinions more freely and not worrying about oh, if I say the wrong thing or this and that because there was no wrong opinion it’s just what you feel.”*  
–Adam

*“they helped me with kind of confidence to believe that I can do things so you know, being the shy, quiet, introvert kind of kid you know, being a part of those and seeing what’s possible with a little bit of kind of help and hard work just kind of showing that I can be confident in myself and my abilities to make things happen.”* – Nick

Betty & Ben, among others, shared experiences of feeling confident not only in a personal sense but also in their professional.

*“So I think, it’s instrumental in laying the foundation so that people can learn about their history, where we come from, our contributions to society. It doesn’t leave me to feel intimidated by mainstream society. Because of that, I feel I have more confidence in my personal self and in my professional world.”* – Betty

*“I felt empowered when I was a facilitator with the adult education and literacy and numeracy programs and life skill programs.”*– Ben

When beginning my social work career, I struggled with my confidence in some aspects as I was often perceived as a student and sometimes intimidated by the amount of knowledge and experience that others more seasoned than I had. However, this did not last long with the support of ABSW and their encouragement and mentorship. This example, although more recent in my life, again supports the positive impacts that these programs have had and continue to have on my life despite age or current social location.

Perception of self was connected to knowing about one’s history and was expressed as a way that positive self-esteem was achieved.

*“I mean, understanding that they’re of value, that they’re important and what are ancestors had contributed to society to make this world a better place. Even for the programs, you know what, they just don’t see that and to have, you know, self-*

*esteem, that we just don't come from enslaved folks, we didn't voluntarily offer to be enslaved and you know.” - Betty*

*“it just made me feel informed and educated and it just allows you go through life with a better sense of self and a better perception of self.” - Shawn*

For some participants, what contributed to their experiences was the expression of self that was encouraged within these programs. Omar and Kaleb shared their experiences of being provided the opportunity to learn how to express, in particular, when it is related to dealing with racism:

*“we made a video to kind of capture like some of the racism that we’ve seen or we’ve dealt with cause we were young I was probably like 15 or 16 and we made a documentary. The whole program was to make a documentary and a series of commercials like conscious racism or whatever and when I think about it now like today it helped me to become more conscious of like racism or to be able to express it cause I always knew it was there but I would never express it. I would always feel uncomfortable talking about it and so after that program I just felt like yea, I just felt more comfortable to speak about and just talk about it or just to see it and to identify it as oppose to being emotional over it. Prior to that when I would see or feel something under the lines of racism it would just cause me an emotion whether it be anger or sadness or whatever but after that I just remember like being able to capture an emotion and just you know I don’t care about that person, that’s just something to do with them it’s really not me or just to know like you know what I mean so it just kind of took the anger from me.”- Omar*

*“people coming together and talking about what the issues are but also thinking about some reasonable solutions for them so problem solving around that you know, and respecting difference.”- Kaleb*

Shawn expressed that it was about staying true to who she was as an individual:

*“being able to stay true to me while still opening up to all these experiences and just learning different things culturally but yeah, I can adapt and take some in my life as knowledge but not become them because that’s not me, I don’t know those and not me taking on someone else’s experiences and who they are .” – Shawn*

Contrarily, what also was shared is that the impact of these programs could be much greater if we would examine and evaluate what the programs’ purpose really are,

whom are they serving and by whom. A process of assessment would then take place and identify if the purpose is truly being fulfilled. Star shared her concerns:

*“having more youth involved and youth programs is kind of important. I'm not really sure because it's not the programs per say, that you know, have issues, it's the attitudes of the people who work in the program and you know, how do you, how do you change a mindset. How do you open eyes to you know a bigger perspective.”*

*“I mean, you have, you have certain beliefs, you hold certain values, those beliefs and values are going permeate whatever it is that you design or set up, our bias permeate what we do. That's just how we are as humans. And that's why I'm talking about, you know the bigger picture of attitudes, how we see each other. Because we're very disjointed. We're not a unified community per say, when we speak of one community as African Nova Scotian and I think that, in my opinion that is reflected in our programs.”*

As I mature, I have been able to observe the differences in program participation and the outcomes of such. There seems to be a sense of passion that is diminishing within the delivery of programs. They are happening with the communities by community members however, the level of accountability is not as clear. Youth in particular that I have talked with who have attended the same programs that I have when I was their age do not have the same appreciation for the programs as my peers and myself had. Perhaps they need more time to reflect on their experiences but unfortunately education as to why the programs have been created seems to be missing.

Robert also shares concerns of the “attitudes” and perceptions within the ANS community, which at times can be a struggle and overall hinder community development:

*“I would say that sometimes my involvement in black specific things is accompanied with nervousness. [...] When you're involved in Black organizations there is a level of scrutiny and judgment that goes beyond the substance of what you bring to the organization. There's also implicit in that an assessment of your blackness and so there's the question are you Black enough?”*

Self-esteem and confidence was demonstrated in participants' ability and freedom to express, but also in their self-determinations. It was also acknowledged that there are

ways for programs to enhance the development of these as well through a unified purpose. This was also referred to as one's place within the community.

## **SENSE OF BELONGING**

*“it was about us, it was for us. By somebody that looked like us. That's what stood out, it was a sense of... of belonging, a sense of comfort ability and just... felt home. [...] I felt safe... I felt part of something... that intense sense of belonging...” – Anne*

Feeling comfortable, a part of and as if you belonged without judgement because you could relate, were some of the collective factors contributing to how a sense of belonging in these programs impacted the life of ANS. Betty, Simone, and Tammy shared their experiences of feeling that they belonged:

*“I mean it's, you feel comfort... you feel comfortable, I'm not worrying about, you know, how I say things, so that it's not interpreted in a different way. And it was, it's just good to be among folks that, that come from my own background and just to be in a room that people look like me.” – Betty*

*“it was a sense of community and you were doing things and involved with people who were like you. That had a similar, like mindset I guess or similar, I don't know what the word for it would be but like, you were alike and sometimes it's nice to just be around people like you. And you could talk about things that, you know, effected you as a culture or as a group, as well, like things that maybe you didn't feel comfortable discussing with everyone in your class or something like that. And it was just a comfortable place to be and you didn't have to worry about maybe somebody judging you for something that you say or something that you're used to.” –Simone*

*“I think that they have made me realize the importance of being a part of something um, the power of influence on decisions and choices that people make and they need to feel sure and valued for who you are um, I think these programs do that. [...] I always feel rejuvenated like I'll use the conference in the fall because you know, there's nothing better than walking in the room and sitting down and you are the majority when you're so used to the opposite all the time. To know that when people are speaking and telling their stories that you can find similarities in your story that is very empowering stuff.” -Tammy*

Some participants acknowledged their experiences as life changing:

*“that cohort was amazing, it changed my life. To be in a classroom of 20 African Nova Scotian people was just mind blowing. It's almost like it... it was... walking into a place that you already knew that you were going to be understood. So, so there was no putting on airs, you just were who you were, you could say whatever you wanted to say. That's what I felt, it was an automatic acceptance... it was beautiful.”- Anne*

However, Shawn, in particular, expressed, *“sometimes they made me feel different, sometimes it made me feel odd like in the broader [communities] with people that weren't from my community.”* She shared that from her experience, her sense of belonging was within her own geographical location coming from a rural community, *“the ones that were community based it made me feel more included, more aware”.* She further explains, *“it can be an adjustment period and eye-opening and when you're going through all those feelings of newness and not being sure and entering a new community and being directed by individuals that have already been like already have this knowledge and functionality that was there from an earlier age.”*

Participants experienced comfort in the identified programs where they felt included and valued. Once a feeling of belonging was developed participants shared how they found ways to include themselves in their everyday academic experiences and achievements.

## **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SUCCESS**

Interestingly, all participants acknowledged the educational components to the programs referenced as well as the educational push that was enforced throughout program delivery. As well, there was recognition to the educational encouragement within their community. There were also many connections between participating in the

programs, which may have not necessarily had education as their primary focus, however, the self-development that happened as a result of the programs naturally applied to their academic success. Malik & Adam specifically outlined this connection through their changes in perception of learning with the support of these programs:

*“I was generally disengaged through school and along with basketball, being a part of for example, cultural awareness youth group that was another reason that made me want to get out of bed every morning and really be a part of the school and then, classes started to make a little more sense because I could tailor it to my own way of thinking. ... I could take whatever we were doing and make it Black like okay, so what does this have to do with Black people or how does this affect Black people or how does this relate to us or whatever. ... I mean I’m talking self-esteem, general health, like I just felt good, better than I did before I had those things.” – Malik*

*“basketball is basically life skills through sport and the community Y was big on that with the each one teach one program and then carry the books as well as the ball.”- Sean*

*“in junior high something happened in grade 7 where I wasn’t really interested in school at all and I was doing my work but it wasn’t as well as I could’ve been doing it-. In grade 9 that is when I participated in the CAEP where I learned those better study skills and learned this is what I need to take in order to reach the next level and things like that. So because of those study skills that they gave me, just the encouragement and confidence that I gained from that it led me to go to high school with a whole new outlook on school and life and stuff like that and it even helped me get on the honour roll for all 3 years and want to get those bursaries and scholarships to pay for post-secondary.” – Adam*

These experiences shared resonated with me most specifically in high school where I did not feel a sense of belonging and had minimal interest in learning. This was a pivotal time in the development of my identity. It was only with the coping skills that I had learned and the resiliency built through my family and community-driven programs that I was able to get through this challenging time.

Other participants shared that although they were achieving success in school, the support that they received through these programs at an early age gave them the extra motivation, encouragement and confirmation that it was attainable.



*“it’s actually incorporating the students into the university. They actually see the university experience like they get to stay in the dorms, they get to eat in the cafeteria, their classes are held at the university so they are literally living the university life for that week and it’s amazing. It kind of gets students thinking okay maybe I can attend university, university is fun, maybe this is what I can do in another 6 years type of thing.” – Jasmine*

*“One is, I had support from the community Y with a number of other Black males outside of my family that had high expectations of me as a man, as a young man. So, I look at all my basketball coaches and I coupled that with my uncles who came from New Glasgow to stay with us, my father, and my 3 brothers and there’s an expectation that you are going to be successful in your life athletically, and there’s an expectation that you’re going to be successful in your life academically.” – Wade*

According to some participants, support from these programs also held true as they became professionals by taking what they learned as participants and applying it within their own professions. Lee shared her experience as a classroom teacher:

*“I can remember the first time being exposed to Black history or what not, learning about Black history. I can remember the teacher and not intentionally but just her choice of words referring to Black people as they or them and White people as us and we and that was the very first time I remember feeling like I wasn’t part of the we. Up until then I thought in schools when they use the word we and us it meant our school community but then that’s when I seen that divide of, oh no when you say we and when you say us you mean the majority of the people in this room who have White skin and the rest of us are the they and the them. When you’re referring to anything to do with Black history and the Black experience it’s them and they even though some of they are in this room and we’re not part of we. So as a teacher, because I know what that felt like as a student, I transferred that into my classroom so that when I’m talking about any group, I could be talking about Muslim experience or Asian culture, I always say we or some of us even if nobody in that room looks like what I’m talking about. I always make it a point to say some of us because you just never know and you never know who you’re leaving out so just being aware of language choices because those can be barriers because those can have an effect on students.” – Lee*

When academic achievement success became evidently linked to one’s sense of self, self-esteem and sense of belonging, participants were able to identify their personal growth.

## INDIVIDUAL GROWTH

*“I think it kind of helps you as you grow into the person you're going to become.”  
- Simone*

Through culturally specific community-driven programs, participants shared that the opportunities that they were able to have as well as the exposure the programs provided through new learning, activities and people supported them in their personal growth throughout their life journey. Melanie talked about her involvement in the church groups through the AUBA:

*“attending church [...] I learned to socialize with people and interact and build my confidence in regards to maybe having to stand up in church and you know, maybe give a little testimony or whatever the case may be but it all helped me to grow.” – Melanie*

Tyler, Marilyn & Tammy discussed other community programs that aided them in their personal growth:

*“ having those programs that targeted us youth in the community such as like the volunteer program that I mentioned and the youth leader programs and being a member of the Mulgrave park community that involves being a person of African Descent but ultimately it helped me get employment at Needham as well, as a member of the community they really wanted to target us and get us involved.”  
Tyler*

*“I also have learned a lot about racism. Through the organization, even in sometimes when you're dealing with government and when you're dealing with health organizations, you realize how they minimize the importance of the African Nova Scotian or Black people in general.[...] And once I became the chair [of the organization], you go deeper, you know, when you become sort of responsible, you go deeper and deeper and the deeper I went into what they were doing and their philosophy and whatever. I really believe in it and I really believe in the education of our African Nova Scotians health wise. I believe in all education but health wise is important because there's a lot of fear out there. And there's a lot of myths and there's a lot of misleading knowledge. So we had the opportunity to set it right. - Marilyn*

*“I think programs like these give people drive and purpose and I think that they make you change the way that you look at things like you know I [am eager to participate] jump all over the things [...] I remember other things, it wasn't a*

*book club because we didn't read a book but it was like a bunch of people in the community, I think it was mainly women, but I think it might've been open to men too, that showed up and we went and discussed a piece of literature. At the time it was a Maya Angelou piece right. [...] When I participate in things like that and when I think about people like that and how powerful they are they become almost like something that you want to strive towards like you know here we are a bunch of women reading this poet's work and all relating maybe in different ways but all relating to the same story – that's powerful stuff.”- Tammy*

Through the accomplishments of other people of African descent, study participants as well as myself have been able to find motivation and inspiration as well as affirmation that it is possible to be Black and successful. It gives hope, ambition and confidence in ourselves and in our people. When able to see the great things that people of my race have done in their lives it encourages me to keep going and to also keep believing in my dreams and goals. It sets an example and it is clear that we learn this when we rarely see ourselves represented but when we do we get a sense of collective joy that is unexplainable, a positive impact in our lives but also necessary for our well-being.

Frequently shared, was the experiences of opportunities to travel through participation in these programs. For many, these opportunities would not have been possible if they had not been a participant in the program. Additionally, building relationships with people that they may not have encountered without these opportunities was significant. Tyler and Chester shared:

*“we used to do Truro March Break and we would have long weekends in such. There were volunteers and such who would host different events for kids in the community. They would take us to bowling alleys, movie theatres and just places around the centre. Growing up this was nice because anytime there was a long weekend or any breaks like Christmas break, march break, those kind of programs - it was nice to not be stuck in the community and that was often my only experience with being able to leave the community because I couldn't really afford to leave on my own.”- Tyler*

*“opportunities, because sadly, some of these kids would never get out of this community if it wasn't for the youth club.”- Chester*

Simone also explained:

*“I think it allows you the opportunity to create friendship, to create a new support system. It's an opportunity to show somebody that they matter to and that there's things out there for everyone. [...]and it is encouraging for somebody that's just a young person and growing up and coming into their own and it gives opportunities for people to be involved in certain things that maybe if the programs weren't available, they wouldn't be involved in.”*

With the disproportionate number of ANS families living in poverty, unfortunately, for many children and youth of African descent the opportunities for travel and extracurricular activities outside of their community are limited. Many ANS children and youth do not have the means to have the experiences which many of their higher class peers would have access to. These programs seek to address the gaps of limited exposure for ANS so that they are provided with similar opportunities as their peers.

Participants also shared that these opportunities were not only individualized and for themselves but for the community as a whole. In addition they provided opportunities as Jude asserts, *“to start helping kids develop these relationships, the recognition of who your family is and you know, who the other Black children are.”*

Adam stated:

*“it's not only for me but for my community like my grandparents. They didn't have these types of opportunities that I have to get an education so it's not only just for me but for the community as a whole because there's also a lot of misconceptions about the communities so I find that always pushes me to want to do better.”*

Through opportunities available by participating in programs, it was found that individual but also community growth and development came naturally. Participants identified those who provided these opportunities and continued to encourage them as also major contributors.

## MENTORSHIP & ROLE MODELS

*“the biggest thing that stood out about the program other than I guess the plan they had set up were the people involved in it, the people make the program.” – Sean*

A common theme when participants talked about their supports in general as well as community driven programs as forms of support, was the importance and presence of mentors and role models who were also community leaders.

*“seeing everyday how much administrators and supportive adults put -how much effort they put into these projects and programs for us, like it was really nice to kind of see the investment from some of the adults who wanted to support us. Also, like the different like I’m thinking about youth of today so with the opportunity to learn from other black leaders who were older than us that had already made in their field,” –Sunshine*

*“the most important people outside of the students themselves is the young people that are teaching them every day. It’s the people that impact their success, it’s the people that impact the way they feel about themselves, it’s the people that impact their self-esteem, it’s all of those things.[It’s] the people that are most responsible for that outside of a child’s parents and family is the people that come into contact with the most.” – Wade*

*“being nurtured by her in the spirit of song and giving praise to God, you know, in that way. I don’t know, it was a huge impact in my life [...]she was, she’s very, very loved and beloved and you know, in the community for the love of spirituals and expressing one’s self through song through so many people.” – Anne*

Those participants specifically involved in sports talked about the significance of coaches. Sean and Omar shared their experiences with their male coaches who were family to them whether biological or not:

*“I just learned a lot through sports like a lot of my life has been based around sports like my attitude towards life kind of would develop through sports. My coaches and stuff still to this day like I always talk to my coaches and stuff like that. It prepared me kind of to go further like to just deal with discipline like even to deal with the structural order of power like you know. Even in sports I always felt like I knew more than my coaches but I learned to kind of listen to my coaches*

*and I think that it was because that one of my coaches specifically was my uncle. Whenever I felt like I guess going above him as a player coach relationship because he was my uncle I couldn't. I remember times I would try and he would just keep me in a place and I just kind of learned from that to deal with like to have respect for people. I wouldn't ever have learned this playing for another team because he was my uncle so if I had of played for a team where the coach is just some guy and we get in a situation where I feel like what he's saying is wrong and what I'm saying is right, I would've never had those moments where I would've just listened and just be humble to what the coach is saying.”- Omar*

*“[my coaches]they were basically like your surrogate fathers for someone like me who my father wasn't necessarily in my life even though he was around those gentlemen played that part and they played it huge and it taught me a lot of life skills.” –Sean*

Mentors and role models through sport were common contributors to male participants' life learning's and experiences. Participants explained that in some cases they were more than just coaches but also father figures that were necessary in their lives. There is a gendered nature of basketball as a mostly male dominated sport. All but one participant who referred to sports as supportive were male participants. Noteworthy is that all participants who mentioned sports as primary and largely influential supports to them were male participants. One female participant referred to sports as a form of support to her however, she did not refer to this support as having as large an impact as the males. Cost of sports was also a factor for many participants or their peers. Basketball has been discussed as being so popular within the Black community not only because of the talent but also because of the cost. It is one of the less expensive sports however, there are still costs that are not affordable to all. It has been asserted that mentorship is not only about direct teaching but also indirect teaching through participant observations. Through these experiences, participants learned what it meant to be a leader and how this included giving back.

## **GIVING BACK/ LEADERSHIP**

*“CGIT was a big, one of the most interesting programs for me going to church in [home community] so when I came to [new community] I formed a CGIT group with young girls[...]becoming a CGIT leader I did have some girls younger to me so I had to try to be a role model for them and to help them understand some things in life that they hadn’t already encountered.” Melanie*

Taking it further than just having mentors or role models to look up to, many participants talked about learning the value of giving back from these mentors and role models who in many cases were the program developers and facilitators or those responsible for the delivery of the program.

*“I don’t remember actual practices, I just remember those experiences and how they molded me to be you know again, community based, to give back and again, each one teach one. [...] it impacted me in terms of basically making me who I am and remembering where I came from and how I got here and who helped me and ways that I can go on and help other youth basically, it leads my life.” – Sean*

*“ it was instilled in a really early age that giving back to your community is an obligation, it’s not a choice you know. If you’re going to impact the kids in the community, you start with the youth and you do what you can. I think to give them what people gave me, try to give them a strong sense of self and self-esteem and positive energy and you’re there as a mentor and a support mechanism to guide them along their own personal journey.” – Wade*

*“it made me feel like I was giving back to the community because of the collective Africentric way, you have to give back.” – Sherry*

Participants shared experiences of once participating as a learner and then taking on a leadership role as a way of giving back. It was identified that holding a leadership role also has a positive impact on their health and well-being. This also provides evidence that culturally specific community-driven programs have had positive impacts on ANS in the sense that they want to continue to be involved so that others can share similar positive experiences to theirs.

## HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The final theme was identified through participants' experiences on multiple levels. All participants spoke to the positive impact that participating in culturally specific community driven programs had on their health & well-being. Some spoke about one aspect of their health and well-being in particular, while others looked at it from a holistic approach including physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Nick, spoke specifically about mental health:

*“mental health I see as a part of that like I said that whole social aspect, for me, getting me out of my shell, getting me around people more, getting me comfortable speaking and that kind of thing so helpful in that aspect.”*

Simone & Sean discussed how the impacts of participating in these programs are positive to your holistic health and well-being.

*“because everything is connected. So to kind of know where you are, know who you are, know where you came from, just know that they know about yourself and about your culture and about other people, it's very important for your well-being. Like your mind and your body and everything is all connected and if your well-being is good and then your body is going to be good and everything kind of ties into one thing. And I think it's healthy and we need healthy things to create positive well-being and to just keep everything, I guess, on the up and up.” - Simone*

*“I mean if you want to look at health and well-being you can look at physically, mentally, spiritually. Obviously spiritually any programs at Cornwallis Baptist Church like I said I was involved in and Sunday School early on. [...] In terms of the other programs, you know it again made me who I was. It taught us that even though we're from this area we don't have to fall into the stereotype that the prophecies to believe that what people say and write in papers is who we are because we are much more than that and because people instilled that belief and that confidence and those skills you can do anything you want if you set your mind to it.” – Sean*



Moreover, some participants shared how participating in programs helped them to better cope with racism and discrimination through collective healthy strategies. Betty, Jude and Sunshine shared:

*“being a part of those various programs, you know, we talk about, you know, everyone's... going through similar situations and coping mechanisms and strategies for health and well-being. So we understand how to deal with that and put it in its proper place and you know, distressing and debriefing about certain incidents and how we move forward instead of letting it fester and eat up and impact one's health. “- Betty*

*“these give you opportunities to engage in dialogue, right. To get things off your chest as oppose to bottling things up, as oppose to not having a outlet where you convey these thoughts and feelings and process this information and learn about solutions and strategies that others have used to deal with racism. [To deal] with being the only one, with not being able to get a job, with not having a boyfriend in high school, that you can connect with individuals and share these common experiences. In my mind, it has to affect your mental well-being and your physical health.”– Jude*

*“I was able to talk and get out what was bothering me or whatever and like see that whatever is going on in my life is happening in everybody's life, all the challenges happening not just [happening] for me. I mean I think it kind of helps to bring awareness to the fact that racism, for example, is something that everybody is experiencing and you're not alone in it. [...] Just knowing that there is a collective experience of something is really good for your mental health so that you can talk about these things and that there are actually things put in place to help you navigate some of that stuff.” –Sunshine*

Sunshine further elaborates on her personal experience with a mental health concern that was able to be managed by the support of a mentor.

*“I remember there was a particular time when I actually did experience mental health issues when I was younger in high school and at that time I felt like I didn't have any support because I didn't even really know myself what was happening. I didn't really know how to talk to anybody about the experience. The thing is that the relationship that I had with that you know, with the person that ran [community program] and the minister that I had, she recognized that there was something wrong. So because she knew me so well, she was able to ask what is going on. I felt like being in a relationship with that woman and like she was able*

*to kind of prevent me from having further mental illness issues because like I was acting different than what I usually do because of mental health situation and she was able to kind of identify and check in with me further. Had I not had that person I may have you know my mental health issue may have lead into a full blown mental health issue.”*

It is through culturally specific programs that I found where I fit into society as a racialized person which evidently impacted my health and well-being. I would say that holistic health and well-being cannot be achieved without the consideration of one’s culture and how that has impacted their lived experiences. For ANSs the necessary supports to aid in a state of well-being is quite multilayered as identified above.

The themes identified by participants through the barriers that they faced, the supports they have used and the impact that participating in culturally specific community-driven programs have had all contribute to the life journey of the participants. As noted within the community-driven programs referenced, although different and range from spiritual to sports to academic based, for example, they all have similarities in the impact that they have left on the study participants. Acknowledging the results of this study through the experiences of participants, Sense of self & Identity; Self-esteem & Confidence; Sense of Belonging; Academic Achievement Success; Individual; Growth; Mentorship & Role models; Giving Back/Leadership; and Health & Well-Being provide evidence are all common factors within the programs referenced. Although some programs can be enhanced through reassessment and evaluation as expressed by some participants, overall, the impact of participating in culturally specific community-driven programs has been positive and essential to the development and well-being of these participants.

This chapter has outlined the emerging themes from the shared experiences of research participants. It has also presented the positive impacts that culturally specific community-driven programs have had on the life journey of ANS. Chapter 6, will provide an in-depth critical analysis of the study findings. This analysis will also present the voice of the researcher as a participant within the study.

## CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the impacts of participating in culturally specific community-driven programs across the life journey as a result of the experiences of ANS that were shared in this study. It also analyzes the experiences based on gender, age/generation, geographical location and participation role based on the definition in chapter one. The following four themes identified are Community: Setting the Foundation, Overcoming Barriers, Finding Support, and Culturally Specific Community-Driven Programs Have a Positive Impact on ANS.

### **COMMUNITY: SETTING THE FOUNDATION**

The majority of study participants expressed that within one's home ANS community is where the foundation was laid. This notion was referenced to the development of sense of self and identity including community pride, mentorship and role modeling as well as opportunity for skill development. Early social involvement for participants also began within their community through volunteering, community cleanups, and social events. In community, participants identified a true sense of belonging, which was different from what they experienced outside of their community when going to school, work or simply in a store or walking down the street. There were no differences in gender, generation age groups or geographical location with participant's experiences of feeling safe, valued, affirmed and loved within their community. Nearly all participants expressed these factors as contributing to the building of both their community and self-resiliency.

**Figure 5 - Community Support Contributors**



## **OVERCOMING BARRIERS**

Participants across all three generation age groups and genders identified racism and discrimination as the overarching barrier or challenge that they have faced across their life journey. Results have shown that experiences of racism and discrimination have most often been in the forms of stigma, generalization and judgement based on one's community, and lack of representation and content of people of African descent in education and employment settings. The findings also suggest that racism and discrimination has an impact on one's health and well-being, and quite often can be experienced as internalized racism.

Research participant Imani, shared her experience of the impact that racism has had on her health by being conscious of it in every aspect of her life.

*“racism has impacted on my health, psychologically it's ingrained in me that I have to be twice as better, twice as good, that's racism. So psychologically as a*

*child being told that, not fully being aware of what it meant and then finally having an uh huh moment when you're like 18 and saying if I want that scholarship I understand why I have to be twice as good or twice as better or getting the job. Or uh huh, I understand why I have to be such and such. So racism I think the psychology of racism is something that black children are exposed to so early whether it's from our family or from the environment."*

Although participants did not always name their experiences as such, internalized racism can be referred to as "acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth." (Jones, 2000, as cited in James et.al, 2010 p.115)

Given this definition, the results show that many of the participants were talking about this concept when they felt a sense of low self-esteem, confidence and the need to prove themselves to those of a different group through working twice as hard. James et al. (2010) also explain that internalized racism can be manifested in sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, lack of confidence, or anger (p. 128). As I reflect back on my personal experiences with racism and discrimination, there is a common experience shared with my participants. I can relate to Tyler when he shared:

*"not being addressed the same as those that came from more affluent families, doubting myself and my intellectual competency in relation to those people who came from more affluent families. I just never really felt as confident. I often felt less than or not as good as the other folks that came from more affluent community and I feel like coming from the low income community you're kind of looked down upon." – Tyler*

At times, although I knew that I was intelligent and capable of what my non-ANS peers were, those doubts crept in when the teacher did not acknowledge my intelligence the way they did with others. I can also relate with Tammy by often taking on too much, only

to prove that I was capable of the tasks requested. She expressed her concerns with taking on too much:

*“...you figured that you weren’t good enough so you always try and present like you are good enough by doing more and working harder. ... I think that has become a big barrier because I have pushed myself more and because I push myself more they [non-ANS colleagues] put more on me know what I mean.. it’s really not been a great experience for me.”- Tammy*

The research indicates that participants across generations, genders and geographical location all share a common experience in dealing and coping with racism. Bernard & Este (2005) James et al., (2010) and Bernard (2004) in studies of Black men’s survival and coping with racism, all found that men in different geographical locations also share common experiences coping with racism. Using both CRT and AT to analyze the data in this study demonstrates how one common factor such as race can impact one’s life so greatly. Applying an Africentric framework also highlights how collective consciousness raising and identity (Este & Bernard, 2003; Lynn, 2005) is shared among people of African descent. Although some participants claimed to have a more multicultural experience based on their specific community demographics, all have experienced racism and discrimination in some point over their life journey. For the older generation age groups, 35-50 and 51-65, racism presented itself to be more overt through name-calling and minimal to no resources available that reflected themselves or their culture. For the youngest generation, racism has still been experienced with results suggesting similar outcomes between all three-generation age groups in this study. Consistent with AT, one might suggest that even among ages and generational differences, there is also a collective identity or common experience shared as a result of one major part of the African identity, race and racialization. For example, Star from the oldest generation age group shared:

*“so I had to get a job right out of high school, I wanted to go to university but the guidance counsellor told me that that possibly wasn't the thing for me to do.[...] So the guidance counsellor persuaded me from applying to university.”*

Likewise, Betty, a participant in the middle generation age group states:

*“racism and you know, it was quite blatant and obvious. And growing up, we weren't or I wasn't viewed or guided towards, by councillors, to go on to post-secondary. You know, that was something that my white counter class mates had but we weren't, I wasn't encouraged to go to, you know, post-secondary university. If anything I would do, maybe go on to vocational school, take a secretarial course but never to become any type of professional.”*

Finally, Simone shared a similar experience:

*“I think like sometimes in high school, when it came time to pick your course, I found a lot, I guess sometimes I needed a challenge, in say math, the subject of math, but I wasn't encouraged by my guidance counsellor sometimes to take the advance math and so sometimes it was like they weren't putting out there as much as they were maybe for other students.”*

Like Simone, I experienced the lack of encouragement from my school guidance counselor when obtaining guidance in course selections specifically in high school.

Instead, I was informed of how difficult and how much extra work the course would require. As a result, I was able to register for the specific course that I inquired due to the status of my grades however, this decision required self-determination by standing up for myself and my abilities.

Interestingly, many of the participants in the middle generation age group, 35-50, most being educators, raised their concerns for ANS learners making reference to the BLAC Report on Education (1994) which presented the same concerns. Some participants expressed their frustration around, while others mentioned the significance of the reports 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in bringing the agenda for ANS learners back to the forefront. It saddened me to know that although we as a community have advocated for these



resources two decades ago, the needs of our learners are still not being met. The results provide evidence that the Black Report on Education (1994) is still a vital point of reference in the well-being and academic success of ANS learners. Sean shared:

*“in the educational system I know there’s you know when you look at the BLAC Report and you know the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and stuff like that we are still looking at ways we can have our black learners succeed, we’re still struggling with that in terms of when we look at data and what have you and ways we can help them be more successful in the educational system which will help them be successful in life we also are still coming up with ways we can do that.”*

Additionally, it was found that regardless of the type of racism or discrimination faced, all found a sense of self-resiliency through supports that were necessary in healthy coping. hooks highlights that African centered spirituality can serve as a form of resistance, a tool for coping and healing (as cited in Este & Bernard, 2006). Kaleb & Sean spoke about their ways of coping:

*“I think in as much as that [experiences of racism] create lots of problems for me, it created really a lot of heartbreak and hurt and stuff, it also made me sharper as a person, it made me alert to other possibilities about how to overcome, it caused me to actually want to fight against it and to try to be more alert to what are some of the schemes and strategies that a person can use to still kind of go on with their life despite of the fact that racism is real and it’s there, and it does hurt and it does leave some tracks on your soul.” - Kaleb*

*“we never let [racism and discrimination] bother us because based on our community and our family background it was instilled in us that if you worked hard and if you were respectful that you would get some opportunities even though I know that racism existed and still exists I never felt slighted in that sense.” – Sean*

I believe that the experiences of overcoming racism and discrimination is a significant sharing by participants because racism and discrimination does hurt and has negative impacts on our holistic health and well-being (James et al., 2010; Travis & Leech, 2013; Waldron et al., 2014), however, it is necessary for us to have the proper coping strategies

for healing and to overcome in the most healthy and positive ways. “One way with coping with racism is through reliance on a strong racial identity (James et. al., 2010, p.141). It is not easy to move past the pain but in order to survive in Eurocentric society, we have to develop resilience.

## **FINDING SUPPORT**

For the majority of participants across all three generation age groups, family was the primary support. As indicated in chapter 5, this also included extended family, which considered included members as well. Also common was the supportive role of faith, spirituality and the church on the lives of participants. Writers (Pachai, 1987; Este & Bernard, 2003; 2006; James et. al., 2010) identify spirituality as a primary form of support. “One primary coping strategy in the lives of people of African descent is the practice of spirituality, a phenomenon that serves as a source of both strength and resilience (James et. al., 2010, p. 135). This was more commonly shared from female participants. James et al. (2010) found that “many women reported that their spirituality and connection to the church helped them to cope” (p. 147). Reflecting on their experiences growing up, participants in the oldest generation age group shared primarily about their involvement in church groups such as Sunday School, the Baptist Youth Fellowship and Canadian Girls in Training, as their community-driven programming. Historically, ANS communities have been tight-knit and united. The church, specifically the AUBA, has always been the central institution for the ANS community as a whole.

For many participants, they experienced the church as central to their communities when they were growing up. Communities were united, with many

referencing the African proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child.” However, when comparing their experiences as a youth growing up to presently, participants indicated that this sense of unity has been lost and the ANS people are more disconnected. My own experience is quite similar. Although I fall into the youngest generation age group, 20-34. growing up, my community was like a family. However, when I return to my home community now, the community unity and orientation are not the same and there is quite a significant disconnect. This was as a concern for the youth who are perceived to not be in touch with their history, values and sense of self. This is also my observation that I have made as well and that it is something that needs to be continued by also enhanced within our communities. Veronica shared her concerns:

*“too many of the negative stereotypes of being Black are portrayed and I think many of our young people are trying to live up to that, no values, no morals and we gotta get back to some of those basics”.- Veronica*

Noted is that there were more culturally specific services available for ANS in the youngest generation age group, 20-34, within education and community-driven programs. Most participants in this group had been involved in the majority of spiritual and educational services and programs including scholarship and bursary opportunities from community-driven organizations and institutions that financially support the academic success of ANS learners. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in church programs and community-driven programs but also receive scholarships and bursaries for post-secondary education, which was a major support for my academic success.

Many participants from the oldest age group, 51-65, spoke of obtaining employment as a priority, and a necessity that was instilled in them by their parents. Some shared that many of their parents had minimal education and therefore did not

encourage them so much to pursue further education. Yet, others had opposite experiences where their parents and grandparents would not accept not obtaining their education as an option. Sherry was one of these participants:

*“my grandparents had a limited education so I knew, and they instilled in me at a young age that you’re going to a university I don’t know what you’re going to take, I don’t know what you’re going to be. So in grade 12, they had enough wisdom to say to me at that time, “you will go further.”*

When there is parental involvement in their children’s education or parental participation in a community-driven program, the study shows that not only do the children benefit but so does the parent. Other scholars (Travis & Leech, 2013; Strayhorn, 2010; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013) have found this to be evident as well. Travis & Leech (2013) assert that increased social support from parents and peers is significantly associated with increased self-esteem. I would agree that for me, parental involvement was essential. As you have read in chapter 2, it was due to the involvement that my parents had in community, and my education that influenced my drive to be the best that I could be academically. I can remember my dad coming on school trips eating “rainbow” bread with me as that was in at the time, or my mom helping me study for my spelling tests each week where I would lie on my back as she called out the words for me to spell. It’s these experiences that I will always remember and pass down to my children.

One participant shared how in some ways, one specific program was the first form of exposure that she had with discovering her true identity and history. *Cassidy* is from a community where she explained was more multicultural and as a result she was not

exposed to racism like other participants shared. She shared her experiences of learning through her son's involvement in a community-driven program:

*“they had started the Saturday School program and I’m a black woman and I’m proud of my heritage and my husband was too and to be honest, it kind of scared me a little bit. I thought Saturday School, talking about Afro-centric -what are you talking about. I’m not from Africa but I did it, I sent him. So I’m 29 by the time I sent [my son] there so that was 20 years ago. It was only then that I learned about my real Blackness.”*

Chapter 2 explains how this program was pivotal in my life as well which speaks to the effectiveness on both the children attending and their parents.

Results also showed that when there is a lack of unity in the community and a collective responsibility only practiced by a small number of community members that often times there is a sense of burn-out and lack of motivation to be involved. This was explained as when the same individuals are constantly trying to restore that unity but there is a lack in cooperation and there is an expectation for those consistently involved to still to get done. Robert and Veronica outline this quite clearly:

*“So there’s a sense in which you can never give enough because you’re never just doing your job right, you are helping your people and the community puts no boundaries on that right. If you’re supposed to work an 8 hour day and you work consistently 10 hour days people will feel like well, where was [name] on Saturday night there was that thing and she wasn’t there.” – Robert*

Similarly Veronica shared:

*“the same folks are sometimes around the table all the time and if you want to get something done then it gets to the same people and then after awhile you're just like oh my gosh can someone else pick up the work you know. You go home you're working, you're at the office working, all of your hours are spent working and so that's exhausting and it's not good physically. I see some of that and so it's really knowing from within when you can call it- number one you can say no, I'm not doing it and then just calling it a day and say I'm not going to do anything more.”*

It is important to acknowledge the role of allies and those who have been supportive to some of the participants who are not of African descent. Though, the majority of participants had more negative experiences with support in school settings with teachers having low expectations of them, particularly for the male participants, as well as the Eurocentric curriculum, there were some that spoke of the positive supports that they had through allies. Ben shared:

*Well, I can reflect back to in the school, that you know there was always that again, the lower expectation and you felt the kind of I guess you call it the lack of interest from the teachers of the day when I was a youth in schools, it wasn't expected that you would do well because of your color.*

Similarly Carlos also supported this idea of low expectation labelling:

*In junior high I was very I won't say destructive because that is the term that my teachers would use so I didn't really pay attention in school and I don't think it was so much not paying attention I just think that I didn't really understand the material, like what was being taught so I wasn't reading at a level where I should've been reading and I just didn't care like I just couldn't care less.. I think for me, I was labeled as somebody that was destructive as a child so I would sort of act accordingly.*

Many in age group 20-34, shared their experiences with positive teachers, while few in the two older generation age groups. These results suggest that non African descent individuals and groups can serve as supports to ANS and can leave major impacts on their lives. I agree that allies of European descent play an important role in the advocacy and fight for social justice in our society as they are the group that hold privilege and power. With their support, we work together to create the necessary changes. Bishop (2002) discusses her experience with the concept of being an ally and the six steps involved in becoming an ally. She explains that one must understand oppression overall, understanding different oppressions and how they are both connected, disconnected and reinforced by each other, have consciousness and healing, and become a worker for your

own liberation. After understanding the former, you can consciously becoming an ally and continue to maintain hope.

### **CULTURALLY SPECIFIC COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROGRAMS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON ANS**

The findings suggest that there were generational differences when it came to the types of participation that participants had in programs. However, common impacts were that of the development of sense of self and identity; self-esteem and confidence; sense of belonging; academic achievement and success; individual growth; mentorship and role modeling; giving back/leadership; and the impact on health and well-being. Reflecting back on my experiences, each of these themes contributed to the impact of the programs that I participated in on my life journey. All of the youngest generation, ages 20-34, shared experiences of participating as a student, camper, youth or someone who was being taught or mentored by a leader. Participants in the two older generations, 35-50 and 51-65, all discussed their participatory roles as being both in the same as the youngest generation but also that of a leadership or teaching role. This was shared as what participants identified as giving back to their communities. Almost all of the participants talked about the importance and value of giving back in various forms. As described in chapter 2, the value of giving back in whatever way that you can offer was instilled in me at an early age through my parents but also community-driven programs. The results provided evidence that the community-driven programs fostered the teaching of giving back through observation and also implementation.

In line with giving back was the idea of mentorship, role modeling and leadership. Jasmine eloquently defines what she means by this:

*“I actually want kids to look up to me. I actually want to be an elder in a community because elder to me does that mean like you’re old, an elder is supposed to be someone who is a leader in the community and that is what I want to be. I strive to be an elder” – Jasmine*

All participants shared a collective view of having responsibility to give back the ANS community in some way. They also expressed the importance of having mentorship and role modeling in their experiences with participating in culturally specific community-driven programs.

Gender differences did indeed present when it came to certain culturally specific community-driven programs, such as those involving sports. Just under half of the male participants identified sports, in particular basketball, as a huge support in their life. Further, they expressed that it was not only through the physical sport that they found support in self-expression but also through the coaches who taught them life skills and how to conduct themselves as young Black men. Noteworthy was the specificity around Black male mentors and role models. This experience was shared in particularly among the youngest, 20-34 and middle 35-50, generation age groups. Wade shared:

*“I was very fortunate to have a number of African Nova Scotian strong role models around me specifically male that help steer me in the right direction, that helped me make good decisions um, I think those were all things that I think are paramount for young people to be successful and I also think its paramount for young Black males to be successful.”*

This form of support provided the greatest gender analysis in this study as the results show that it is more common for ANS males to find support in sports compared to ANS females. Bernard’s (2009) study highlighted the experiences of Black men in the Diaspora and the impact that mentorship and role model had on their survival. “If Black men can provide negative influences, then they can provide positive influences by diverting their energies. Even without full opportunity, Black men have potential. Couple



that with motivation and you have a positive role model” (p. 87). It is evident that sports play a major supportive role in the lives of males, specifically, ANS males. This is in line with the societal stereotypes regarding males and sports as well as more specific stereotypical views of males of African descent and basketball. However, for the males in this study, basketball was not just about the sport itself, but also about the mentorship demonstrated by their coaches as well as the life skills learned. These participants were able to learn and be taught, and mentored through sport.

By contrast however, the female participants did not share much about having a gender specific role model or mentor in their lives when they indicated the support of mentors and leaders. Female participants were also less likely to mention sports as a form of support. This might contribute to the stereotypical implications and marketing around sports being male dominated with little to no place for females. Females are often discouraged from being competitive and athletic, hence the lack of reference to sport by females in this study.

These findings provide evidence that community – driven sports teams are not solely for recreational purposes. They also develop many life skills both directly and indirectly, through mentorship and role modeling, in addition to opportunities to travel and build life-long relationships.

Common among genders, all generation age groups, geographical location and culturally specific community-driven program was the opportunity to build relationships and develop friendships, which is supported in the literature (Travis & Leech, 2013; Strayhorn, 2010). For many participants, friendships that were developed through

programs are still consistent in their lives today. Many participants spoke of the importance of being around other ANS peers that share a common experience from both the same and also different communities. This holds evident in my life as I have met many of my closest friends through culturally-specific community-driven programs attended over ten years ago.

Although similarities in ANS communities overall, it is important to note the differences and uniqueness as well. Study participants reside in various parts of Nova Scotia providing a range of experiences, in particular, rural compared to urban. Participants expressed that often times, rural ANS communities do not have access to the same opportunities as the urban ANS communities and that this presents as a barrier. There seemed to be a greater sense of community pride amongst urban participants. Rural participants highlighted more incidents of racism and less access to particular cultural resources. 45% of the participants come from rural ANS communities compared to 55% of urban residents. Results suggest that ANS need to stay connected across the province, as Imani states when referring to a community-driven program,

*“to celebrate the diversity and to recognize that even though we are diverse in our locations geographically that there were these core elements of who we were- that we worked on collectivity over a year of our academics, or 3 years or 5 years or how many years CAYG was involved in your school and you came out being proud.”*

A few participants living in rural communities also experienced feeling behind in their cultural awareness compared to urban participants, yet, were grateful for the opportunity to participate in culturally specific community-driven programs when the opportunity

arose. Few participants further explained their feelings of not necessarily feeling as if they belonged in a different ANS community setting. Kaleb asserted:

*“it’s really good to have programs that have people who look like you, who have some understanding of what the African Nova Scotian life is like and that understanding that everybody could be a little bit difference. The rural experience verses the city, I think there was a difference when I got here, people seemed to be talking about more than they were in the rural community in some respect and I just think that people coming together and talking about what the issues are but also thinking about some reasonable solutions for them so problem solving around that you know, and respecting difference in terms of like I said the city and the rural experience.”*

An area of concern that was identified by participants was in relation to the way we as people of African descent view each other. Participants shared their thoughts on the need to address the skin complexion and hair texture issues. Bertram raised, *“why are we pointing out who is light skinned versus dark skinned.”* It was not until I moved to Dartmouth that I recognized how fair skinned I was as it was quite often and still is pointed out to me by other people of African descent. At times this bothers me because I almost feel like it is in a sense devaluing or minimizing my racial identity as an African Nova Scotian woman and my experiences.

Also raised was the need for community education and dialogue regarding the collective identity of all members of the African Diaspora including first generation Africans and people of Caribbean descent needs to be addressed. Other authors have also found this to be evident (Este & Bernard, 2003; Ruck, 2014). *“The Black community in Nova Scotia in particular, and I think in Canada, is a divided one. Terribly divided. Those who come from Africa have a place, those who come from the Caribbean have a place, those who come from the U.K. have a place and so on”* (Pachai as cited in Ruck, 2014, p. 44). Too often have we heard comments referring to people of African descent not

indigenous to Nova Scotia as “them” or “not one of us.” These issues need to be addressed in order to restore the community unity that appears to be fading.

Overall, the findings provide evidence that through community supports such as family, mentors and role models, spirituality, and programs that participants can overcome barriers such as racism and internalized racism. It takes the development of community and self-resiliency to fight against the trauma of daily racism and discrimination to sustain one’s health and well-being. Through community-driven programs, there are positive impacts that are left on the life journey of ANS study participants. The findings assert that these programs foster a Sense of self & Identity; Self-esteem & Confidence; Sense of Belonging; Academic Achievement Success; Individual; Growth; Mentorship & Role models; Giving Back/Leadership; and Health & Well-Being. Additionally, there is a role for allies not of African descent in our fight for justice. Although there is a need for more community unity, which includes cooperation and responsibility on the part of all community members, communication and education, participants remain hopeful in that we can restore our communities back to their traditional greatness. Is this lack of community unity within the ANS community perceived as a new concept? Is there a romanticization of the past? Was there always unity amongst our people historically speaking? This idea of a lack of unity within the community is not a something new that we are experiencing in our communities. One could argue that a lack of unity could actually date back to early settlement in Nova Scotia. When the promises made upon arrival were unfulfilled, some of the Black loyalist left for Sierra Leone and some stayed. Could this be one of the first examples of

community being un-unified? What is important to consider is how we grapple with our differences acknowledging that we are not homogenous.

Chapter 6 provided an extensive analysis of research findings with the voice of the researcher intersected within. The final chapter will conclude this paper with a discussion of the current study findings and how they link to previous studies. It will also present recommendations, study strengths and limitations and implications for social policy and social work practice.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This chapter links the results of the current study with findings from previous studies, and discusses the implications of the research findings for policy and social work practice. It also provides first voice recommendations but also those of the researcher for how to improve our communities, education and programs for African Nova Scotians. Strengths and limitations of the study will also be presented. Considering that there is no previous qualitative research that has examined the impacts of culturally specific community-driven programs on the life journey of African Nova Scotians, this study offered participants the opportunity to share their experiences with participating in these programs. Thus, in some ways, they have provided evaluative measures of the mentioned programs, through their sharing of the impact they have had on their lives.

The results of this study provided evidence that culturally specific community-driven programs do indeed leave impacts on the life journey of ANSs. Further, these impacts as a result of this study have been overall positive. As stated in chapter 3, due to the minimal research and literature available in Canada regarding people of African descent and this topic, I had to explore research outside of the African Canadian and Nova Scotian context. However, Klinck, et al., (n.d.) present similarities with the Aboriginal communities in Canada. Other studies (Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Hodge & Jackson, 2010) have also found positive impacts through culturally specific program specifically with African American and Native American youth with these two populations sharing some similar findings in what is required in a culturally specific program. These studies all found that these programs are necessary for the health and well-being of those participating, specifically African American youth. As a participant

in culturally-specific programs, the impact that has been left on my life journey has been unquestionably positive. It is through participating in those programs that I have learned about myself in a way that I did not have the opportunity to in the education system from grade school to graduate school. Therefore, these programs have provided me with the awareness of self and the self-love that I needed for my health and well-being. My experiences have been shared through Auto-ethnography which has also been tied to both AT and CRT in how I have been able to center both my participants and myself in the research by also recognizing the societal and systematic impacts on our lives.

Although a variety in the programs referenced, there was a similar learning and appreciation for race, culture, heritage and lived experience in each. Identified in the programs were the fostering of core developments such as Sense of self & Identity; Self-esteem & Confidence; Sense of Belonging; Academic Achievement; Success; Individual Growth; Mentorship & Role models; Giving Back/Leadership; and Health & Well-Being. Many other studies (Bathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008; Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Hodge & Jackson, 2010; BLAC, 1994) have found that culturally specific programming must encompass a number of key components. Some of the key themes include identity and cultural identity formation, sense of belonging, mentorship, the interconnection of human life, nature and spirituality, fostering heritage and cultural restoration, self-esteem and self-evaluation. All of these components have aided in the positive perception that I have of myself as well as my mentors, peers and community. This positive perception has led to the educational ambitions that I have. A consistent overall theme in the literature reviewed as well as through the current research findings is the evident connection that

the key themes have to academic performance (BLAC, 1994; Travis & Leech, 2013; Este & Bernard, 2003; Strayhorn, 2010; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013).

James et al. (2010) assert that when there is a strong racial identity where one can cope with racism and discrimination, that this has most often been developed through an individual's sense of belonging to their community. A true sense of belonging includes a common or collective identity or experience that can be of support to them. This has also been found in this study. While collective or community unity supports each other, it had been found through this research and other studies (Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013; CCL, 2008; Travis & Leech, 2013; BLAC, 1994), that parental involvement and mentorship have been necessary in particular with academic success. It was found that parental involvement and peer support were significant supports for participants in this study. Similarly, Bernard and Este (2009) discuss parental involvement as a support and key to survival and tool for empowerment. Similarly, increased confidence predicts several youth development dimensions including academic competence (Murry, Berkel, Brody, Chen, & Miller, 2009; Toldson, 2008 as cited in Travis & Leech, 2013). The constant affirmation that I could achieve anything that I set my mind to, not only by my parents but also the mentors and role models in my life and through these programs, I began developing that self-confidence that I needed in the academic world. Mentors and community leaders also play a vital role in strengthening racial and cultural identity as they hugely impacts the lives of youth. The findings from this study supported by previous literature provides evidence that cultural identity being also associated with increased academic engagement and performance.



In addition, community involvement has also been the preliminary venue for the development of many of the core constructs identified. Travis & Leech (2013) suggest that youth that increase their sense of community and become more engaged citizens can reinforce their moral identity and mastery processes. Participants in this study have shared how their increased awareness of self and community has encouraged community involvement. As I reflect, the more community involvement I had, the more I felt a sense of belonging and responsibility toward my community. Similarly, for participants in this study they were able to reflect on their roles within their communities and how giving back was a priority to them. Many of the male participants, who talked about sports as their greatest support through programming, discussed their ways of giving back through coaching basketball and striving to be the mentors and coaches to young Black men as their coaches were to them. More of the women participants spoke about the role of spirituality in their lives and how this was passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. Furthermore, they stressed that they have or will pass it along to the next generation.

It is interesting to note however, that when there was not a great sense of feeling of belonging, based on factors such as not living directly in the community as well as rural and urban differences, there was not as much of a commitment to giving back. When there is priority to give back, this links empowerment to community and citizenship as “the process by which adolescents develop the consciousness, skills and power necessary to envision personal or collective wellbeing and understand their role within opportunities to transform social conditions to achieve that well-being” (Travis &

Leech, 2013, p. 103). This notion of community citizenship was referenced in this study through the need and responsibility to give back through leadership within one's community.

Similar to the current study findings, Alford (2003) suggests that there are links between racial-ethnic socialization and positive youth development outcomes through one's self-esteem. The current study found that ANS students have faced and currently face a variety of barriers and challenges within the education system including under-representation of Black teachers and principals, negative stereotyping of Black students, lower expectations of Black students, a curriculum that is not reflective of them, and the persistence of racist incidents and name calling" (BLAC Report, 1994; Brathwaite & James, 1996; Gulson & Webb, 2013; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008; James & Lloyd, 2013; James et al, 2010; Este & Bernard, 2003; Strayhorn, 2010; Travis & Leech, 2013). Participants voiced their concerns with the education system and based on the experiences shared, there are still a significant number of gaps to be addressed when it comes to the ANS learner. There is also the question of what is the most suitable or appropriate form of learning.

The educational system is designed for formal learning which has been in many cases challenging for ANS learning. Within the ANS community, much non-formal learning and teaching takes place which often goes unrecognized and unvalued. It is worth considering alternate styles of learning within the education system to work to meet the needs of diverse groups and diverse learning styles. Despite the educational barriers and challenges faced by ANSs, through the role of the church, spirituality, community, and culturally specific community driven programs, ANSs in this study have

been able to cope with and overcome the barriers and challenges they faced. Finding people and places that value you is crucial to one's self-esteem and their self-evaluation. For me, it was through each one of these supports that I felt the same sense of affirmation.

Noteworthy, is the appreciation that participants had for the opportunity to reflect on the impact that these programs had on their life journey. Although participants may have done this subconsciously, they did not indicate that they had intentionally reflected previous to this study.

*“I think that you know, some of the questions required some depth and intersection and that was a good thing.” – Robert*

In addition, the appreciation for this research exploring the impacts of such programs was also acknowledged by many of the participants. Thus, this study affirms that there is a tremendous need for culturally specific programs that foster core components to contribute to the cultural identity of ANSs that will support them and contribute to their overall health and well-being.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Research has been conducted (Lee, 2009) to measure the effectiveness of programs as a result of the BLAC Report on Education, however, there are still a number of culturally specific community-driven programs that have not even been measured for their impact on the life journey of ANSs until the current study. There is a crucial need for outcome research examining the efficacy of culturally specific interventions designed specifically for ethnic minority youth (Hodge & Jackson, 2010) to provide evidence of the impacts that they leave on the life journey. Through this study, results indicate that

these programs are absolutely necessary in the healthy development of ANS people, communities and learners. In addition, they also present the need to ensure the core values and intentions of the programs are being fulfilled.

It is important to be mindful of the suggestions that participants brought forward in what they would like to see for the next generation to contribute to similar impacts that they have experienced.

*“Black children need to be participating in these programs to get the affirmation that they need because we are out there battling at war everyday with all these micro-aggressions that we have to handle.” - Jude*

The results provide recommendations for community, and community organizations, community-driven programs and education. The recommendations are identified under the following themes:

*Communication within Communities to Establish Unity*

1. Host Quarterly Community/Family Meetings within ANS Communities.
2. Host Semi-annual Community/Family Meetings Rotating in Provincial Regions.

*Equitable Access for ANS within Community, Education and Employment*

1. Increased awareness of Culturally Specific programs services available in Nova Scotia.
2. Provincial funding allotted to any ANS community requesting a program or service already implemented in another ANS community.
3. The development of culturally specific content (visuals, reading material, resource people) for ANS learners across the lifespan.

*Marketing & Promotion of Culturally Specific Community-Driven Programs*

1. Market and promote with past participants who can reflect on the lasting positive impact of such programs on their life.
2. Use social media for recruitment
3. Specific target population promotion for programs developed and available for all ANS of various genders, age groups and locations.

*Evaluation of Culturally Specific Community-Driven Programs*

1. Consider evaluative measures when implementing culturally specific community-driven programs followed by a 5-year check-in with past participants to identify the impacts through evidence-based research.

These themes provide specific detail of recommendations below.

### **COMMUNICATION WITHIN COMMUNITIES TO ESTABLISH UNITY**

Lee (2009) found that better communication between ANS communities and schools and between communities and organizations working on behalf of ANS students was needed. The current study suggests that six years later, this is still necessary. Further recommended was a need for communities to engage in dialogue around divisions within the community and the historical implications of it whether it is skin complexion or place of origin. Kaleb states:

*“we didn’t do it enough but we talked about our own kind of issues between each other so people who have light skin, people who have dark skin, people who did something to their hair, other people wanted their hair to be natural, you know, what was that about anyway. And this whole acknowledgement that we have internalized some of these issues that we complain about right, we have internalized racism to some extent and that is not something that we should just pretend that we didn’t do and that it has a face and its implications but it doesn’t take away who we are as a people and we don’t do it enough because we are so busy fending off what I would call like racist attacks. We don’t have enough time to talk about how we handle each other at times, there needs to be workshops, there needs to be things like that where it is safe and we can just talk to each other and we can do it in a respectful way and not blow up on each other because you know, because it’s really too close to the home you know what I mean.”*

Kaleb continues to speak to the division among the African Diaspora in Nova Scotia:

*“The other thing I think that needs to happen as well is talking about the new immigrants that came in who are of African descent, how we handle them – they’re like they’re other people, they aren’t really part of us, they came in with skills, they came in with sets of paradigms and things like that. When we look back on it in a way they were kind of threatening to us because it meant that now*

*there are going to be people to compete for the scarce resources, the jobs in stuff that are going to be available to us that the White people don't care about because all they see is a Black man, that's good enough, that satisfies our quota or whatever but it doesn't really address the injustice that people who are indigenous to Nova Scotia experience and that we still need to be acknowledged for that and have an opportunity to get a job after we been through all this and then having someone kind of swooping in and taking the job that we are trying to compete for, it hurts and it's upsetting. Then it ends up getting turned around where we fight with one another about that kind of stuff so I think that's kind of the thing that is still left for us to do as a people - we need to find more time to talk about that."*

Kaleb also raises how certain ideologies and structures that have historically pitted people of African descent against each other have not been acknowledged as something that has been developed within the larger society. Historically, there has been certain ways in which White people have intentionally created divisions amongst people of African descent. Razack and Jeffery (2002) explain that CRT gives power to the voices of those dispossessed or marginalized to recreate and inject new ways of seeing and intervening in people's lives. Through Kaleb, we can recognize the multiple levels of the implications of racism.

The following recommendations are put forth to address this gap:

1. Host Quarterly Community/Family Meetings Within ANS Communities
2. Host Semi-annual Community/Family Meetings Rotating in Provincial Regions
3. Host Annual Community/Family Meetings specifically inviting non-indigenous ANS community members (Immigrant community etc.)

## **EQUITABLE ACCESS**

Findings suggest that there is still unequal access when it comes to resources in the community, education, and employment opportunities.

*“well I guess in essence I think that I too, I'm learning every day and you know and I have to say that I'm humble and very appreciative of the organizations that I've mentioned and those I haven't mentioned because they're all a vast part and I say my but I mean our being as people of colour. And it's sad that, to see, you know A: that it's still needed because we haven't gotten to a part where it's automatically incorporated, that these programs are needed. But I just hope that the longevity... that they see it as a staple and not just as a temporary solution. It's a permanent fix.”– Betty*

She continues to say:

*“I wish that [ANS young people] would recognize and see the importance of these programs and access them and take the responsibility seriously. That this is an opportunity, a gift, of programs like TYP, you know and acknowledging BBI and ABSW and the struggles that they've gone through. So recognizing all of our programs and the people behind the scenes, who are leading the charge on these things and recognizing what they've gone through to take... to appreciate and to carry the torch forward.”*

The need for equitable access was also identified as needed within certain communities, specifically more rural communities. Melanie shared:

*“within this community there's not very many community driven programs for our African Nova Scotian children. There's only one that I'm familiar with, possibly two but I would love to see a broader range of programs and you know, I think what we need is to get together and be more supportive to the younger ones. I don't really know how to go about it, whether to get government involvement or to just establish something on our own but I think it is important to focus on the younger generation coming and to try to have them involved in programs such as the Saturday program because I feel that was a great benefit and that helped out with a lot of things with children learning, their confidence, their self-esteem, you know, with the spelling bees and learning and their vocabulary and their grammar. It's all the little things that helped to build their confidence and if we don't have those programs or continue on with those programs, I think there are still going to be children getting lost along the way so I would like to see those kind of programs still exist.”*

Similarly, Jude asserted:

*“increased access because you know, some children only get to experience one of these events going to a career jam maybe when they are in grade 10 but they struggled with being the only Black student in a rural high school for their whole lives. If they could have increased access that they could experience at an earlier*

*age to have these experiences on a much more regular basis to again, encounter all the negativity that's out there.” – Jude*

Currently, there are similar programs available in more rural communities as they are in urban communities, such as the Cultural Academic and Enrichment programs being a province-wide initiative. However, I would recommend that we look at province wide cultural enhancement to break down the rural and urban divides identified.

The following recommendations are suggested:

4. Increased awareness of Culturally Specific programs services available in Nova Scotia
5. Provincial funding allotted to any ANS community requesting a program or service already implemented in another ANS community

## **CONTENT**

Participants commented on the changes that need to happen in the education systems to reflect the cultural experiences of ANSs. There is research that support this idea for people of African descent in Canada (Brathwaite & James, 1996; Canadian Council on Learning, 2008; Gulson & Web, 2013; James & Lloyd, 2013) and also in parts of the United States (Travis & Leech, 2013; Strayhorn, 2010;) as well more specifically, in Nova Scotia as a result of the Black Report on Education (1994), yet, we still see gaps in the system.

*“I’d like to see culturally specific and culturally appropriate programming available from birth to death for all Nova Scotians. [...] Wouldn’t it be great if we had a universal childcare system in Nova Scotia and in every childcare setting there were culturally appropriate caregivers who could ensure that programming in that daycare was culturally appropriate for the Black kids there. [...] Wouldn’t it be great if every public school had the capacity to deliver culturally appropriate programming for Black youth and in every elementary school so that you didn’t have to go to a special segregated Black school or that there could be special classes and special programming not just in the regular curriculum having conversed the curriculum but I’m talking about in addition to that special*



*opportunities for cultural learning and exploration for African Nova Scotians.”- Robert*

Additionally, the need for data collection for ANS learners is necessary to provide evidence of where ANS learners are experiencing challenges in school. I would stress the importance of this for the academic achievement success of ANS learners.

The recommendation is as follows:

1. The development of culturally specific content (visuals, reading material, resource people) for ANS learners across the lifespan

## **MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

Marketing and Promotion came out as specific recommendations for culturally specific community-driven programs. Participants raised their concerns around the means of advertisement and recruitment strategies as they reflected on their former participant role and then their new participatory roles. Jasmine explained:

*“I also found that there are less students that are attending and I feel that has to do with marketing strategies. Overall, I think it was an amazing experience for me as a youth and even chaperoning I feel like it just brought me back to a place where like oh my gosh that was me like 10 years [...]but I just think that again with marketing, the programs need to actually go into the communities and say this is what is going on, this is what is happening maybe even bring past students that can kind of speak to what they have seen go on throughout the summer and kind of advocate for the program so that other students can see that okay that person attended and maybe I can do the same thing type of thing. I think they are great programs and initiatives for students but if the students don’t really know about them it kind of takes away from it.”*

I am in agreement that there needs to be more effort into recruitment strategies that are relevant to the current generation. Additionally, it was stressed the importance of culturally specific community-driven programs for all ANS.

*“I just, I guess like to stress the importance, to me, that the importance that I feel of culturally specific programs and also just trying to create more opportunities for those programs to be offered. For example a person might not face a lot of barriers in education or in their everyday life but that doesn't mean that those types of programs and things aren't important as well to them. Because sometimes people, I think, it's like, "Oh you need these opportunities for people that are struggling and doing this and doing that." Which is true but sometimes they're also important for people that might not necessarily have a lot of barriers or challenges but it's still an opportunity to learn and to grow and to do something with members of your community and it creates a sense of community too.” - Simone*

Recommended is the following:

1. Market and promote with past participants who can reflect on the lasting positive impact of such programs on their life.
2. Use social media for recruitment
3. Specific target population promotion for programs developed and available for all ANS of various genders, age groups and locations.

## **EVALUATION**

Although participants did not identify specifically evaluation as a recommendation, through the results, they shared the necessity for culturally specific community-driven programs for the next generation youth as a result of the impacts that they had on their own lives. Jude expressed:

*“I would just like to expand the idea of this targeting programming, Afro-centric programming even to things like segregated schools [...] increasing the number of opportunities for targeting afro-centric programs for me is key for this next generation of individuals. We grew up within the community, we grew up with communities that were intact with social institutions like the church, these are all being eroded now so what do these kids have to rely on and how do they find their way in terms of who they are and where they belong.”*

Finally Bertram suggested that:

*“I think that the kids and we certainly have enough research that tells us this, our kids do very well before they get to school and then something happens. I really think that those programs allow kids to develop this sort of internal resilient cultural piece that allows them to be bi-cultural in school.”*

Jasmine and Wade also pay tribute to these programs, which have pushed them to continue on their journey.

*“I kind of feel like these camps have helped me to do all of these things as well as my family but the camps have really helped my self-esteem just to be like okay, Jasmine you can do it because you’ve seen people who went through these programs, who have good families, who have done these things so you can do it so I would say overall the camps are fabulous and it just encourages me to do more and continue to do better .”– Jasmine*

*“and of course what it does for me is it continues to push me along my journey because I think that that’s one of the most important forces there can be is that you’re doing something every day that has a purpose and that purpose, I believe should be reflected in the lives that you touch and the people that you are connected to and the way that you make young people feel. I think all those things are necessary and so for me, it’s really one of those things that when I’m successful you know, we are successful because whatever I have that I can do to improve the condition of anybody else that looks like me, I will do.”– Wade*

This provides evidence that the effectiveness of culturally specific community-driven programs need to be evaluated and recognized. I suggest the following:

1. Consider evaluative measures when implementing culturally specific community-driven programs followed by a 5 year check-in with past participants to identify the impacts through evidence-based research.

Additionally, some participants expressed their appreciation for research which gives value to the impact that these programs have on the life journey of ANS. Jude concluded:

*“It has been impacted immeasurable, absolutely immeasurably. The experiences that I had growing up which shapes me as a young adult, which shapes my worldview in where I am now. It’s everything and I’m glad that individuals are*

*doing research like this, hopefully identifying similar themes. It affirms that need for this afro-centric programming, for targeting programming.”*

These recommendations reflect the voices of study participants as a result of their experiences living in Nova Scotia and having the opportunities to participate in culturally specific community-driven programs. They are also supported by myself, the researcher and former and present participant in culturally specific community-driven programs.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

This study is the first of its kind to explore the impacts of culturally specific community-driven programming on the life journey of ANS. It has laid the foundation for further research to be carried out in examining the effectiveness of culturally specific programs, services and resources for this group. It provided an opportunity for ANS across the life span to share their experiences growing up in the province and finding the necessary supports to overcome barriers and challenges specific to racism and discrimination and their historical implications. It also served as a process of self-reflection and self-analysis of the impacts that culturally specific community-driven programs have had on their life journey. The identification of the factors that contribute to the impact of these programs on one's life provides an in-depth understanding of what is necessary in the healthy cultural development, as well as the overall health and well-being of ANSs. This has great implications for community organizations, policymakers and social work practitioners.

Culturally specific education should be reflected in all major systems, including education, justice and health to reflect the cultural reality of ANSs among other marginalized groups. While there are culturally specific community-driven programs for

ANSs, there should be emphasis on enhancing and tailoring them to the new generations as time progresses. This also includes the appropriate funding allocations to develop, market and deliver programs. Further, future studies exploring the notions of culturally specific, relevant, sensitive and competent service need to include the experiences of ANSs and their unique lived experiences in this province.

For social work practice, social work practitioners need to be culturally aware as well as culturally specific in addressing the needs of this group acknowledging that experiences are unique, for example, those of rural and urban geographical locations. Therefore the importance of using a holistic approach in practice with this group is essential. Using a holistic approach is the basis of AT and practice, which allows practitioners to examine and gain a better understanding of the barriers faced linking to social structures in society which bring upon oppression. Additionally, using these approaches practitioners can better understand the positive impacts that culturally specific practice can have on ANSs. AT and practice enables practitioners to consider the family and community values as well as the beliefs of ANS and how they relate to that individual or group (Sheile, 1997; Este & Bernard, 2003; Lynn 2005).

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

This research found that it is within education that ANS experience many barriers and challenges when it comes to their cultural identity. Other writers have also found that children are more likely to engage in learning when they are included (BLAC, 1994; James & Lloyd, 2013; Travis & Leech, 2013). This research has suggested that educators need to be culturally aware of the curriculum developed and delivered within the

classroom setting. Curriculum developers need to also consider this when creating curriculum content as well as professors in post-secondary institutions. Educators need to ensure the reflection of ANS people and culture is present within the education system. Participants discussed the role of allies and how this also supported them specifically in their educational settings. Bishop (2002) discusses the six steps involved in becoming an ally that educators and other professions involved in the education system could model.

Educators also need to consider the importance of non-formal learning as something that has been practiced within the ANS communities for centuries.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

There is a need for students in post-secondary institutions to be educated and trained with a level of cultural awareness in their respective fields of study. For social work, students need to be exposed to CRT, and AT in both the Bachelor and Masters level of study. It is not sufficient to solely be taught frameworks such as anti-oppressive theory as a blanket understanding of working with all oppressed groups. There are also implications for education programs in line with social work, courses need to be creative in their pedagogy and it is recommended that there be opportunities for exposure with diverse groups. The content must also engage students in culturally appropriate ways that challenge their ways of thinking and understanding culturally diverse groups.

Bernard, Issari, Moriah, Njiwaji, Obgan and Tolliver (2012) discuss the role of maternal advocacy in the academy with the work of early feminists highlighting themes of empowerment, narrative, agency and the motherline. They also discuss the institution of motherhood and the role it plays in challenging oppression and creating new direction

for future generations. Bernard (2009) also talks about the significance of mothers to Black men as pivotal in their survival. The notion of othermothering, sharing mothering responsibility was also raised quite often in this study, especially by participants who were mothers. It also aligns with the Africentric framework which acknowledges the collective responsibility and nature of people of African descent. Another place in learning, specifically for the ANS community is for intergenerational learning and dialogue that could be facilitated through such learning experiences.

### **IMPLICATION FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITY**

Evident through this research is the need for unity restoration in the ANS community. There is a need for dialogue around specific issues that will help to reconnect individuals to their community. The ANS community dynamics are changing however, the community still remains a major support for ANS learners. An area that can be enhanced is programs for adults to meet certain culturally needs of this group. We need to consider if the adult literacy programs address the culture piece adequately as it relates to adults, along with the learning goals of the curriculum. For example, one of the study participants explains how she first learned about her racial identity as a parent of a child involved in a culturally specific community-driven program. The impact that this program left on her as an indirect participant was quite significant. Intergenerational learning and dialogue is also an area the community can emphasize, as some community organizations, such as the Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW), are beginning to do. ABSW has developed a number of cultural intergenerational learning programs through dance, history gathering, computer tutoring and dialogue circles discussing community violence. Their most recent project was the development of a cookbook of

traditional recipes made more nutritious. Both senior and youth community members contributed to this book and it is an excellent example of an informal, intergenerational education project. More opportunities like this are sorely needed.

## **STRENGTHS OF STUDY**

Using a qualitative research design offered study participants the opportunity to share their experiences through their own words and interpretations. Participants were recruited to participate in the research, therefore those who participated did so as a result of their own personal interests.

To provide a better analysis of the impacts of programs over the life journey, a reflective approach was used through the design of the interview guide and the selected age groups. With this use of auto-ethnography, I as the researcher was able to present my own experiences throughout the research to remain authentic in my approach and to mitigate the potential for biases that may have presented. This also made for a richer analysis as I was also a participant in the research.

Although the sample size of thirty-one (31) participants was small in relation to the number of ANS who have participated in culturally specific community-driven programs, it was large enough to reach across three generations age groups, gender and geographical locations across the province.

Lastly, this topic has not been researched previously, therefore, this project provides evidence of the need to evaluate programs and to conduct evidence-based research with participants of programs.



## **LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

The primary limitation of this study although identified as also a strength is that it includes a sample size of thirty – one (31) which is small compared to the number of ANSs who have participated in culturally specific community-driven programs. Therefore, this sample size cannot be generalized and should only be identified as the experiences of study participants and not all ANSs. In order to gain a broader perspective, more research including ANSs who participated in culturally specific community-driven programs needs to be conducted.

Another limitation was that the majority of study participants had positive experiences in culturally specific community driven programs. With all participants being well educated and now established, there was also a class bias. What is missing are the narratives of people who have not achieved the level of success but have had positive experiences in culturally specific community-driven programs. As well, missing are the narratives of participants who have had negative or less affirming experiences in these types of programs. Finally, ANS community members ages 65 and older were not provided the opportunity to share their experiences in this study. However, each of these limitations can all be identified as areas for future work and research.

This topic seemed to be of great interest within the ANS community and unfortunately, due to the study's capacity, there were interested people that could not be included. I believe that the interest in this study stems from the positive impacts that the majority of participants experience when participating in culturally specific community-driven programs. People want to share their positive experiences in hopes that these

programs will continue to be present within the community and provide opportunities for the younger generations.

## **CONCLUSION**

Acknowledging the few limitations, overall, the results suggest that ANSs are faced with a variety of barriers and challenges throughout their life journey, which is manifested in racism and discrimination, internalized racism, the education system and employment setting and the impact this all has on one's health and well-being. It was also found that through supports such as family, the ANS community, faith, peers, representation of people of African Descent, mentorship/role models, and community-driven programs that ANSs were able to overcome these barriers and challenges. Most profoundly, the research identifies the overall positive impacts that participating in culturally specific community-driven programs have on the life journey of ANSs. This was acknowledged through Sense of self & Identity; Self-esteem & Confidence; Sense of Belonging; Academic Achievement Success; Individual Growth; Mentorship & Role models; Giving Back/Leadership; and Health & Well-Being.

The impacts of these programs are not only individualized but also contribute to the well-being of the ANS community as they instill in participants the value of giving back and community leadership. Thus, through these programs, there is an expectation that what is learned would be taken back into their communities to create more programs that support the lives of ANSs. Through the researcher's voice as well as those of the participants, personal experiences have been shared as well as an analysis of the how these personal experiences are made political. Societal and systematic implications have been applied to this study through AT, CRT and Auto-ethnography. Finding support has

been a source of survival of ANSs. The study identifies the need for culturally specific community-driven programs as their impact on the life journey of ANSs is essential to the individual and collective health and well-being (Travis & Leech, 2013; Alford, 2003; Staryhorn, 2010; Este & Bernard, 2003; BLAC 1994). Wade summarized nicely:

*“I would say that I can’t put a number or a figure. There’s no words to describe the impact on my life. Like I said, I mean at 8,9,10,11,12 right up to 16, I’m traveling, I’m meeting people, I’m having new opportunities, and it shaped me as a person. You’re in and out of different environments and those are things that you don’t reflect on until you’re much older about your abilities to sort of you know, roll in certain environments and be comfortable. My life has been impacted a lot simply because exponentially, I had the opportunity to meet people in different walks of life and I had the opportunity to have friends all through the country, all through Canada, all through the United States and other parts of the world. I don’t think you could put anything on the impact because it’s built the way that my life has become and I guess the beauty of it all is that the friends that are within my community that I would’ve hung with since 8, 9 years of age are all great friends to this day, are all professionals, who are all people that seek each other and get together from time to time. Those are the things about a sport experience that you want, you want to build lifelong friendships and you want to build lifelong relationships and like I said, there’s no- I don’t even know if I have the words really because it’s all I’ve ever known.”*

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Ethics Approval Letter**



**Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board**

**Letter of Approval**

December 02, 2014

Ms Rajean Boudreau

Health Professions\Social Work

Dear Rajean,

**REB #:** 2014-3372

**Project Title:** Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific ' Community-Driven' Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians

**Effective Date:** December 02, 2014

**Expiry Date:** December 02, 2015

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application for research involving humans and found the proposed research to be in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. This approval will be in effect for 12 months as indicated above. This approval is subject to the conditions listed below which constitute your on-going responsibilities with respect to the ethical conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Valerie Trifts, Chair

Post REB Approval: On-going Responsibilities of Researchers

After receiving ethical approval for the conduct of research involving humans, there are several ongoing responsibilities that researchers must meet to remain in compliance with University and Tri-Council policies.

1. Additional Research Ethics approval

Prior to conducting any research, researchers must ensure that all required research

ethics approvals are secured (in addition to this one). This includes, but is not limited to, securing appropriate research ethics approvals from: other institutions with whom the PI is affiliated; the research institutions of research team members; the institution at which participants may be recruited or from which data may be collected; organizations or groups (e.g. school boards, Aboriginal communities, correctional services, long-term care facilities, service agencies and community groups) and from any other responsible review body or bodies at the research site

## 2. Reporting adverse events

Any significant adverse events experienced by research participants must be reported **in writing** to Research Ethics **within 24 hours** of their occurrence. Examples of what might be considered “significant” include: an emotional breakdown of a participant during an interview, a negative physical reaction by a participant (e.g. fainting, nausea, unexpected pain, allergic reaction), report by a participant of some sort of negative repercussion from their participation (e.g. reaction of spouse or employer) or complaint by a participant with respect to their participation. The above list is indicative but not all-inclusive. The written report must include details of the adverse event and actions taken by the researcher in response to the incident.

## 3. Seeking approval for protocol / consent form changes

Prior to implementing any changes to your research plan, whether to the protocol or consent form, researchers must submit them to the Research Ethics Board for review and approval. This is done by completing a Request for Ethics Approval of Amendment to an Approved Project form (available on the website) and submitting three copies of the form and any documents related to the change. Please note that no reviews are conducted in August.

## 4. Submitting annual reports

Ethics approvals are valid for up to 12 months. Prior to the end of the project’s approval deadline, the researcher must complete an Annual Report (available on the website) and return it to Research Ethics for review and approval before the approval end date in order to prevent a lapse of ethics approval for the research. Researchers should note that no research involving humans may be conducted in the absence of a valid ethical approval and that allowing REB approval to lapse is a violation of University policy, inconsistent with the TCPS (article 6.14) and may result in suspension of research and research funding, as required by the funding agency.

## 5. Submitting final reports

When the researcher is confident that no further data collection or analysis will be required, a Final Report (available on the website) must be submitted to Research Ethics. This often happens at the time when a manuscript is submitted for publication or a thesis is submitted for defence. After review and approval of the Final Report, the Research Ethics file will be closed.

#### 6. Retaining records in a secure manner

Researchers must ensure that both during and after the research project, data is securely retained and/or disposed of in such a manner as to comply with confidentiality provisions specified in the protocol and consent forms. This may involve destruction of the data, or continued arrangements for secure storage. Casual storage of old data is not acceptable.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to keep a copy of the REB approval letters. This can be important to demonstrate that research was undertaken with Board approval, which can be a requirement to publish (and is required by the Faculty of Graduate Studies if you are using this research for your thesis).

Please note that the University will securely store your REB project file for 5 years after the study closure date at which point the file records may be permanently destroyed.

#### 7. Current contact information and university affiliation

The Principal Investigator must inform the Research Ethics office of any changes to contact information for the PI (and supervisor, if appropriate), especially the electronic mail address, for the duration of the REB approval. The PI must inform Research Ethics if there is a termination or interruption of his or her affiliation with Dalhousie University.

#### 8. Legal Counsel

The Principal Investigator agrees to comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to the project. The Principal Investigator agrees to notify the University Legal Counsel office in the event that he or she receives a notice of non-compliance, complaint or other proceeding relating to such requirements.

#### 9. Supervision of students

Faculty must ensure that students conducting research under their supervision are aware of their responsibilities as described above, and have adequate support to conduct their research in a safe and ethical manner.



# African Nova Scotian Community Members...

- ✓ *Are you between the ages of 20-65?*
- ✓ *Have you ever participated in a community program that specifically serves African Nova Scotians, such as Spiritually-Based or Recreational Programs (Each One Teach One; Carry the Book, Carry the Ball etc.), Camps (Kujichagulia, Math etc.), or tutoring programs (Cultural Academic and Enrichment Program etc.)?*
- ✓ *Would you like to talk about your experiences participating in them?*

**If you have answered yes to all of the above, then consider participating in this research study where you will participate in a 90-minute individual interview, that will explore the impacts of culturally specific community-driven programs on the life journey of African Nova Scotians.**

**For more information contact:**

**Rajeau Boudreau, Dalhousie University  
Thesis Research (Masters of Social Work Student)  
[Rajeau.boudreau@dal.ca](mailto:Rajeau.boudreau@dal.ca)  
(902) 403-6473**

**APPENDIX C**  
**Informed Consent Form**



**Research project Title: Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific “Community-Driven” Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians**

**Principal Investigator:** Rajean Boudreau  
Dalhousie University School of Social Work (Master’s Student)  
1459 LeMarchant Street, Suite 3201  
Halifax, Nova Scotia.  
Tel: (902) 403-6473  
Email: [rajean.boudreau@dal.ca](mailto:rajean.boudreau@dal.ca)

**Thesis Supervisor:** Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard  
Dalhousie University School of Social Work  
1459 LeMarchant Street, Suite 3201  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3P8  
Tel: (902) 494-1190  
Fax: (902) 494-6709  
Email: [wanda.bernard@dal.ca](mailto:wanda.bernard@dal.ca)

**Invitation to Participate in Research:**

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Rajean Boudreau who is a Masters of Social Work student and supervisor, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard who is a Social Work professor at Dalhousie University. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You will be invited to participate in an interview that will be audio recorded. Your information will also be kept confidential with no disclosure of names or and identifying information. Information about the study is explained below. This should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. This explanation tells you about the risks, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience as well as the benefits. I will also inform you of what we might learn things that will help others in community. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Rajean Boudreau.

**Purpose and Objectives of the Research:**

This research is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of the thesis option in the Dalhousie University Masters of Social Work program. This research will provide researches an opportunity to gain understanding of the impacts of culturally specific community-driven programs on the life journey of African Nova Scotians. The participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences with these programs and how they have impacted their lives. Programs initiated prior to the BLAC Report on

Education include but are not limited to: the Black Educators Association's/ Dalhousie Math and Science Camps; Africentric Saturday School; any recreation programs such as Each One Teach One and Carry the Book, Carry the Ball; community sports teams through the YMCA, East and North Preston; East Preston's Girl Guides, Brownies and Scouts. As well, various spiritually-based programs within the African United Baptist Association. Programs initiated post the BLAC report on Education include those of the African Canadian Services Division such as the Student Scholarship program; the Student Support Worker Program; Adult Literacy Programs; and Cultural Academic and Enrichment Programs. Additional programs include, Kamp Kujichagulia and cultural group programs within grade school settings such as Youth of Today and Cultural Awareness Youth Group (CYAG). This research project requires the student/researcher to conduct one brief interview with each of the participants with the use of a eight (8) question interview guide. This interview will take approximately sixty (60) minutes in length with up to an additional thirty (30) minutes, maximum, for explanation of study. The student/researcher is required to hire an experienced professional who can accurately transcribe the interview, thus requiring the use of a recording device during the interview process.

**Procedures Involving the Participant: How will the Data be Collected?**

You will be interviewed individually in person or via telephone using the eight (8) question interview guide which will explore the impacts of culturally specific programs for African Nova Scotians. These interviews will be audio recorded for transcribing purposes. The interview transcriptions will be done manually by an experienced transcriptionist hired by the researcher. The transcriptions will then be analyzed by the student/researcher to identify and demonstrate emerging themes.

**Time Required by Participants:**

You will be required for the interview which will be conducted for approximately sixty (60) minutes with up to an additional thirty (30) minutes for study explanation. Although you will not necessarily be required for the transcription and analysis, which will begin after the interview is complete, you may be called upon for clarification of quotations from the audio recording if what you said cannot be accurately identified through the audio recording for transcribing purposes. This procedure of this research project will take approximately four(4) months to complete.

**Who will be Conducting the Research:**

I, Rajean Boudreau, the student/researcher and my Supervisor, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard will be conducting the research. I will also hire a professional to transcribe the individual interview audio who will have access to the audio recordings in addition to the student/researcher and research supervisor. They will sign a confidentiality agreement. The recording will not be accessible to anyone else.

**What Recordings will be Used For:**

The recordings will strictly be used by the researcher/student for the analysis of the data for the thesis requirements of the Master of Social Work Program. All content of the interview will be observed, recorded, and accessed by the student/researcher for the purpose of data analysis. The final thesis document will be submitted to the Dalhousie University Master of Social Work Thesis Committee. The names of the interview participants and all identifying information will be removed from the transcriptions, analysis reports or final thesis document.

**How Access to Audio Recording will be Controlled:**

Only the student/researcher, research supervisor and hired transcriptionist will have access to your individual transcript.

**Plans for Publication:**

The audio, transcriptions or analysis reports will not be used for publication purposes. However, the final thesis document will be used for publication purposes.

**How long will records be kept:**

The audio interview will be deleted from the student/researcher's computer after it has been transcribed. After the thesis is complete and submitted to the University, the transcription and analysis reports will be deleted from the student/researcher's computer.

**Potential Benefits:**

After conducting the eight (8) question interview, you, the participant would have participated in a research study providing your knowledge and opinion on a specific social work related topic. This process will encourage you to critically think and reflect on the subject matter. The student/researcher will gain experience in research and complete an extensive analysis of the data to complete the thesis.

**Potential Risks or Discomforts:**

Although this is not anticipated, there is the potential that you, the participant may feel discomfort or experience emotional responses during the interview based on the subject matter. However, if this happens the student/researcher will terminate the interview if you, the participant, desires and will offer an opportunity to debrief which would not be recorded.

**How will your information be Protected:**

Your audio recordings, transcriptions and student/researchers analysis will be kept confidential on the student/researcher's computer, which can only be accessed by the student/researcher. Only the pseudonyms that are chosen will be used and your name or any identifying information will not be disclosed at any time in any publications.

**Compensation and Costs:**

There is no compensation provided for participating in this study.

There are no anticipated costs on the part of you, the participant.

**Withdrawal From the Study:**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant may withdraw at any time from the research study without negative consequences. You may withdraw from the study by informing the student/researcher that you or they no longer wish to participate with the assurance that no questions will be asked.

**How to Obtain Results:**

Results will be made available after the thesis is complete in an executive summary. There will be distributions made through social media as well as within different organizations and community places.

**Disclosures:**

In cases where it is revealed during the course of the focus group that evidence of suspected child abuse or neglect or the abuse of an adult has occurred, the researchers have a responsibility to report these concerns immediately to the appropriate authorities.

Only the student/researcher, will be able to access the audio recording. Therefore, there will be no inclusion of non-participants.

**Summary:**

You have been asked to take part in a study to talk about your experiences with culturally specific community-driven programs. You will be asked to take part in a sixty (60) minute individual interview with up to an additional thirty (30) minutes for study explanation for a total of ninety (90) minutes.

You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records at the beginning of the study (before the interview begins).

**Questions:**

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Rajean Boudreau, Researcher, Masters Social Work Student, [rajean.boudreau@dal.ca](mailto:rajean.boudreau@dal.ca), (902)403-6473.

**Problems or Concerns:**

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director of Dalhousie University's Office of Human Research Ethics Administration, for assistance (902) 494-1462, [Catherine.connors@dal.ca](mailto:Catherine.connors@dal.ca)

Signature Page

**Research project Title: Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific “Community-Driven” Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians.**

**Lead Researcher: : Rajeau Boudreau**  
Dalhousie University School of Social Work (Master’s Student)  
1459 LeMarchant Street, Suite 3201  
Halifax, Nova Scotia.  
Tel: (902) 403-6473  
Email: rajeau.boudreau@dal.ca.

I \_\_\_\_\_(participant) have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to take part in this study. However, I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I \_\_\_\_\_(participant) agree to audio recording of the individual interview

I \_\_\_\_\_(participant) agree to the use of quotations, with the understanding that the quote will not in any way identify me as an individual.

I \_\_\_\_\_(participant) agree to be re-contacted if something that I said cannot be accurately identified from the audio recording for transcribing purposes, with the understanding that the quote will not in any way identify me as an individual.

**\*Note: I Will Be Given A Signed Copy Of This Consent Form.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant                      Name (Printed)                      Year    Month    Day\*    \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator                      Name (Printed)                      Year    Month    Day\*    \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Note: Please fill in the dates personally**

This research has been approved by Dalhousie University. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons.

**APPENDIX D**  
**Individual Interview Guide**

*Faculty of Health Professions  
School of Social Work*

**Project Title: “Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific ‘Community-Driven’ Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians”**

i. Tell me about your life journey.

Probes: Where are you from? Where did you grow up? Family structure? Were you involved in your community – if so, how? What was your education experience like? Employment?

ii. What barriers did you face?

Probes: In your community? In the ANS community as a whole? In the larger community? In the education system? Within employment? Within your family?

iii. What would you say has supported or helped you in your life as a person of African descent?

Probes: Where did you find support? What kind of supports did you use? Any In community? In the education system? What about your hobbies?

iv. What community-driven programs have you participated in?

v. Looking at the community-driven program(s) that you participated in, what stood out about the program(s)?

Probes: What was it like? How did it make you feel?

vi. Overall, after participating in the community-driven program(s) you identified, how was your life impacted?

Probes: Did anything change? How did you feel about yourself?

vii. If you could change anything for the next generation, what would that be?

Probes: Was anything missing- if so, what? Within the ANS community? Within the larger community? Within the education system? Within organizations?

viii. Do you have anything that you want to add?

**APPENDIX E**  
**Demographics Survey**



*Faculty of Health Professions  
School of Social Work*

**Project Title: “Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific ‘Community-Driven’ Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians.”**

**When completing this survey please adhere to the following:**

- Please answer all of the questions honestly and to the best of your ability. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, please skip it and move to the next question.
- This information will be used to help us describe the participants in the study.
- Do not write your name on the survey.
- Information from this survey will be presented in such a way that individuals can not be identified.

Please **check your answer** in the box beside the question (ie. ). If a written response is required please write in your answer in the line provided:

1. Age:  (20-34)

(35-50)

(51-65)

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your highest level of education?

Some school, but not a high school certificate or GED

High school certificate

GED

Post-secondary education

- College Diploma
- Undergraduate Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Other



4. What is your family status?

- Single
- Separated/Divorced
- Married
- Common Law/Living together
- Widowed
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you currently employed?

- Yes
  - Casual
  - Part-time
  - Full-time
  - Seasonal
- No

6. Are you currently a student?

- Yes
- No

6a. Which level?

- College
- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Other

6. What is/was your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which culturally specific community-driven program led you to participate in this study?

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**APPENDIX F**

**Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionist**

**Project Title: Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific “Community-Driven” Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians**

I \_\_\_\_\_(transcriptionist) agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and written documentation received from Rajean Boudreau or Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard in relation to the research project entitled “Exploring the Impacts of Culturally Specific “Community-Driven” Programs on the Life Journey of African Nova Scotians.”

Furthermore, I agree to:

1. Hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription audio-taped interviews
2. Not disclose any information related to the interviews or other discussions with participants where personal information is revealed to a third party.
3. Not make any copies of the tape recorded interviews unless specifically requested to do so by the primary researcher.
4. Store all research project related tape recordings and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
5. Return all tape recordings and research documents to the lead researcher in a complete and timely manner.
6. Delete all transcribed interviews and any other relevant electronic files or interview notes from my computer hard drive and any backup device
7. If any information is revealed during the transcription of the interview indicating the occurrence of child or adult abuse or intent to self-harm or cause harm to others, I am required by law to report these incidents to the appropriate authorities, and will do so accordingly.

Transcriptionist’s Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Transcriptionist’s signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Lead Researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Lead Researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date (YY/MM/DD):

\_\_\_\_\_