# AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN YOUTH EXPERIENCE ON THE ISLAND, THE HILL, AND THE MARSH: A STUDY OF TRURO, NOVA SCOTIA IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the lived experiences of African Nova Scotian youth and their memories of growing up in three neighbourhoods in Truro, Nova Scotia in the 1950s and 1960s. Five male and five female African Nova Scotians who were between thirteen and nineteen years of age in the 1950s and 1960s were interviewed about their experiences of community, education, religion, dating, popular culture, music, and racism. Their stories surrounding the six topics highlight memories of sorrow, joy, hardship, and resilience, shared to preserve the missing history of rural Black youth experience in Truro, Nova Scotia. Collectively, their stories revealed a distinct Black youth culture and an education system that both implicitly and explicitly discouraged their progress.

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## Introduction

> I knew that we were treated differently, but I couldn't articulate what it was. Like its only when… when the movement started in the 60s, the Civil Rights Movement, that I started reading more, because I had never ever been introduced to even a Black book. (GTR, b. 1949)[1]

This thesis explores the lived experiences of African Nova Scotian youth and their memories of growing up in three neighbourhoods in Truro, Nova Scotia in the 1950s and 1960s. Five male and five female African Nova Scotians who were between thirteen and nineteen years of age in the 1950s and 1960s were interviewed about their experiences of community, education, religion, dating, popular culture, music, and racism, including "GTR," quoted above. They focused on the similarities and differences between the three African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods in Truro: the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh. Their stories surrounding the six topics highlight memories of sorrow, joy, hardship, and resilience, shared to preserve the missing history of Black youth experience in Truro, Nova Scotia. This localized approach, and the encouragement of participants to interpret their own culture, revealed a distinct Black youth culture in Truro.

The historiography of the African Nova Scotian experience has long focused on Africville, inadvertently shifting the focus away from other experiences of race-based segregation, and highlighting the physical erasure of space over the institutional suppression and racial inequality which has also plagued rural Nova Scotia for generations. Through her recent commemoration on the Canadian ten-dollar bill and in Graham Reynolds' 2016 publication *Viola Desmond's Canada,* Viola Desmond has

[1] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

provided ballast for the evaluation of the rural African Nova Scotian experience and motivation for further exploration into non-urbanized African Nova Scotian identity. In that vein, this thesis explores the three lesser-known African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods in Truro, Nova Scotia, 100 kilometers north of Halifax, and 60 kilometers west of Viola Desmond's home town, New Glasgow. As much as the oral history interviews conducted in this project work to preserve the history of Black youth experience in mid-twentieth-century Truro, they also beg for further exploration into neighbouring communities, and a shift in the historiographical focus from urban to rural Nova Scotian interactions with racialized space.

Truro, Nova Scotia is a centrally located town, commonly referred to as the "Hub of Nova Scotia" by residents of the province.[2] Sitting in the fork of Nova Scotia, as the gateway to Halifax, Cape Breton, and New Brunswick, Truro has long acted as a stopping point for passers-by, and the province's railway. A servicing point to the province's railway since 1858, Truro was formally incorporated in 1875, and grew further with late 19th century industrialization, including the establishment of Charles Stanfield's world-famous underwear factory in 1870.[3] The wealth of international manufacturers created a social hierarchy reflective of larger urban centres, made starker by the rural Nova Scotian atmosphere of Truro. This gap was intensified for Truro's Black population, and persisted well into the twentieth century.

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[2] "Living in Truro," Town of Truro, Accessed March 3, 2019, https://www.truro.ca/living-in-truro.html.

[3] Nan Harvey, "History of Truro in a Nutshell," Town of Truro, Last modified September 23, 2003, https://www.truro.ca/truros-past-and-history.html, and "About Stanfield's," Stanfield's Ltd, Accessed March 4, 2019, https://www.stanfields.com/about-us.

Today, Truro is home to more than 12,000 people, and remnants of industrial wealth and social stratification remain, including Stanfield's Ltd which continues to operate nearly 150 years later.[4] Victoria Park has grown to encompass more than 1000 acres, and is as relevant to the youth experience today as it was in the 1950s and 1960s.[5] In an age when so many Maritime youth are moving outside the region, the town website boasts that Truro is one of the few towns in Nova Scotia continuing to grow.[6] Absent from the same town website, however, are any mentions of Truro's African Nova Scotian population and its related history of segregation and racism.

As the interviewer, transcriber, and compiler of this thesis, it is important to identify where I fit as a part of the research, and the project as a whole. First, I am white, which I acknowledge has provided me with a privileged perspective, and also means I can in no way compare my lived experiences to those of the participants in this study. This also means additional care has been taken to ensure the project reflects the views of the participants, and their stories, utilizing oral history to ensure their voice is preserved. Second, I was born in 1994, nearly three decades after most participants experienced the years they discussed in the interviews, which further removes me from a position of understanding and comparative analysis. Although I grew up in Truro, this project has shown me a side of my home town not present in the current historiography and provincial classroom curriculum. It is my hope this project can be used as a starting point for the continued preservation of African Nova Scotian voices in Truro, and move

[4] Nan Harvey, "History of Truro in a Nutshell," Last modified September 23, 2003.
[5] "Living in Truro," Town of Truro.
[6] The map of important thesis locations is located on page 113.

the focus on Black Nova Scotian experiences out of urban areas, and into the underrepresented rural communities.

**Methodology**

This oral history project is based on ten interviews in which African Nova Scotian men and women born between the late 1930s and late 1950s reflect on their youth experience in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s. The project analyzes intersections between categories of analysis such as time, race, age, and location. The parameters for selecting interviewees were largely based on their teenage years (13-19 years) falling in the research period, (1950s and 1960s) with the requirement they came of age (reached age 18) in the research community (the Island, the Hill or the Marsh). Using shared authority to ensure the interviews gave participants the opportunity to preserve the aspects of their lives they felt to be important meant that far more time was spent on the entirety of the youth experience, rather than teenage experiences specifically.

Michael Frisch identifies in his work *A Shared Authority*, the importance of oral history to change the dynamics of authority in historic preservation, stating, "the notion that what is most compelling about oral and public history is a capacity to redefine and redistribute intellectual authority, so that this might be shared more broadly in historical research and communication rather than continuing to serve as an instrument of power and hierarchy."[7] Shared authority for the purposes of this project, has meant giving the

[7] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx.

interviewee freedom to discuss their youth experiences as they remembered them, providing them the opportunity to review transcripts, supporting their ability to veer from the questionnaire, and asking them to review their quotations in the thesis to ensure their voice is accurately representing the preservation of African Nova Scotian youth experience in Truro. Youth, under the parameters of this project, is defined as the earliest memories that began to contribute to identity, up until leaving school. The problem with further developing the terminology is well articulated by Jason Reid in his study of teenagers:

> More important, however, is the fact that there isn't any one phrase specific enough to use with any accuracy. *Youth* and *child* are simply much too vague and are often applied to younger children whose experiences don't fall into my field of view. Similarly, *teen* and *teenager* are much too specific, encompassing all children between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, while neglecting those who are slightly older and slightly younger.[8]

The vague nature of the term 'youth' is valuable to this project, and is more representative of the life course stages identified than the other terms analyzed by Reid. This is a fairly subjective time period in terms of age, but specific ages in relation to experiences were infrequently used as markers by the participants, and therefore youth will be analyzed far more experientially than chronologically. Another important introduction is the use of the terms 'segregation,' 'suppression,' and 'racism' throughout the project. Each of these terms was used by participants to represent different experiences. My interpretation of this has been to use 'segregation' as formal, often institutional in nature. 'Suppression' seems to be used as a more informal identifier, a

[8] Jason Reid, *Get Out of My Room: A History of Teen Bedrooms in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 10.

place holder when the experience is more difficult to define as formalized segregation and racism, but I argue it is almost an interchangeable term. 'Racism' was used explicitly, when there was no doubt as to the intent and resultant experience caused by specific actions. This terminology has been crucial in understanding the interviews.

A balanced set of interviews was my initial goal, but this proved to be impossible. In the end, five men and five women were interviewed, of whom six are from the Island, three are from the Hill, and only one is from the Marsh.[9] It became apparent once the interviews began, striking a balance of interviewees from each of the neighbourhoods was an unreasonable goal for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Island is the only neighbourhood still home to a primarily African Nova Scotian demographic. The Marsh is now seemingly completely racially integrated, and the Hill has always been home to interracial occupancy, but has more recently gone through an intense phase of gentrification. With the Marsh and the Hill undergoing such stark changes, many of the original inhabitants have moved away which also factored into the difficulty of recruitment.

The ten oral history interviews conducted with individuals who grew up on either the Island, the Marsh, or the Hill in the 1950s and 1960s are the main primary sources in this thesis. These interviews explore the major topics of community, education, religion, dating, popular culture, and racism, to uncover a first-hand account as to what life was like for Black youth in the 1950s and 1960s. The experiences my participants share help

[9] This thesis uses the terms 'narrator', 'participant', and 'interviewee' interchangeably to refer to the people who were interviewed, and are being reflected through transcriptions.

to identify the ways in which an individual is shaped by their community, while also providing insight into the legacy of youth experiences in adult life. As Brian Calliou states, "Most oral history projects aim to supplement or compliment written information. However, they can also provide primary research material where written evidence is lacking."[10] The interviews I conducted provide a rural African Nova Scotian perspective and create a source where no other exists, while current documentation will be used to contextualize the interviewees' claims. As the interviewing process developed, it became evident which questions were the most successful, and which questions yielded responses outside of the norms of current Black, or youth historiography. These questions began to take precedence in the interviews, and in the later stages filled a majority of the conversation between interviewer and interviewee, helping to shape the chapters of the thesis.

As mentioned, although I was born and raised in Truro, I am not a member of the Black community. Liaising with insiders who could vouch for me was essential in gaining access and learning the background information needed before conducting interviews. What Nigel King and Christine Horrocks refer to as a 'gatekeeper', and Susan K. Burton refers to as a 'sponsor' can be similarly defined as insiders with a knowledge of the history, the ability to explain the research project, and a willingness to vouch for the

[10] Brian Calliou, "Methodology for Recording Oral Histories in the Aboriginal Community," In *The Canadian Oral History Reader,* ed. Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 26.

interviewers' intentions.[11] King and Horrocks identify the importance of gatekeepers being well informed about the proposed research, stating that: "They will require an overview of the project, summarizing its aims, methods, anticipated outcomes, and clearly stating the time commitments required from participants."[12] My sponsors were found through relationships I had built in my youth, one being a childhood basketball coach, and the other a parent of a childhood friend, who had maintained a friendship with my parents. As an insider, each sponsor also acted as an instructor, providing crucial information and tips for when conducting interviews. Perhaps the most valuable suggestion given by the sponsor was drafting an answer to the question: "You are white, why do you want to look at our history?"[13] This was something which came up a lot, and having a genuine, thoughtful response helped in 'setting the interview stage', and providing peace of mind, with the interviewee seeing me as an advocate for their history's preservation.[14] The participants' response to this thesis so far has been positive, and there seems to be an appreciation for preserving these stories.

This initial conversation was followed by the gatekeeper taking on the role of recruiter, identifying and contacting perspective participants on behalf of the project. Jo-

[11] Susan K. Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Japanese Women in England," In *The Oral History Reader,* Second Edition, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 167.
[12] Nigel King and Christine Horrocks, "Chapter 3: Designing an Interview Study," in *Interviews in Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2010), 31.
[13] The common response identified my connection to the community as a child, and I had an opportunity to compile interviews as part of my MA thesis, so this was a chance to give something back to the community.
[14] S. Brinkmann and S. Kvale, "Chapter 7: Conducting an Interview," In *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2015), 154.

Anne Jarvis-Jordan, the main sponsor and recruiter for the project, went over and above in assisting me, and it is important to state none of the project's findings would have been possible without her. Following the email correspondence and recruitment, I met with Jarvis-Jordan face-to-face, and reviewed questions and possible outcomes of the project from an academic, and community-based perspective. Since I was an 'outsider' as Burton explains it, it was necessary to build trust between the researcher and the gatekeeper to ensure the criteria for selection is being followed, and in the case of this project, there has been a well-established relationship, resulting in exceptional 'insider' references.[15] One thing I would do differently in selecting and utilizing gatekeepers in the future, however, is to have more than one and give them an even more active role to bring more perspectives into the project. Using one active, and one informational gatekeeper worked well for the size of this study, but it is evident the gatekeepers had closer ties to the Island than either of the other neighbourhoods, which could encourage bias. Although I do not believe this happened in my case, a gatekeeper with this amount of power can choose people they know have a certain story to tell, and ensure the history gives preference to particular experiences. For this reason I, as the researcher, also have to be sure my criteria for selection creates enough of a balance that it does not favor one story, and if it does, I have to identify and analyze the impacts in the final thesis. That being said, the difference of opinion on the project in regard to its goals and possible implementations would likely have made a multiple gatekeeper model difficult

[15] Burton, "Issues in Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Japanese Women in England," 167.

in a project of this size. I was extremely fortunate to find someone so receptive, and eager to make the proposed research a reality.

As the interviews unfolded, an earlier observation made by Donna Byard Sealey, author of *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church & the Black Community of Truro, Nova Scotia,* became apparent: "Three distinct areas form Truro's black [sic] community. Each area has definite characteristics which supports its separate identity. The people in all three areas seem unaware that former residency and prior bonding are factors in their identity".[16] My initial assumption that I would be able to analyze one united Black community in Truro was misguided. Therefore, the project has evolved to emphasize the analysis of similarities and differences between the neighbourhoods, in an attempt to understand what would have been shared Black experiences in Truro, and which race-based encounters were dependent on one's geographical living situation and utilization of specific space.

Using oral history as the primary research method means far more of me is found in the data than I could have imagined. Self-reflexivity has been a key aspect in understanding my own place in this project. Carly Adams describes this personal analysis, stating, "I often do not ask the 'right' questions, I do not always listen carefully to responses, and I always have my own agenda and expectations."[17] The interview is not a perfect process, but it is an avenue for co-creation and shared authority which

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[16] Donna Byard Sealey, *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church & the Black Community of Truro, Nova Scotia* (Gaspereau Press, 2000), 15.
[17] Carly Adams, "(Writing Myself into) Betty White's Stories: (De)constructing Narratives of/through Feminist Sport History Research," *Journal of Sport History* 39, no. 3 (2012): 398.

preserves the lived experience as the narrator wants it to be told. In the initial interviews, I was so focused on ensuring the questionnaire I was asking worked, that I missed how valuable the information was that was being presented outside of the formal structure and prefabricated questions. Analyzing the resultant unscripted conversations helps preserve the identity of the individual, identity of place, and the role their historical situation played in shaping their lives.

The historiography of Africville, Nova Scotia's best-known Black urban community, continues to evolve, with historians such as Tina Loo finding alternative approaches to analyze the community. The most recent historian to take an in-depth look at Black culture in Nova Scotia from a rural community perspective is Frances Henry. Although her 1973 study takes an extensive look at African Nova Scotian communities through surveys and interviews, the conclusion seems to fall short of grasping the aspects of lived experiences and shared tribulations which my interviewees see as contributors to Black culture in Nova Scotia.[18] For this reason, a more localized approach is needed to examine how African Nova Scotians view their own culture, and in a setting like Truro where identity is prominent in the community structure, a shared concept of culture should be identifiable in the interviewees' responses.

**Historiography**

There is no doubt of a historiographical evolution in the field of African Nova Scotian history. I will therefore use a chronological approach to demonstrate how

[18] Frances Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* (Don Mills: Longman Canada Limited, 1973).

African Nova Scotians have been represented since historian Robin Winks published *The Blacks in Canada* in 1971. This is also an attempt to display the need for historians to challenge the defining works, and identify how this is beginning to be accomplished through local, and micro history projects.

The significance of *The Blacks in Canada* by Robin Winks, first published in 1971, cannot be understated. This significance, however, must not be assumed to be completely positive. Winks researched in archives across Canada to understand how Black Canadians experienced racial suppression within national borders. His interpretation of his findings, however, makes his concluding argument troublesome. Winks states:

> Negroes in Canada were often responsible for their own plight, since they by no means made use of all the channels of opportunity or all the roads to progress and all the sources of strength open to them. As in the United States, Canadian Negro leaders strove for accommodation to the dominant white community. They accepted the dominance of that community and worked neither to undermine it nor to become equal to it but to find a guaranteed role to play within it.[19]

After spending more than four hundred pages explaining some of the worst atrocities and experiences faced by Black Canadians, it is almost incomprehensible how Winks reached this conclusion. What is perhaps most disconcerting is how Winks viewed the work himself, identifying in his preface that the book was meant as a building point for works to follow.[20] The precedent of Black blame will be tracked through this historiography; but it was important to establish Winks as a starting point for a historical

[19] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* Second Edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 480.
[20] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* xvi.

methodology which devalued the impact of settler colonialism and servitude on a race still fighting suppression four hundred years later.

Frances Henry was one of the first historians to embrace Winks' call to take the examination further. Publishing *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* in 1973, two years after *The Blacks in Canada*, the similarity in argument goes far beyond the bibliography, furthering the blame based approach. Even when attempting to place Henry's argument as a product of its time, it is difficult to understand how a project seeming to illuminate African Nova Scotian experiences could make such culturally detrimental conclusions, especially given the first two sentences: "*Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* is a serious work that should be read by both Blacks and Whites, and in particular by community organizers. The work is objective in its approach and its findings are supported by scientific analysis."[21] The foreword by C. S. Bayne places Henry as an unquestionable researcher, and portrays the book as having an ideal methodology. As the first academic attempt an exclusively African Nova Scotian history, the work is imperative for understanding African Nova Scotian historiography.

Henry "randomly selected" 319 participants from the estimated 20,000 to 25,000 Black Nova Scotians at the time of the study, to respond to a survey and interview that asked them to rate and describe feelings associated with a photographic elicitation test.[22] This data was used to prove a previously established assumption, "If our hypothesis with respect to the commonalities between the Black value system and

[21] Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia*, vii.
[22] Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia*, 1, 15, 16.

those of the wider society is correct, and it appears to be so as substantiated by the data, a relative absence of a core or unique culture or value system amongst this population becomes evident."[23] By saying this, Henry set a dangerous precedent for future researchers. Establishing that there is no unique Black culture in Nova Scotia based on a comparison to the United States and the Caribbean, is an argument which devalues the establishment of the unique community features even Winks identified as significant.[24]

Henry's chapters present the findings of the survey and much like Winks, she uses the conclusion to deliver a devastating analysis. As Henry states:

> We would suggest that factors such as acceptance or approval of inter-racial mixing, strong support for pro-White statements on the race relations scale, and a fantasized relationship of equality with Whites, and fairly little appeal or recourse to racism or discrimination as a means of explaining their socio-economic position of marginality, suggests an integrative or assimilative approach to the problems of race relations on the part of this Black population.[25]

In essence, Henry argues the Black population is willing to dissolve any semblance of individuality in order to comply with the dominant white culture, which is not only untrue, but can also be used to continue a rhetoric of Black culture loss, which Henry stated as a goal from the outset. Henry's decision not to attempt to construct an image of the commonalties that make Black Nova Scotian experiences different than the general population, and therefore analyzable for possible cultural similarities, shows not

[23] Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia,* 3.
[24] Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia,* 3.
[25] Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia,* 153.

only the book's lack of objectivity, but the author's agenda to explain the cultural demise as a form of self-assimilation.

Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes published *Telling the Truth. Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia* in 1995, a history which had been introduced by Winks, but allowed for more depth of analysis from future researchers. The work is significant, as it represents one of the first micro-histories written by African Nova Scotian authors to preserve their own history. Their methodological approach was unique, due to the ways in which it broke the history into biographies of individual schools and prominent teachers in the segregated school system. As a reinterpretation of information introduced by Winks, it is clear the work was more focused on including factual, individualized history, as opposed to making the separate schools fit within a singular cohesive narrative. Evans and Tynes presented an interesting historical interpretation, stating, "The idea of separate schools for Blacks would offer security from white prejudice and an opportunity for Black children to learn at their own pace."[26] Although the historians are able to analyze the possible positive effects of segregated schools for Black students, the book unfortunately facilitates the opportunity for the other side to present racial prejudice and historically ingrained racism in a positive light.

Following chronologically, the next infusion would be a contribution to the literature of race and race issues in the Halifax area. After Evans and Tynes published their work on segregated schools the Black community in Nova Scotia, between 2002

[26] Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes, *Telling the Truth. Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press Limited, 1995), 8.

and 2016, works began to be published on topics ranging from athletes to social workers with African Nova Scotian roots. Another shift occurred in the methodology during this time period, with more focus being given to the ways in which the people within the historical writing were able to use their position to contribute to social justice issues in a suppressive society.

The first work to closely examine this fight for social justice was *Halifax Champion: Black Power in Gloves* by Robert Ashe. Although Ashe received his education in Journalism, earning a Masters from Carleton, his methodology closely resembles that of an oral historian; he conducted more than forty interviews.[27] Ashe established boxing as a key component of Black culture, "…with one of the most dynamic periods in Halifax's history [1960s and 1970s] – a time of conspicuous, extensive economic and cultural transition, which saw the emergence of the city's black population as a social and political force."[28] Robert Ashe placed one boxer, David Downey, at the centre of the history, and traced how Downey's athletic evolution helped to shape a culture of social justice interaction for African Nova Scotians. Unfortunately, the book is overwhelmingly biographical, so much of the historical agency through boxing was lost. An important feature of the book, however, is the legacy of fighting for social change, an important element of the third chapter of this thesis.

Different authors have constructed the central intersection for analysis of race, from numerous building points. Donna Byard Sealey uses archival data instead of

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[27] Robert Ashe, *Halifax Champion: Black Power in Gloves* (Halifax: Formac Publishing Company Limited, 2005), Back cover, 5.
[28]Ashe, *Halifax Champion: Black Power in Gloves,* 10-11.

interview-based experience to analyze the church as a community hub in her work: *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church & the Black Community of Truro, Nova Scotia.* The title is misleading, as this book is purely a church history, with little examination given to community history. Donna Byard Sealey does, however, give one of the rare glimpses into a singular Black history which is not reliant on Africville to present a distinct African Nova Scotian community. The author's methodological approach is to present the founding of Zion Baptist church as an integral meeting place in a diverse Black community.[29]

Donna Byard Sealey's work from 2000 is important not only to a historian aiming to examine Black history in Truro, but also due to its unconventional methods and workload. This book is a stand-alone work, and cannot be derived from any known secondary influences. Sealey cites almost exclusively primary archival sources such as church documents, gathered over a six-year span, and constructed into a cohesive chronological narrative which aims to display the importance of the church to African Nova Scotians in Truro.[30] Some may argue this devalues the work, seeing as the author has not attempted to integrate the story into the existing narrative, but I would argue the approach taken was exactly what was needed. Sealey understood the individuality and uniqueness of this history, and was not willing to sacrifice the integrity to force it into a body of works which had not yet caught up to her observations on the roots of the Black communities in Nova Scotian history. This is an impressive take on micro-history,

[29] Sealey, *Colored Zion,* 24.
[30] Sealey, *Colored Zion,* 12, 251-270.

but I would once again contend no other approach would accomplish what Sealey was able to achieve.

This micro-history of Black experience in Nova Scotia continued to grow from fields outside of the strictly historical discipline. An example of this comes from Dalhousie Social Work professor Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, who published *Fighting for Change: Black Social Workers in Nova Scotia.* The work tracks the development of the Halifax Chapter of the Association of Black Social Workers, focusing on the introduction of Africentric practices in the Nova Scotia system between the 1970s and 1990s.[31] This methodological approach places experience as the central contributing factor to the historical development, similarly to Ashe using personal stories and interviews to construct the association's progression.

Although this research takes on the form of an experience-based study from a social work background, the book's value must not be discounted by historians aiming to understand African Nova Scotian culture. Bernard is also firm in concluding the experience-based research was contextualized into the political and historical frameworks the social workers were acting within.[32] Perhaps most importantly, Bernard's conclusion seems to unknowingly refute previous statements made by Winks and Henry, exposing how, "African Nova Scotian social workers and human service workers who participated in this study expressed an awareness of the impact of racism on them and their clients. They identified a sense of cultural connectedness to their

[31]Wanda Thomas Bernard, *Fighting for Change: Black Social Workers in Nova Scotia* (Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield Press, 2006), 8-9.
[32] Bernard, *Fighting for Change: Black Social Workers in Nova Scotia,* 208.

clients and their communities."[33] Here, more than thirty years after Henry's book was published, her historical argument of cultural assimilation is finally refuted. This book, like many others in the historiography of African Nova Scotian experience, was written by an amateur historian. The argument can be made that this devalues their contribution, and questions can be raised about methodological understanding, but I would argue the most important factor is that the history is being preserved. Bernard was able to see the significance of the history she was a party to, and if no one else would write it, she would. This is perhaps the greatest dilemma of African Nova Scotian history: developing an interest in experience outside of the Africville discussion.

Since the demolition of Africville, authors such as Donald Clairmont and Dennis Magill (*Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*) have worked vigorously to preserve the fractured culture of the community and the relocated residents. Africville is the most studied area of Black History in Nova Scotia, and therefore the value in historical evaluation of Africville comes from interpretations that help establish the larger social issues present in twentieth century Nova Scotia. These are exactly the interpretations one can draw from Tina Loo's article, "Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada." Loo outlines her main argument as follows:

> While current scholarship frames Africville in terms of racism, for officials of the City of Halifax, and the liberal-minded more generally, Africville was a "welfare problem"- one that required them to figure out ways to meet the multiple and concrete needs of the residents. Racism might have been the reason Africvillers were disadvantaged and immobilized both socially and spatially, but the solutions liberals offered were aimed at meeting Africvillers' needs – for

[33] Bernard, *Fighting for Change: Black Social Workers in Nova Scotia,* 207.

education, employment, adequate housing, and access to capital – rather than eliminating racial prejudice directly.[34]

Loo's argument is methodologically revolutionary, because it not only examines the racial element at play, but also the white liberal need to fix a Black problem they could not begin to understand. Loo's examination of where and when it is appropriate to intervene, from the perspective of the ethically flawed relocation of Africvillers transcends this single occurrence, and speaks to an array of white on Black interventions across Nova Scotia, where liberal 'help' became cultural assimilation and dismissal. Loo was able to expertly examine the misguided view of Africville as simply racial segregation, and show the truth of this segregation becoming a multigenerational hub for Black culture, family, and safe space.[35] This article opens the door for a reevaluation on the ways in which historians examine Black communities, as a location of cultural growth, instead of suppression.

In 2010, a new national Black history was published by Joseph Mensah, titled *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions.* Most notably, since Winks had published almost forty years earlier, the priorities had shifted, falling more into the present social historiographical writing style of the twenty-first century. As Mensah states, "This book examines the history, experiences, and socio-economic conditions of Black Canadians from a multidisciplinary perspective."[36] Although this work is clearly an

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[34] Tina Loo, "Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada," *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* XXXIX, No. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010): 27.
[35] Loo, "Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada," 46-47.
[36] Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2010), 5.

establishment of how far Black history has come since Winks, Mensah still references Winks, showing how influential and valuable *The Blacks in Canada* was to the development of the discipline.[37]

The methods behind the construction of the book are unconventional, and clearly broken down to be more accessible as a multidisciplinary resource than a comprehensive history. The chapters flow almost like a journal, as stand-alone articles aimed to engage with specific issues facing the Canadian Black populace. This unfortunately makes an overview of the author's arguments difficult, but a clear chapter outline establishes the book beginning in historical analysis, and ending in a modern fight for equity. This text is perhaps most useful in combination with Winks, using Winks for the depth of historical backdrop, and Mensah to place the history into a modern contextualized picture of Canadian race relations. This work has been a valuable resource in writing the thesis, with the multitude of directions covered contributing in different ways to the understanding of each of the project's chapters. Mensah's strong examples the importance of sport in African Canadian lives shaped such discussions in the thesis.

From 2016 to 2017, enormous leaps were made in the historiography of writing race, and race-based experience from the Black perspective in Canada. In 2016, Graham Reynolds published *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land*. Reynolds' work is significant not only as an analysis of race, but as an argument which brings the experience of youth to the forefront, stating, "Most

[37] Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions,* 287.

Canadians are unaware that, until very recently in our history, being born an African-Canadian was almost universally associated with negative childhood experiences."[38] Not only does Reynolds attempt to understand age as a tool for racial analysis, he also approaches the topic from an interesting methodological procedure, placing one of the worst Canadian accounts of racial segregation as the starting point for the interpretation of the magnitude of segregation.

Reynolds concludes, "The Black quest for the Promised Land, like other racial narratives in Canadian history, is still a journey in process."[39] Unlike Winks, who saw his research as a starting point for further historical exploration, Reynolds intends his work to be a rallying point for continued action against racial suppression and segregation. The book is an excellent resource for the modern scholar, not only as a tool when writing about African Canadian history, but as a guide to historians aiming to unpack the historical implications of colonial racial concealment. The work is also important for situating the experiences of participants in Truro, due to the close geographical proximity of the two towns.

The final national work to be placed into the historiographical analysis of African Canadian racial history is the 2017 work by Robyn Maynard, entitled *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to the Present.* Perhaps the most important work ever published on interpreting race as a Canadian, Robyn Maynard's use of historical evolution (or lack thereof) to explain the continued obstacle faced by Black Canadians is

[38] Graham Reynolds, *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 5.
[39] Reynolds, *Viola Desmond's Canada,* 175.

necessary for ensuring change in the historical narrative of African Canadian experience. Maynard expertly presents race as a social construction, and goes on to state, "Given the "global anti-Black condition" (Walcott 2014:93), it should come as no surprise that the associations between Blackness, crime and danger continue to have enormous power in Canada nearly two centuries after the British abolished slavery in all their colonies."[40] The interconnectedness of the centuries of African Canadian suppression is exactly what Winks was missing from his own historical interpretation.

Another compelling feature of Maynard's work is her ability to take Reynolds' interpretations of racialized youth and furthering the impact. The most relevant chapter to this thesis is "The (Mis)Education of Black Youth."[41] Maynard examines how the colour of the child's skin determines whether they are perceived to be a child at all. Maynard states, "Today, Black children and youth remain outside the construction of innocence, as well as childhood itself, and the suffering that they are exposed to is frequently erased or negated.… Childhood itself takes on a different meaning depending on race, and the category of "innocent youth" continues to be raced white."[42] Maynard uses history as a way to understand the present. The importance of this in relation to the thesis is that participants of the study were reconnecting with their own childhood memories, and verbalizing the ways racialized spaces shaped their lives.

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[40] Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to Present* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 9.
[41]Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to Present,* 208.
[42]Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to Present,* 211.

When attempting to understand the history of Black youth, it is important to understand the legacy youth plays in adulthood. The importance of Robyn Maynard's publication has redefined the way we understand racial history, similarly to what Winks accomplished forty-five years prior. We as historians can only hope that by continuing to re-evaluate how we discuss, and construct race, we can continue to break down segregation continuing to plague the course of African Canadians' lives.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter one establishes the location and direction of the thesis within the current literature and historiographical transition. Moving away from the earlier models of Black responsibility for their socioeconomic situation, I will follow the methods of Toby Rollo and Robyn Maynard to show how multi-generational anti-Black sentiment continues to suppress Black mobility centuries after the end of slavery. The chapter will also place the work contextually into the current historiographical surge of using age as a categorization tool for analysis. This will help to show how my participants understand their lives as derived from the experiences of their youth. Through this, the intention will be to emphasize the chronological historiographical evolution of African Nova Scotian, and Black youth cultural histories.

The second chapter uses many of the more nuanced responses from the questionnaire to construct the identity of the individual. It will also look at the neighbourhood, and the role it plays in the youth development of the children who grow up there. Using the works of scholars such as Toby Rollo and Robyn Maynard, a conscious effort is made to analyze the colour of childhood, and how this changed once

the neighbourhood boundary was crossed. As Rollo states, "In a racial order predicated on the designation of childhood as a site of naturalized criminality, violence, and servitude, to which black peoples are principally relegated, not only will appealing to the category of childhood fail to protect black youth it will reaffirm an antiquated and pernicious misopedic [sic] distinction between human beings."[43] What is significant is how in a town as small as Truro, these perceived Black relegations become almost fluid between the boundaries of neighbourhoods, restaurants, and even bathrooms. Navigating this as a child was challenging, and meant learning to understand how the colour of their skin changed their rights based on their geographical location on a town map.

Space and youth interactions within space became an integral feature of this chapter; I use the works of Lia Karsten and Natalie Djohari, Gitanjali Pyndiah and Anna Arnone to contextualize the experiences in both a historical narrative, and a contemporary understanding of 'safe spaces'. This split the chapter into two main parts: shared experiences and understanding spaces. The shared experiences section displays how African Nova Scotian youths' experiences were similar in Truro regardless of neighbourhood origin. Understanding spaces identified the specific locations utilized by each of the three neighbourhoods, and how these created differentiations in youth experience. Some examples of spaces explored are graveyards, dumps, churches, and the neighbourhoods themselves. The complexity of finding the individual, placed within

[43] Toby Rollo, "The Color of Childhood: The Role of the Child/Human Binary in the Production of Anti-Black Racism," *Journal of Black Studies* (2018): 18.

the neighbourhood, contextualized within the historical situation of the Town is what makes this chapter so important.

The third chapter will follow the educational experiences of Black youth from elementary to high school. Nova Scotia has a long history of racial segregation and misconduct in the education system. From the late 1800s, segregated schools which were said to be "best suited to Negro abilities," became common institutions in Nova Scotia, promoting non-academic programing, emphasized domestic work for girls and industrial practices for boy.[44] Politician Samuel Creelman became the first advocate for equal Black education in Nova Scotia, introducing a bill to ensure no child was refused education based on race:

> It affirmed that colored pupils could not be arbitrarily excluded from instruction in the section or ward in which they lived. The government could continue to establish separate schools for sexes and for colors, but if no Negro school existed, admission to the public school was guaranteed.[45]

The Black population in Truro never justified a segregated school, but with many of these schools remaining open into the 1960s, the period marks an interesting time for the African Nova Scotian children attending public schools, while continuing to be subject to the practices of racial discrimination.[46] In Truro, inhabitants of the three African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods were subjected to very different educational circumstances based on the elementary school they attended. For the Hill, growing up in

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[44] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada.* Second Edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 378-379.
[45] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 379.
[46] All school closure dates are listed. Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes, *Telling the Truth. Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press Limited, 1995).

an integrated community, and all going to the new Douglas Street Elementary where the children all came from families of similar economic status, the interviewees remark on a far more positive elementary school experience. The children of the Hill still had interactions with segregation in other avenues of their lives, but their introductions to race and difference were far subtler than the other neighbourhoods.

Willow Street Elementary School, attended by the children of the Island and the Marsh, gave these young people a formal introduction to the deep seated racism, fostered by Truro's upper class white residents for generations. Robyn Maynard explains the historical reasoning for segregation, stating, "Innocent (white) childhood could be protected, in part, by maintaining distance from the corrupting force of "uncivilized" and immoral Black children."[47] In a school where, on the surface, integration and equal education seemed evident, the systems of protection established a clear divide between the students. As one participant recounts, "I know when I went to Willow Street School, I remember the sign up for the girls, the sign that said Coloured, and then the White, but the boys, we had to wait till the white boys came out of the bathroom before we could go in."[48] Bathrooms were used as the first tool of enforced racial segregation at Willow Street, and left a lasting impression on all of the projects participants who went there.

A curriculum analysis will also play an important role in understanding the segregation the participants were subjected to. At the elementary level, this will mainly focus on the books used to teach the difference between the Black and white

[47] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives,* 210.
[48] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

students.[49] An analysis of the 'hidden curriculum' culminating in the schools will also be used to understand the ways in which students were taught to understand race. Moving to the later years of education, the analysis will show how this 'hidden curriculum' was used to promote more subtle strategies of segregation experienced by the participants, including being placed in lower level classes, and being streamlined away from university preparation. These methods will be difficult to quantify due to their subtle and informal nature, but the experiences are extremely important in preserving the suppressed history of racial devaluation in Nova Scotian classrooms. These common themes will provide evidence of systemic racism outside of the educational systems enforced and recognized structure.

To understand the 'hidden curriculum' clearly, the participants' perspectives on why they did, or did not go to university will be included, to show how effective these methods were, and the different ways they were forced on students.[50] Supplemented by the work of historians such as Neil Sutherland and Tim Stanley, this chapter will analyze the oral history interviews under comparative studies, to understand how Truro can be understood as an anomaly in the larger Canadian education system.

The fourth chapter analyzes the legacy of youth experiences, and draws overarching conclusions from the themes of the thesis. Through the interview process and shared authority in interview direction, it became clear the legacy of youth to the

[49] The two main books mentioned by participants were *Little Black Sambo* and *Visits in Other Lands*.
[50] Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada From the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 213.

participants is as important as the experiences themselves. The social, political, cultural, and community constructions the participants were subjected to in their youth have influenced the rest of their lives. Whether they went on to be teachers, social activists, or community leaders, these actions reflect their ability to spark change on the suppression of their youth. The evolution of Truro since the 1970s is stark, but it is an evolution which has promoted the burying of history in an attempt to distort the true injustices suffered by earlier generations. The participants found relations to their current situation in almost every question asked, something which cannot be ignored. The chapter will try to make sense of the historical shift, the role the participants played in making it happen, and the ways race-based discrimination continue to manifest in their daily lives. The chapter ends by forming conclusions about the project as a whole, and revisiting the aspects of youth experience which shaped the African Nova Scotian experience in Truro in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Conclusion**

The thesis makes connections not currently reflected in the African Nova Scotian historiography, by intersecting the categories of race, time, age, and geographical location. The study aims to create a resource for the community, through oral history preservation, which will hopefully spark continued interest in preserving local history. This research has empowered participants through shared authority, and connected the importance of historical preservation with the people who lived it. Far too much Black history has been written without the sharing of experience and the contributions of the African Nova Scotian perspective. This will be integral to preserving the history as

accurately as possible, and providing an avenue for understanding the evolution of African Nova Scotian youth experience in Truro.

## Chapter 1

### Youth Interaction with Community

African Nova Scotian youth in Truro, Nova Scotia, shared a number of experiences through their coming of age, while also having specific encounters based on the neighbourhood they grew up in. In the 1950s and 1960s, Truro was home to three primarily Black neighbourhoods, the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh, which each contributed differently to the identities of youth who grew up there. Participants reflected on their neighbourhoods with pride, and pled the case for the communities as excellent places to grow up, especially compared to the larger town of Truro as a whole. Participant experiences reflect a unique account of growing up in the period in Truro's three distinct African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods. Despite shared and differing experiences, the category of Black youth in Truro can be analyzed retrospectively through the recurring themes of geographical occupancy and racialized spaces. This chapter examines places and spaces Black youth inhabited outside of school, while the next chapter deals more specifically with education, and educational involvement with racial identity.

Before exploring the variations of community experience, Donna Byard Sealey's book, *Colored Zion* will be used to outline the historical lineage of each of the three Truro Black neighbourhoods. Sealey's contribution to preserving Truro's Black history was immense, and her research was well regarded by numerous participants. Sealy first describes the origins of the Marsh, stating, "The people on the Marsh are descendants of the Black Loyalists of Guysborough and the Black Refugees of Preston. The Loyalist

families were Baptist. Initially the few Refugee families were Methodist… They later embraced Zion."[1] Zion, the local African Nova Scotian Baptist church is a common theme of the communities explored, with specific importance during the 1950s and 1960s.

According to Sealey, the Hill represented a diverse community not only in origin, but also in religion.[2] As was observable in participant accounts, the Hill was the most substantially inter-racial neighbourhood in Truro in the 1950s and 1960s. Parallels can still be seen between the Hill and the other African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods, partially due to a shared geographical discrimination and racial prejudice from the white community in the central core of Truro.

The final neighbourhood Sealey examined was the Island, stating, "Once surrounded by marshland, the Island, or "Smith's Island" is situated on West Prince Street. The people on the Island are primarily descendants of the Guysborough Loyalists. In addition to a common origin and experience, they shared a common religion – Baptist."[3] The Island represents the majority perspective in this project, with six of the ten participants growing up in the West Prince Street settlement. Although this does disproportionately weight the results, the plethora of information gathered does help to further the understanding of the other neighbourhoods, and establish more interconnected experiences. The Island was the only neighbourhood participants reflected on being exclusively Black in the 1950s and 1960s.

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[1] Donna Byard Sealey, *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church & the Black Community of Truro, Nova Scotia,* 24.
[2] Sealey, *Colored Zion,* 15.
[3] Sealey, *Colored Zion,* 15-16.

Although many of the following perspectives represent a positive youth experience when surrounded by the love and care of the neighbourhoods, Truro as a whole was not a town prone to accepting integration and equality when race was a factor. Robin Winks when examining the 1940s stated, "…evidence of discrimination was persistent, job opportunities for black men were few, and the segregated schools continued to reinforce the racist assumptions of many rural Nova Scotians. Truro, to the province's Negros [sic], had become 'Little Mississippi'."[4] According to participants, not much had changed by the 1950s. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how African Nova Scotian children experienced their own neighbourhoods, while also exploring how these children navigated the race-based suppression in specific spaces and communities outside of their own.

**Shared Experiences**

The experience of Black youth in Truro is contextualized through the shared experiences of participants across social, economic, and geographical boundaries. Perhaps the most important shared experience relates to geography, and how race determined the geographic location my participants inhabited as children. Despite these three locations existing as separate neighbourhoods, they existed for the same reason, to draw Black people away from the town centre, on parcels of undesirable land which surround the outskirts of the town. This distribution has had lasting effects on the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods, as historian Joseph Mensah stated in 2010,

[4] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* Second Edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 420.

"…many analysts now believe that the spatial distribution of ethnic and racial minorities has significant implications for their social and economic well-being."[5] Mensah fails to account for how youth experience such distributions, and how they view their own childhood retrospectively within them.

Understanding the difference between Mensah's analysis and the responses from participants is crucial, because the spatial distribution seemed to create a positive atmosphere when it came to how youth understood security. Raymond Tynes, who grew up on the Island, looked back on his childhood with fondness, stating, "It was fun, lot of kids, my age, we had the golf course behind us, we played, we played outside a lot, it was like our own little community. We played road hockey, we played baseball, we played football. It was a tight knit community. Everybody looked out for one another. It was just great."[6] Raymond Tynes recounted these spatial memories clearly, and attached his memories of a happy childhood to a specific geography. Most significantly, Raymond Tynes went on to distinguish between his positive experience on the Island and his negative experience off the Island:

> Until you stepped off the Island… [Laughs] Then the story starts changing a little bit… Well it's a, it's like your own little world. You felt comfortable with everybody, but then when you stepped off of the Island, that's when you started seeing the racism, the sep… Separations… And you could clearly, like, see the separations… that's when you started understanding the, the cultural differences and, the subtle racism there. You know. But, when we got back to our community, the Island, as soon as you went up the hill, then you felt comfortable.[7]

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[5] Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experience, Social Conditions* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2010), 59.
[6] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.
[7] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

Leaving the neighborhood meant exposure to the external racism which had segregated the Black community in the first place. As children, this was a process of geographical discovery for Black youth in Truro. Learning the places which were welcoming, those that weren't, and meeting other children who were willing to play and intermingle across racial boundaries.

Lia Karsten's oral history of youth spatial interactions in Amsterdam in the 1950s and 1960s provides a useful historical comparison for contextualizing the experiences of Black youth in Truro. Karsten interviewed adults who had grown up in the segregated pillar system following the Second World War, which provides a comparable context to the neighbourhood divisions that separated African Nova Scotians during the same time period in Truro. Karsten states, "Different schools and different clubs resulted in segregated worlds. After school, however, when it was time to play in the streets, the segregated character of children's daily lives faded away."[8] Crossing the boundaries and coming together to play was something commonly remembered by participants. Raymond Tynes reflected on such experiences in his interview, stating, "I remember in the sports and that we used to play a lot over on Smith Avenue because that's where a lot of our parents worked."[9] In this capacity, the Black parents of a lower economic bracket were working for the white families of Smith Avenue. Once again, the geographical understanding is brought back to Mensah, because even though the

[8] Lia Karsten, "It All Used to be Better? Different Generations on Continuity and Change in Urban Children's Daily Use of Space," *Children's Geographies* 3, No. 3 (December 2005): 282.
[9] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

suppressive segregation of race based socio-economic well-being would have greatly affected their parents, this racialized class system was an opportunity for young children to make new friends, and embrace Karsten's notions of the 'outdoor childhood' across perceived separations.[10]

Where the clear difference appears between Karten's examination and this study of Black youth experience in Truro is how for young African Canadians in Truro this relationship had an expiration date. JP, who grew up on the Hill, has a clear memory of a racial divide being instituted. He stated:

> I can remember, and I won't mention names, but two guys that played on the team with me, we were really close, and I used to go to their house all the time, and you probably know them so I'm not going to mention it, excuse me, and, we hung out a lot together cause we played. Those guys were lineman and I was a running back, and I stayed close to the lineman. And, I can remember their sister, like we sorta, liked each other a little bit, and, soon as… I think she, I can remember this really clear that she asked her dad, can we go to a dance, a teen dance one night, that was the last time I was at their house… And one of the guys said, well ask her out, and I said well she'll probably never go out with me, and he said you'll never know. So I did, and she said well I'll have to check with my parents, she said dad doesn't want you coming to the house anymore.[11]

Reaching the age of dating seemed to bring the acceptability of interracial friendships to an end in the memories of multiple participants. Making this more stark was how no participants reflected on this divide being instituted by their own parents, it was always enforced by the parents of their white counterparts. GTR, who grew up on the Island, remembered a similar experience of enforced division from her childhood, explaining, "Yeah I remember… I walked with [Boys name], who lived over on Robie

[10] Karsten, "It All Used to be Better?" 283.
[11] "JP Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 20, 2018.

Street, every day, and the last day of grade six he said, oh Glenda I'm going to miss you, can't walk with you anymore now. And I said why, and he said Mom said it's time to break it off… Yeah, and I think it was all based on, you know, maybe they'll want to date each other. Or whatever."[12] Although it was not a purpose of this study to measure the end of childhood, participants recounted an abrupt point in their pathways through youth, where race became an enforced aberration and the paths of white and Black youths split.

Raymond Tynes experienced this abrupt transition similarly, and expressed in his interview, "But I remember at 16, and I never forgot it, we were playing and this one prominent person, his son used to be there, and I never forgot that day that he came and said, "You're older now, you can't come around no more, it's time for our boys to start learning the business." So the Black kids weren't allowed around there anymore."[13] Learning the business is a comparable marker to the prospects of interracial dating in the participants' portrayals. Both were turning points of possible destabilization in the social hierarchy, where the parents in the upper class white community were no longer willing to risk their children's futures, be that through relationships, or inheritance of a family business. This was, however, rooted in bigotry, with white fear continuing a multigenerational partition that denigrated the futures of Black youth.

This explanation is an attempt to combine methodologies and historical references to understand the complexities of the Black youth experience in the 1950s

[12] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[13] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

and 1960s in Truro. As Natalie Djohari, Gitanjali Pyndiah and Anna Arnone concluded in their overview of how 'safe spaces' are being examined by childhood geographers, "Accepting that safe spaces are made in the convergence between what people do, the material world they interact with and the presence and absence of other co-creators, means we can also begin to see safe spaces as something mobile and temporal, moving in and out of existence with people and practices."[14] This, combined with Mensah's portrayal of Black existence in segregated geographies, creates a perspective which can be carried forward in this chapter. The African Nova Scotian youth in Truro were co-creators in their safe spaces of play, transcending racial boundaries and exploring friendships outside of their own communities, until their maturity and race denied them the ability to create as equals.

Bringing this back to experience, it is impossible under the limited scale of this project to outline all the linkages between the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh, but some key interconnections were themes consistently discussed in the interview process. Perhaps the most recurring memory from participants about their youth was about the Teen Hop dances at the local Legion. The Teen Hops created an unusual dynamic for the 1950s and 1960s, with all being welcome, despite wealth gaps and racial boundaries, kids came together to have a good time. When asked about the Teen Hops, GTR and BM seemed to enjoy the opportunity to compare memories of these youthful experiences, using each other to understand a full picture of the events:

[14] Natalie Djohari, Gitanjali Pyndiah and Anna Arnone, "Rethinking 'safe spaces' in children's geographies," *Children's Geographies* 16, No. 4 (2018): 354.

> GTR: Oh my goodness that was so much fun. They first started having them under the IDA didn't they?
> BM: No that was the Lincolns. The Teen Hop was always at the Legion.
> GTR: At the Legion, yes, yes, I think it was .25c to get in.
> BM: Yep.
> GTR: But did they have a band, or…
> BM: No it was the radio. And it would be broadcast on CKCL, I think it started at 9, and the whole dance would be broadcast, the music, right? So that was one good thing even before we went, at night you can turn the radio on and listen to like the Elvis, and Beatles weren't out back then, them fellas, when I couldn't get in. Beatles are my age, they aren't like your's and them's age.
> GTR: How old… We had to be how old to get in the teen hop, 16?
> BM: 13.[15]

As Alexander Freund explains, "Communicative memory is based on the fleeting, unstable, disorganized, unspecialized communication between people who may alternate between the roles of storyteller and listener."[16] As BM and GTR discuss their memory of the Teen Hops, they help preserve important details which contextualize the stories of other participants in the study. Everyone remembered the Teen Hops slightly differently. It was the moves and preparation which stood out in RW's memory, as he explained:

> And I have a friend who was a very good dancer, lived across the street from me there, he used to go to Montreal all the time on the train with his father. And every time he came back he had a new step, right? And he, Butch, got a new one, got a new one, so he'd come over, we'd turn the record player on, and he'd show me this, next… Yeah, we'd work it out work it out work it out, then the next Teen Hop, boom! We hit em with it, so.[17]

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[15] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[16] Alexander Freund, "A Canadian Family Talks about Oma's Life in Nazi Germany: Three-Generational Interviews and Communicative Memory," In *The Canadian Oral History Reader,* Ed. Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 162.
[17] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

With these memories, the Teen Hop was more than just a day of the week to RW, it was an opportunity to bring the new moves from across Canada to the Truro dance floor, and to stand out amongst his peers.

For others, the memories of the Teen Hop were simply another example of surface-level integration, with an underlying inequality and segregation. As Raymond Tynes remembered it, "You go to the, we used to call 'em the Teen Hops then, at the Legion. You go through the door, on the left side would be your Blacks, your First Nations, and as they liked to call it, the poor whites. Over on the other side would be your kids from outside of the town, and the so called rich white kids."[18] The segregation seemed to transcend all aspects of life, despite appearances of a move towards modernity and equality of treatment, "Little Mississippi" had a concealed darkness, even in the happy memories of youth development.

Although elements of play, sports, religion and community could be analyzed under the title of shared experiences, it is more important to outline the neighborhoods individually, in order to understand how youth were shaped by more micro-level geographies and social structures. There is one more thematic element which continued to come up in the interviews. Participants consistently recounted spaces in which they were not welcome in as children, or that they were segregated within when granted entry due to their race. Due to the fact that some of these establishments are still in operation today, the names will not be included in the thesis. This by no means implies a lack of belief in the participants' statements, it was simply not possible to verify all

[18] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

accounts under the scope of this oral history project. That being said, the list included restaurants, movie theatres, pool halls, barber shops, and school washrooms, among others.

**Understanding Space**

The Hill was represented by three participant voices in this study, two male and one female, who grew up in the Young Street area. Although this is a smaller sample size than the Island, the participants gave well rounded accounts of their youth experiences, which reveal some of the ways childhood on the Hill was different from that of the Island and the Marsh. As outlined earlier by Sealey, the Hill was an extremely diverse community in the 1950s and 1960s, combining cultures, religions, and races into a cohesive living environment of similarly classed families. As JM looked back on his childhood, he stated, "It was fantastic as a kid. We were all of equal status. All of the neighbourhood peoples were of the same economic bracket mostly, and you know, doors were open. Kids interacted, mixed race kids, white kids, it was, it was just fantastic."[19] This integrated upbringing was extremely beneficial for the children of the Hill, and as will be explored further in the next chapter, made a world of difference in the youth experiences in education.

As previously stated, the Island represents the largest sample portion in the study with six participants, three male, and three female. Combined, they provide a strong impression of youth experience. What quickly became clear in the interview process was how tightly knit this community was in the 1950s and 1960s. Participants

[19] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.

told stories about how the community's inception was shared with the next generations, and continue to be told. As BM remembers it:

> …when the Black people came to Truro, they weren't allowed to live in town, they put them on the Marsh, where it was marshy, way over the Hill, where it was hilly and trees, and they put us up here because apparently when it used to rain, or whatever, the water used to surround it. That's how it got called the Island. Yes, that's how it became the Island. And guess what? The people up here don't get water in their basements… And I often say to myself, if these people could come back and see what's on this Island now, and realize that everything's in our back door, where before everything was uptown. But everything's over here now, where everybody go.[20]

Land once considered to be the least desirable now borders a golf course and is situated within walking distance to the town's main street.

The Island, as a word, represents a segregated space, free of borders and connections to external communities. For the youth of the Island, the name also represented a geography which was theirs, with connotations of safety and freedom. As Robert Weyeneth described when examining the architecture of racial segregation in America, "Everyday life in a world constructed to reenforce [sic] and reflect the values of white supremacy inspired a range of imaginative reactions on the part of African Americans, from strategies of quiet accommodation to active resistance and protest."[21] In Truro, by the 1950s and 1960s, the African Nova Scotians of the Island were thriving in a space originally created to suppress their mobility. The participants of the study reflect overwhelmingly positively on what growing up was like on the Island, seemingly because

[20] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[21] Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematic Past," *The Public Historian* 27, No. 4 (Autumn 2005): 33.

it was a place where they could be themselves, and not be further prosecuted by a town which embraced a racial hierarchy.

Lynn Jones grew up in a family of ten children on the Marsh, with extremely hard-working parents, and highly successful brothers and sisters. Families of such size were not uncommon in the reflections of participants, but Lynn Jones gave perspective to how her family operated in order to put food on the table. As Lynn Jones remembered it, "…but I grew up in the house right on the, right here on the property, but on the corner. This was all our garden, and the chicken coup, the barn… The barn. So we were up really early in the morning. We had to tend to the garden, we had to tend to the chickens, and the milk, and there was a lot of work."[22] The children were part of the household economy, and despite being in close proximity to the town's main streets, they were able to grow and raise a sustainable quantity of food for a family of twelve.

As Waldron discovered in her research on environmental racism, "Today, the Marsh is a primarily white community since many African Nova Scotians left the community."[23] Despite Waldron's analysis, Lynn Jones continues to maintain her family homestead on the Marsh, and it was there we conducted our interview. Lynn Jones takes pride in maintaining the family land parcel, and preserving the memories of a happy childhood on the Marsh which were shared throughout her interview. One of the most interesting childhood reflections Lynn Jones shared, which seemed to be an

[22] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.
[23] Ingrid R. G. Waldron, *There's Something In The Water: Environmental Racism In Indigenous and Black Communities* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2018), Location 1901, Kindle.

experience only present on the Marsh, was a description of child parades. As she stated in the interview:

> We had street parades all the time, as kids we… and the parents acted like it was a big parade. Like kids would say okay we're gonna have a parade, and maybe it's gonna be Saturday at two o'clock, like its say… and the parents got wrapped up in it, and we'd decorate our doll carriages and tin cans for drums, and stick for majorette sticks, and what have you, and all the parents would come out on the door step and things… And we would have organized it ourselves, in the community.[24]

This experience is an excellent example of the ways children were given value in their segregated geography, and given an opportunity to feel worth from a young age, which would not have been available from the town as a whole. Children acting as organizers, role players, and actors, to the pride and praise of their parents, implies progress and the possibility that children could dream of careers and pathways beyond their small-minded town of birth.

With this comfortable space and exploration being one of the few aspects of life Black youth in Truro had complete control over, they took advantage of it. Lia Karsten makes a fitting assessment of this generation, stating, "…children's time-space behavior in the 1950s and 1960s can be roughly characterized by one type—namely 'outdoor childhood', with children playing outside almost every day…."[25] GTR reflected on these days of her childhood on the Island fondly, explaining, "As a child, there were lots of kids, so we had lots of opportunity to go out and play with our friends, or cousins, and it was very nice. We basically stayed within our own community, because there were so

[24] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.
[25] Karsten, "It All Used to be Better?" 283.

many kids and we found things to do. Like we would go over to the graveyard and jump from grave to grave, and we'd go down in the dump and dig and see what we could find. You know, just a whole lot of things like that. So on the Island it was safe, and it was fun."[26]

As Karsten explored with the generation of 'outdoor childhood,' the correlation and comparisons are far more recognizable with the Hill than the other two neighbourhoods. Karsten explains, "The street was a meeting place for all. The different backgrounds did not matter much to the children themselves."[27] The street, however, to children from the Hill, could have a variety of meanings. By this, I mean the Hill occupied the largest geographical area of the three neighbourhoods, and backing on Victoria Park, the children had seemingly endless avenues for freedom of exploring and play. The park was continually emphasized by participants from the hill as a space of complete bliss. As JM explained, "We… Like most kids in the area, we were little rascals, [both laughing] ran through the woods, made swings, and swimming holes. There was, you know, you just… Everyday was just whatever your imagination would lead you. You were free to roam. Summer vacation came it was… I had a lot of friends. A lot of the neighbourhood guys, we would go fishing. Camp out and fish."[28] With this expansive, unsegregated geography available in their own backyard, children of the Hill had a freedom which cannot be equated in the other two neighbourhoods, and they embraced it.

[26] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[27] Karsten, "It All Used to be Better?" 282.
[28] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.

Outdoor activities seemed to come in many different forms on the Island, and RW remembered many of them fondly. As he recalled in the interview, "We played outside a lot. It was a big competition on our street. We had the up the roads, and the down the roads, so the guys… there was a border line at the Maxwell house... And anybody who lived past that were the up the roads, and everybody that lived below it was the down the roads. And all sports, no matter what sport it was, hockey, baseball, whatever, football, there was always a competition going on."[29] Sports once again divided the geography of the Island, but from an angle of friendly competition which empowered and motivated Black youth. RW took the importance of this further, stating:

> And it was… there was a pecking line man, I'll tell you, it was… That's why most the guys from up our way were pretty good at sports, because you had to get by. The older guys treat you like crap, right? When you're a young guy coming into it, older guys just put it to you all the time. And especially baseball, and the rule was, if you struck out you missed at bat, you didn't bat the next time around. Or if you dropped a fly ball you didn't play…It was really cool, but not that they treat you like crap, the older guys, but you had to learn to get better. So we used to practice a lot before they got, like… In-between the games we played and stuff, and the weaker players that is, but we used to play catch every day, or whatever just to try to get better. Right? So didn't want to have to go home early. So anyway, but the biggest day of my life was when I played a whole game, I finally got through a whole game. Never missed a bat, and never had to sit down, got to play the whole game, and I went flying home to my father and said, dad I did it! I did it, I did it! He said what? I said I played the whole game today! [Both laugh] Now that was fun, that was fun man... It was pretty cool. Yeah, it felt mean at the time, but afterwards, and when you get a little older, and you're playing in the leagues around town, most of the guys were the best players on their team.[30]

Sports for children growing up on the Island acted as a rite of passage. Enforcement by matured and tested players ensured no child coming in had an easy path, but it also

[29] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.
[30] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

pushed the youth to greater sporting heights beyond the boundaries of the Island. As Joseph Mensah explains, "Furthermore, as with all ethnoracial groups, Black youths identify with, idolize, and emulate successful Blacks – and more often than not, these successful Blacks are in sports and entertainment. Thus, the Black involvement in sport is somewhat self-perpetuating."[31] In the 1950s and 1960s, as will be seen more in the education chapter, Black youth had an absence of tangible role models in their education who embodied the potential for Black success. Thus, role models were formed in the community, where youth had observable excellence to emulate through sport.

Another important observation from Lynn Jones's memory is the importance of baseball to the people of the Marsh. Although baseball was talked about in all three neighbourhoods, the intergenerational component of Lynn Jones's memories makes the story unique. As she explained:

> And there was this intergenerational thing that happened because there was no separation between like a five year old and a hundred and five. We all played ball at the same time… But the kids, the little kids for example, and we might run and catch balls, for the bigger people, or whatever, but they would have a break for the kids. And it would be the kids turn. And they'd throw balls and let us play. And then they'd go back to the regular game. And it would be the same for the real older folk, cause they don't want to play ball all day, but they played. But there may be a break for the seniors to do their thing. Cause they're not running too hard or anything. But kids loved to watch, have the kids… So everybody played.[32]

Once again, this memory reflects the intergenerational community which prospered on the Marsh. There was an intermingling of youth and seniors, all aimed at creating

[31] Mensah, *Black Canadians,* 200.
[32] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

opportunities and playful competition. Although Lynn Jones's memories linked numerous other avenues for exploration, the thesis focus has been placed on the youth experience as a whole, and how youth occupy space. Despite the single interview coming from the perspective of youth engagement on the Marsh, the story complements those of the other communities well and helps comprise a more complete study of the shared, and individualized experiences of African Nova Scotian youth in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s.

Continuing to unpack the earlier quotation of GTR, it is important to briefly touch on the significance of the Truro town graveyard, and its location. For youth, the graveyard served as another location of play, located only one block from West Prince Street on Robie Street. As GTR remembered the jumping from stone to stone, BM added, "…and we used to go over to the graveyard sometimes and skate when there was water over there."[33] The long icy straits of the wintered marshland provided ice for skating, while in the summer the space served to expand safe playing territory with its close proximity to home. The graveyard, however, has its own dark history of segregation. As Lynn Jones (the Marsh) outlined, "…Truro, and the fact that you weren't allowed to be buried in the graveyard in Truro. Except in… No, there's a Black section in the graveyard. When we grew up, Black people weren't allowed to be buried in the graveyard."[34] Even the graveyard in Truro represented segregated space. Black people were no more welcomed by the town in death, than they were in life. The irony of this

[33] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[34]"Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

space representing a safe place to play for Black children shows the importance of age as a category of analysis.

Similar to the accounts of the Island, Lynn Jones also remembers spending time in the segregated graveyard during her childhood growing up on the Marsh. Her insights further complicated the understanding of the space. She explained, "And then the man that lived here, Mr.[Name], he used to mow the graveyard. The Black section had to be done separately. And so as kids we would wait and see when he was putting his lawn mower in his station wagon. Mr. [Name], can we come, can we come? And go play around the graves while he mowed the, the lawn. And sometimes he would tell us stories about some of the people buried."[35] Although the graveyard maintenance man provided the children with further opportunity to play and learn in the graveyard, one must be left asking, why was his job necessary? In a town graveyard, maintained by the town, not even the maintenance of the Black section could be counted on being conducted by the regular staff. It was left to the community to send someone in order keep the space respectful and maintained. Although the history of this position is unknown, and it could be an example of a make work project for an African Nova Scotian community member, what is clear and undeniable is the creation of such a position comes as a result of racism and segregation.

The final component of GTR's quotation to be unpacked is the issue of the town dump. During the 1950s the Truro dump was located on the Island. At some point during the 1950s and 1960s, it was relocated from the Island to the Hill, moving the racialized

[35] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

placement from one Black neighbourhood to another. It is important to discuss these dumps separately, because they were discussed differently by participants. Although these locations represent a clear imposition of geographical racism, which will be discussed further later, for children, the dump was another safe area to play and explore within their community. As Raymond Tynes remembered it, "…I remember that's where they used to dump the snow, we couldn't wait. We'd go looking for change in the snowbanks. You see little shiny whatever…"[36] Exploring the dump could be a profitable venture for children of the Island, but for some of their parents' generation, the dump represented their livelihood, and sometimes their survival. Although many participants reflected with pride that they had never wanted for anything, and that there was always enough food to eat, this was not the reality for all narrators. Poverty was most definitely present in Truro's African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods. As Raymond Tynes went on to say, "And the dump was where Kingston Aluminum is, in the area, and we ate a lot of dump food. Monday morning was like going to the grocery store shopping, cause back then, stores were closed on the weekends, Wednesday at noon they closed, and then after Friday they were closed till Monday, and then all the lettuce, everything, all the food was thrown out, and my father used to go down and sort through it, separate it, and, you know, people would share it."[37] The dump was prejudicial in its placement, but people with a need made the best of a bad situation, and used it to survive.

[36] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.
[37] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

Environmental racism has a long legacy in Nova Scotia, with a history of devaluing Black lives to ensure white safety. As Ingrid Waldron states clearly in her book, *There's Something in The Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities,* "Policy decisions that lead to the disproportionate placement of polluting industries and other environmental hazards near Indigenous and Black communities highlight how little value these bodies hold in the white imagination."[38] As participants of the Island discussed, the dump was not recognized to be a problem in its location until it began having an effect on the more affluent neighbouring white communities. As BM remembers it, "And until the rats started running around Smith Avenue more, that's when they decided, when they moved the dump. You know, moved the dump. Yeah Smith Avenue complained till… like there were more rats running around. I was up the street, so I didn't see, I didn't see as many rats."[39] The dump's relocation to the Hill had a significant effect on their community.

JP lived an exciting youth with the freedoms which came living next to Victoria Park, remembering in the interview, "But yeah, just talking about younger years. And, back where we lived, you could go through the woods, like we lived at Victoria park when we were young, you know?"[40] The shift in youth's ability to experience this completely untouched wilderness came when the dump moved to the Hill from West Prince Street. Seeing as the new dumping location was further removed from a populace of rich white residents, the memories of participants reflect a disregard for Black life

[38] Waldron, *There's Something In The Water,* location 1915, Kindle.
[39] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[40] "JP Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 20, 2018.

which seemed to go even further than with the previous dump. As JP remembered, a lot changed with the opening of the dump, "Oh yeah, you could get trout like after school, and then soon as the dump came, and they burnt everything back then, they burned a lot of stuff, bulldozed it over, but you couldn't hang your clothes out up where I lived at night, cause the smoke would come right through our community and the leach aid just destroyed all the water up there. So, that's something that the other communities wouldn't have seen."[41] By burning the garbage, polluting the air, and through soil pollution polluting the water, the town sent a message of the value they placed on the lives of people from the Hill.

Waldron analyzes how white populations in Nova Scotia were able to justify such stark environmental racism. She states, "This lack of regard for the humanity of Indigenous and Black peoples speaks to enduring perceptions of them as disposable and lacking in humanity and value and simultaneously invulnerable, strong, "superhuman" and, therefore, able to endure inconceivable harms inflicted on their spirits, souls, minds, and bodies."[42] The justification seems to come from a belief in the hardships and trauma of Black lives make them better suited to further exploitation, a racist devaluation meant to ensure white preservation.

The final important theme to discuss is the significance of religion, and how it shaped the lives of Black youth in Truro. As MJ reflected on Zion Baptist Church, and the foundation it gave to her youth, she stated, "Oh, it was all that Black people had. That's

[41] "JP Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 20, 2018.
[42] Waldron, *There's Something In The Water,* location 1923, Kindle.

all they had, really was the church."[43] The Zion Baptist Church was founded on November 5, 1896, and with it, brought a home and community hub to many families in Truro's Black community.[44] For African Nova Scotian youth in the 1950s and 1960s, the church had been the staple of their parents' generation, and parents seemed to be set on this being continued through their children. As GTR stated, "I mean you could be as drunk as a skunk the night before but you still went. Got up for church. I remember we'd go to the Teen Hop and mom said yes you can go to the Teen Hop, but just remember, you're getting up in the morning for church. So it was an expectation."[45] Despite the expectation of attendance, the larger importance of the church in the lives of youth from the Island was its development and maintenance of culture and community, instilling a pride in being Black. As WT remembered, "…but like I say, you, if you wanted, if you look for the leader in the community, you have to look at the church. Like you didn't look in the community because basically they weren't there. People accepted a lot, they were very quiet, they didn't protest."[46] Under the racially segregated system in Truro, the participants' parents' generation had been taught they had no voice, and that they were of lower value that Truro's white population. The church changed that. Zion Baptist Church gave its congregation a platform to speak out, and someone to look up to who carried the word of god, and brought them hope.

[43] "MJ Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, May 2, 2018.
[44] Sealey, *Colored Zion,* 25.
[45] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[46] "WT Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 19, 2018.

The church also provided outward mobility yearly in the form a congregation picnic. WT remembered these clearly, stating, "…every year they would, rent a bus, sometimes they'd take us out to Murray Siding, it's a place you know, everybody, all the families went and all the families took their own picnic lunch and played games, swam, and stuff like that. Then eventually they moved it out to the little park there in Wentworth Valley, and took a bus, and that went on all the time that I was a kid."[47] By taking the congregation to another area, the picnic removed families from prejudicial space, and took them to an area where they were completely free to relax and embrace their community. This also gave children an opportunity to see the province beyond the town of Truro, and understand the freedom of movement they had, despite historical suppression which aimed to maintain community segregation in Truro.

Although some of the same sentiments were echoed on the Hill from the Island in regards to play, sports, and outdoor importance, there were other ways they differed greatly. One of the main ones was through religion. Unfortunately, with only three participants from the Hill, a depth of religious experiences could not be gathered, but some variance was observed, which speaks to the multiple religions practiced on the Hill. For SM, her roots were in a different religious congregation than many members of Truro's African Nova Scotian community. When asked which church she attended as a child, she stated, "Oh, the Anglican. St. John's… We were Anglicans."[48] SM went on to explain how her family was one of numerous Black families from the Hill whose religious

[47] "WT Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 19, 2018.
[48] "SM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 21, 2018.

beliefs lead them to the St. John's Anglican Church. Much like Zion, the church was a busy hub for the congregation, and hosted events to instill a sense of community in the congregation. As SM remembered them, she stated, "And they used to have, I can remember, cause they used to have… Every once and a while they would have like these, these suppers. They'd put on these suppers and all the women would make the favourite recipes. And so you would go there and you would have your supper."[49] Through these events, children participated as silent extensions of their parents, somewhat different from the youth focused opportunities reflected by participants who attended Zion.

JP attended Zion Baptist Church, and being from the Hill, this was one of the few reflections where he remarked on a true connection to the Island and the Marsh. As he remembered it, "…when I was growing up I was baptized at the Zion Baptist Church, and we had to go to church."[50] JP went on to say later in the interview, "Yeah, but I mean, it's a little different, we were so far away from each other, the only real time we grouped together was in church, and if there was, you know, if there was a church social, that we could all get together for barbeque, we used to have a picnic every year, I know growing up."[51] For JP, Zion Baptist Church shrank the vast geography between the three African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods, and inspired a sense of shared community. This goes to show how different the connection was to the Hill than the other

[49] "SM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 21, 2018.
[50] "JP Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 20, 2018.
[51] "JP Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 20, 2018.

communities, and how interconnectivity was largely determined by religious and educational backgrounds in the 1950s and 1960s in Truro.

**Conclusions**

During the 1950s and 1960s, numerous elements combined to create a shared Black youth experience in Truro, while maintaining the individuality and collective identity found on the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh. This chapter does not pretend the ten perspectives presented are representative of all African Nova Scotian youth experiences in the town, nor does it content to present all elements which divided, or brought the neighbourhoods together. What it did aim to accomplish was presenting the common themes participants shared, and use them to understand the ways youth acted freely, or were limited within their spatial geography. Another important factor was attempting to understand how racialized the youth experience was in the 1950s and 1960s, and how children were able to ignore, or overcome such boundaries in order to live happy childhoods in their communities. What can be concluded is every space in Truro had a backstory which either enabled or prevented Black youth from acting within it. As will be examined further in the following chapter on education, space in Truro was used to enforce a racial hierarchy, so the most important take away from the experiences shared was how children overcame racialized space to embrace a path of resiliency and success.

## Chapter 2

### Education as the Introduction to Segregation and Resilience

The history of African Nova Scotian schooling is poorly documented, which can be attributed to a lack of policy and formal implementation, or more likely, a sign of the devaluing of Black education in the province. 'Progress' and 'equality' are words commonly associated with race-based educational reforms, but these are not words one can use when understanding how the system came to be in 1950s Nova Scotia. Instead, the system should be viewed as a transition through different stages of segregation practice and prejudicial implementations. Although the narrators in this study represent a single generation of youth experiencing different stages of education between the late 1940s and the early 1970s, what becomes clear is segregation and legacies of hate have had a lasting influence on the youth who experienced this period in the Truro education system. To understand the experiences of this generation, and the complexities of their shared and differing experiences, it is important to first contextualize the history of African Nova Scotian education.

Robin Winks' *The Blacks in Canada* remains the best chronological history of African Nova Scotian education from foundation to its 1971 publication date. Despite the overarching problems, such as its arguably racist conclusion, the book makes an interesting observation: that although Nova Scotia had laws allowing school commissioners to establish segregated schools with government approval, this was

seldom put into practice due to the history of residential segregation in the province.[1] With African Nova Scotians already being excluded from living within town boundaries, a segregated school could be made to look like a result of institutional proximity, as opposed to race-based exclusion from historically white schools. Where denial of proximity to primarily white schools was unavoidable was in urban centres such as Halifax, where three formally segregated schools were needed to support the African Nova Scotian population with formal government funding to maintain segregation.[2] As will be examined, Truro never introduced a segregated school, but segregation was nonetheless present in the lives of African Nova Scotians in the town, and in the town schools.

The dates of the origins of segregation are difficult to establish, but Winks is clear that much of the formal policy on the topic was established in 1884, and remnants of the origin story are clear in the reflections of participants.[3] When Winks summarizes the initial segregation arguments put forward by local officials, he explains, "The colored schools should offer a different, more practical, program of studies best suited to Negro abilities, with sewing for girls and industrial drawing for boys."[4] This combined with an earlier statement exhibits a clear intent, "…any Negro who could pass his examinations at the end of the seventh grade should be permitted to go on to higher school wherever

[1] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* Second Edition (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 276.
[2] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 376.
[3] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 378-379.
[4] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 378-379.

he wished."[5] Although it is unclear what parts of this debate were successfully implemented, what is clear is a mentality existed in the Nova Scotia Legislative Council to exclude African Nova Scotians from obtaining higher education, creating paths for vocational education, and blocking opportunities for Black Nova Scotians to break the pattern of suppression.[6]

A single positive outcome can be observed in the 1884 debates, coming from Samuel Creelman, a former teacher from Truro. Creelman substituted an amendment, which, "affirmed that colored pupils could not be arbitrarily excluded from instruction in the section or ward in which they lived. The government could continue to establish separate schools for sexes and for colors, but if no Negro school existed, admission to the public school was guaranteed."[7] In Nova Scotia, at least twenty-three segregated schools were established, with some remaining open as late as the 1990s.[8] What is unclear from the interviews is why Truro seems to have been a provincial anomaly. With a large African Nova Scotian population, and residential exclusion being a distinctly exploitable factor from Winks's perspective, the Marsh, the Hill, and the Island seem to have the markings of neighbourhoods which would have suffered from the institution of segregated schools under The Education Act of 1884.[9]

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[5] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 378.
[6] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 378.
[7] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 379.
[8] Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes, *Telling the Truth. Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press Limited, 1995), 10-11, 27.
[9] Evans and Tynes, *Telling the Truth,* 8.

This chapter will aim to understand experience within the anomaly, exploring segregation practices within institutions which outwardly project the appearance of 'equality'. The policies of the 1950s are easily connected to the racial regulations of the 1880s. Although not all experiences were shared, it is clear that prejudice, racism, and spatial segregation thrived in Truro schools during the 1950s and 1960s. As important as this history is to preserve, what will also be a crucial observation is how the students created their own success, breaking through the institutionalized racism, and creating a generational legacy of educational success. Overcoming is as important as what was overcome, and the narrators of this study represent a moment in educational history where the student, not the teacher, became the avenue for 'progress' and 'equality'. Education in Truro will be explored in the stages of elementary, junior, and high school, creating an understanding of what race meant to the institution of schooling, and how it was experienced by Black youth in the 1950s and 1960s.

Mona Gleason's article "Disciplining the Student Body: Schooling and the Construction of Canadian Children's Bodies, 1930-1960" combined with Neil Sutherland's book *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada From the Great War to the Age of Television* serve as the most prominent literature in the chapter. Both authors help researchers understand the authoritative classrooms of the time period, and analyze the youth experience of navigating differing school environments. Where both authors fall a bit short, however, is how race influences these dynamics. My analysis needs additional interpretation to consider how African Nova Scotian youth in Truro navigated an already difficult school system. The 1994 "Black Learners Advisory

Committee Report on Education" will also be used to contextualize and compare the experiences of participants to those of the findings of the Black Learners Advisory Committee. The report analyzes the reasons for continued African Nova Scotian disadvantage in the provincial education system, and identifies racist practices similarly to how participants portrayed them, such as segregation and academic streaming.[10] The report plays a critical role in interpreting the ways schools failed Black youth in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s.

**Elementary Education**

The elementary education African Nova Scotian youth received in Truro in the 1950s and 1960s varied widely depending on which school they attended. The majority of African Nova Scotian youth in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s either attended Willow Street Elementary School, or the old Truro Elementary, moving to Douglas Street Elementary once it opened on Young Street. Willow Street School opened in 1915, with Douglas Street Elementary not opening until 1967.[11] For children from the Hill, the integrated and modern educational environment at Douglas Street Elementary School provided a far different experience of those of the Marsh and the Island, who attended Willow Street Elementary.

[10] Black Learners Advisory Committee, "BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity – Empowering Black Learners, Volume 2: The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia," Halifax (December 1994): 32.
[11] Nan Harvey, "History of Truro in a Nutshell," Town of Truro, Last modified September 23, 2003, https://www.truro.ca/truros-past-and-history.html.

As Donna Byard Sealey argued, people from the Island were often regarded as the "500s" or "big shots" by the other Black neighbourhoods in Truro.[12] As most participants reflected, many women from the Black neighbourhoods in the 1950s and 1960s worked in domestic service, just as many of their mothers had. Living in close proximity to the wealthy neighbourhoods of Smith Avenue and Longworth Avenue meant work was not hard to come by, but it also meant without a segregated school, all children from the area went to one elementary school, Willow Street. For the children of Willow Street Elementary, it meant the classroom integration of the wealthiest Black and white neighbourhoods, but the wealth gap between Black and white students of the school was severe.

Before any function of the school or race can be examined, it is important to establish that in mid-twentieth century Canadian schools, children attending a school with such parental earning differences would be 'othered' by the institution before they ever walked through the doors. As Mona Gleason states, "The association of particular children with lower or higher social standing shored up the established order of things in which the working class, and by extension the other children of the working class, occupied a level below that of children of professionals."[13] This is not only evident in arguments such as Gleason's, but in the participants' reflections. To add to the already damning factors of social stratification, the participants are Black. As Gleason also states,

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[12] Donna Byard Sealey, *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church & the Black Community of Truro, Nova Scotia* (Gaspereau Press, 2000), 16.
[13] Mona Gleason, "Disciplining the Student Body: Schooling and the Construction of Canadian Children's Bodies, 1930-1960," *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 200.

"The politics of racism at mid-century in Canada provided a particularly insidious avenue for disciplining children's bodies. That some children were labelled "different," and thus inferior, imbued "race" with the power to reproduce and legitimize traditional hierarchies of power in schools."[14] With this being said, it would have been possible for institutions to segregate and discriminate without ever outwardly portraying it as race based, but that is not what happened at Willow Street.

Willow Street Elementary will be examined as not only an institution for curriculum-based learning, but a place for racial education on societal interpretations of race-based values as demonstrated in school culture and policies. As RW explains, "That's probably the first, yeah, that's probably the first time I experienced any kind of racism. Was at Willow Street School."[15] Willow Street School maintained a multigenerational community hierarchy in a number of ways. Most notably, participants who attended Willow Street Elementary School all spoke about its segregated washrooms for Black girls. Participants reflected the shift in this period away from signs marking the racial divide expected in these washrooms, while enforcement continued keeping racial segregation in place.

Although Timothy Stanley has studied anti-Chinese racism in British Columbia, the sentiment and social agenda he described is evident in this study. As Stanley argues, "Racisms are racialized exclusions, that is, exclusions organized on the basis of racializations that take many different forms. However, whatever their form, and

[14] Gleason, "Disciplining the Student Body," 198-199.
[15] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

whether the result of deliberation, accident, or thoughtlessness, racialized exclusions do not fall from the sky. They are something that one human being (or group of human beings) does to another (or others)."[16] This is true in the case of the African Nova Scotian washroom, or 'Coloured' as it was referred to at the time the participants attended the school. As Stanley contends, whatever the circumstances were that brought the washroom to be, white values imposed Black segregation. Robert Weyeneth's study on the architecture of segregation and duplicating spaces provides a helpful addition to Stanley, and he explains, "As public policy, duplication represented a feeble nod in the direction of providing "separate but equal" facilities that were emphatically separate and never equal."[17]

Segregation was not uncommon in the 1950s, but by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, one might expect to see these blatantly racist practices beginning to dissolve, especially at the elementary school level. What becomes clear when speaking to participants is the policies relating to the washroom did evolve over time. Several things can be considered to have stayed constant throughout the evolution from evaluating the interviewees' responses: the room remained the same, the Black girls were provided with fewer toilets, and the segregation was only forced on girls. Lynn Jones reflected on the enforcement of the space, saying, "Apparently though there were two different times, because they had changed it earlier, but the system went back."[18]

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[16]Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 97.
[17] Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematic Past," *The Public Historian* Vol. 27, No. 4 (Autumn 2005): 15.
[18] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

Although none of this history is well preserved, possibly deliberately so, comparing the interviewees' memories of how the space was while they attended the school helps to understand the bathroom evolution. The major change can be observed as the sign 'Coloured' at some point came down, but regardless of its physical presence, the mentality and enforcement remained the same.

This remains a clearly troubling memory to GTR, who recounted, "It was just an unspoken, and it was, there was no signs up, but you knew if you went into the other washroom, that you were going to be called a derogatory name. And I was really sensitive as a little girl growing up about that kind of stuff, so sometimes I would just sit there and pee myself, rather than go to the bathroom."[19] Gleason identified similar reactions from students who were observed as the undesirable 'other' in her study, stating they were, "…left to endure the humiliation, discomfort, and infantilization of stress-induced bedwetting."[20] The fear of being called a derogatory name both enforces the segregation, while working to elevate the perceived value of white students through preferential treatment and lenience.

BM added to the reasons for complying with this informal segregation, saying, "…and sometimes if you went in you got a strapping."[21] Corporal punishment for using the white washroom would continue to support Gleason's earlier point, further identifying Black youth as the 'other' within the school. The segregated washrooms were

[19] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[20] Gleason, "Disciplining the Student Body," 199.

[21] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

used as a tool to teach race, difference, and lower self-worth in African Nova Scotian youth. One of the major reasons this can be argued is because the practice was not continued past grade two, according to participants.[22] As BM remembers, "When you got to grade two, then you went to the bathroom with everybody, when you changed that area, you know and I couldn't wait to get to grade two just to get out of that. That, really, I couldn't wait to get out of there."[23] Within the first crucial and formational year in public school, the administrators, teachers, and community affiliates of Willow Street School were able to instil a classroom race-based hierarchy, centred in segregation and exclusion, which would follow students for the duration of their education.

Unfortunately, it is clear that these tactics were successful in creating an environment operating on fear within the school. As GTR remembers, "And some kids like me that are sensitive that was just engrained. You know, you're programed to think, whether you're in grade primary or grade six, cause it went to grade six then, that's where you went, that was your place. You know?"[24] Due to the enforced informal segregation during the educational foundation, some students continued to use the washroom even after it was no longer required. For female Black students, this was a space of their own within a school which overtly characterized them as lesser.[25] Lynn Jones found a different reason to embrace the segregated washroom, stating:

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[22] The reason for this was never further explained, but after listening to the participant memories of the washrooms, it seems as though they were used as a racial learning tool only deemed necessary for the first year at the school.
[23] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[24] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[25] I must make clear I am in no way advocating for the washrooms, I simply aim to understand why participants learned to embrace the space over the alternative.

> Two stalls, but it was very clean, very, large and very clean, the white washroom when you snuck in there kind of thing, it had more stalls and it was dirty. They didn't keep it good, whereas that's what I remember the most, was the Black washroom, they kept it very, very clean. And, in order, in the end we didn't even want to go in the other washroom, when we were allowed cause it was, people didn't look after it. They threw their toilet paper anywhere and, but Black people were more conscious about the cleanliness.[26]

Something which became clear throughout the interviews is the youthful ability to find the positives in a bad situation. Although Lynn Jones's family played a crucial role in the eventual end of the segregated washrooms, she still holds firm on the reasons she was more comfortable continuing to use it. What cannot be deciphered is how much of this is due to the taught segregation and fear, and how much of it is a genuine sentiment aimed to offset negative educational interactions.

The policing of the washrooms also provides an important fragment in attempting to contextualize the social hierarchy and its construction in the culture of the school. Teachers' real names are unable to be used, despite despicable actions which live as memories to the projects participants. As BM remembered, not every teacher abided as firmly by the school's segregation guidelines. She states:

> But, as I said, I just went where I was told to go. And I didn't want a strapping, and I remember the teacher when she, I was downstairs, both times, grade one and grade two. Now Mrs. [1] was a different type of teacher, she was a little nicer teacher, but we used to have to come upstairs to go to the bathroom, like, to go down. But Mrs. [2], she would stand right there when it was time, like break time, everybody went to the bathroom. Just stand… Cause when you come out of her door, you go straight ahead, and there's the two bathrooms. And to stand there and watch to make sure everybody went to the right bathroom.[27]

[26] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.
[27] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

Mona Gleason's examination of corporal punishment in mid-1900s schools depicts a clear teacher mentality, "It was understood that respect for authority had to be drilled into children, through physical punishment if necessary, and that children's powerlessness made them particularly pliable subjects."[28] What happens to this argument when race is added? Respect for adult authority would have been universal, but how does the respect and powerlessness shift when there is a multi-layered racial hierarchy already imposed on the students? Simplifying the reasoning for a strapping when using the wrong washroom can also be seen as a strapping for expecting racial equality. Although it cannot be said a white student would never be strapped for using the Black washroom, the validity of this argument is negated by the actuality Black students were not favoured in the washrooms creation. The very nature of the washrooms creation was for the perceived white benefit, once again showing the racial exclusion that defined the school's culture.

The next step in understanding the washroom policing moves from teacher-on-student enforcement, to student-on-student enforcement. As GTR remembers, "…if you did venture in, and I did once, and like I remember girls telling me, you're in the wrong washroom, your washroom is over there."[29] This statement makes two things clear. First, at least on some level, whether it was taught or a sentiment learned from their parents, the white students perceived themselves to be of elevated status. Second, they were willing to act on these perceptions and enforce race-based rules to embrace the

[28] Gleason, "Disciplining the Student Body," 201.
[29] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

divide. As Gleason understands it, "Within the culture of childhood, children reproduce and legitimized the relations of power experienced in the classroom for their own purposes."[30] Although the argument can be made racism is learned, and is a product of one's environment or teaching, the horrifying truth to be taken from this is the teaching had been effective, and the students themselves were participating in enforcing a racial hierarchy by the time they reached the second grade.

Understanding how the divide came to be so gendered while creating partial racial segregation is difficult. Although Neil Sutherland does an excellent job of contextualizing the gendered nature of 1950s schooling in Canada, his argument does not factor in how race adds another dimension to these diverse interactions between youth and the educational system. Sutherland explains, "Schools presented a gendered physical message; there, boys and girls inhabited sharply differentiated spaces."[31] The differentiated spaces is clear, especially when it comes to washrooms, but how does this explain why only one gender would be forced to divide once again by race? Questions come to mind such as, was this an architectural limitation, had there been specific complaints about girls in the past, or were they simply less worried about the boys interacting? These questions are difficult to answer with this type of qualitative study, but what can be answered, and more importantly so is how this divide transcended gender despite only physically separating girls.

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[30] Gleason, "Disciplining the Student Body," 202.
[31] Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada From the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 214.

When RW shared his first memory of racism, he was able to describe how gendered it was, while still exhibiting the affect it had on his own life. In his words, "…and it wasn't for me directly, it was, was the girls. The girls, the Black girls had to go to a separate bathroom. I know the boys didn't. But the girls had a separate bathroom they had to go to. But, and then on the school grounds, you used to get some name calling once and a while, but they didn't do it very long."[32] What becomes clear here is despite the segregation only being forced on girls, the children understood the broader meaning that somehow it was also about them. They were not being segregated for being girls of a different class, or a different primary reading level, they were segregated because they were Black. This in turn meant Black boys suffered as extensions of their female peers, understood to be of different value to their school based on the signs on the walls or words of their teachers.

This is in no way to say African Nova Scotian boys were not also subjected to overt racism as a result of the washrooms. As Raymond Tynes remembers, "You started seeing the real world. Places you could go to and you couldn't go to. For example, I know when I went to Willow Street School, I remember the sign up for the girls, the sign that said Coloured, and then the white, but the boys, we had to wait till the white boys came out of the bathroom before we could go in."[33] This action was also degrading, and instilled an understanding of space as hierarchical, with white being first, and Black boys only occupying space when their white 'equals' were finished with it. Looking back on an

[32] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.
[33] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

earlier quotation by Lynn Jones, we can also see white children seemed to give little regard to the space and its cleanliness. Having to go to the washroom second would have meant using an already soiled space, once again using race to teach the treacherous social structure of the time, with Black youth expected to endure white debris. Although this was not an experience all participants reflected on, it may have been yet another example of the evolution of the space, seeing as the narrator also remembered the signs for the female washroom.

Segregated washrooms at Willow Street School were a tool used to create difference and hierarchy between Black and white children. Although these washrooms went through an evolution as an attempt to limit the outward perception of institutional racism, the sentiment and its enforcement did not change in the 1950s or 1960s. This would be the first of many obstacles for Black youth to overcome in pursuit of education in Truro. Some credited the reintroduction of segregated washrooms to a push from the white community surrounding Willow Street School, so this experience can be looked at as the introduction to the mid-century societal norm of suppressing the aspirations, goals, and value of Black youth.[34]

Curriculum in the 1950s and 1960s was another tool utilized to ensure a racial divide was established at the elementary level. In order to understand the curriculum which was used to 'other' Black youth, one must first recognize the historical context of

[34] A specific timeline is difficult to establish, as no participants reflected on these events with specific dates, but the important recognition is the shift happened between the 1950s and 1960s.

the ways a classroom was meant to operate in 20th century Canada. Neil Sutherland perhaps puts it best:

> Whether pupils attended school cheerfully or apprehensively or in a state of fear, curriculum, teaching methods, and the pattern of school discipline combined to press them into the formal mode of learning. Its system was based on teachers talking and pupils listening, a system that discouraged independent thought, a system that provided little opportunity to be creative, a system that blamed rather than praised, a system that made no direct or purposed effort to build a sense of self-worth.[35]

To understand Sutherland's statement under the framework of this project, the question must be asked, who are the pupils to whom Sutherland is referring? Since he makes no indication of race, it is safe to assume he is referring to a generalized white school populace. In Robyn Maynard's words, "…there are unique dimensions to the experiences of Black youth, who experience schools as carceral places characterized by neglect, heightened surveillance and arbitrary and often extreme punishment for any perceived disobedience."[36] Combining these perspectives provides a more helpful point of reference, contextualizing how African Nova Scotian youth experienced a white directed curriculum and institution. In a system that provided little effort to ensure white youth found a sense of self-worth, can we understand how much more it must have discouraged and degraded Black youth? With the segregated washrooms in mind, this is a question worth examining.

As many participants remarked, the push to succeed in school had to come from home, because as a Black youth in the 1950s and 1960s, such support was not often to

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[35] Sutherland, *Growing Up,* 192.
[36] Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to Present* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 209.

be found from the teachers in Truro. As WT thought back on his days at Willow Street School, he remembered, "…that and my mother pushing me, because… there was not high expectations placed on us by the school system. The books were racist… people refused to read it."[37] Establishing the curriculum was in itself racist was the combination of the books used and the ways they were taught. One is not the same without the other, and what is clear in the participants' memories is how actively some teachers used the curriculum to continue a classroom racial divide. GTR remembers this very clearly:

> …the sad part of the curriculum is we never saw ourselves reflected. We didn't see ourselves reflected in the… readers that we used, or, you know, in any of the atmosphere of the classroom, pictures and… like it was all European. So you just sat there and you wonder where am I? Like you know why aren't I represented in this material? What's missing here? And I remember another little thing called *Little Black Sambo*, and there was a N-I-G-G you know the word, never die. All those kinds of things were said to us at recess, and it was, it was tough.[38]

*Little Black Sambo* by Helen Bannerman (1899) was a staple of racism in Nova Scotian elementary classrooms for decades, published in many formats with a varying array of derogatory imagery. The version accessible online tells the story of "Little Black Sambo", whose mother, "Black Mumbo" makes him a find a set of clothes which he loses to a tiger in the jungle.[39] The images are a painful, racially charged reminder of a bygone era with different social standards, but even with this in mind, it is difficult to comprehend how this book continued to find its way into the hands of school children in

[37] "WT Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 19, 2018.
[38] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[39] Helen Bannerman, *Little Black Sambo,* In The Project Gutenberg Ebook, Released February 22, 2006, (Saalfield Publishing Company).

the 1960s. RW remembers the book in a similar way, "Well they had a book there, ah I forgot, maybe I want to forget about it, ah they had a fairly racist book there that we had to read in grade one, two, I'm trying to forget the name of it but, but, it was very racist, and we didn't like reading it. They used to get us to read passages out of this book, and I can't think of the name of the book anymore, oh, *Little Black Sambo*."[40] Wanting to forget is likely impossible when a book plays such a large role in the establishment of place for a child. This is further emphasized when, as GTR recognized earlier, the book would be the only portrayal of Black people in the classroom literature during the early elementary years.

RW made a further observation, "It was absolutely horrible. And it was part of the curriculum, it was in the school curriculum. And it's not there now, it was gone shortly after that I think they took it out. But it was there for a long time, it was there when my parents were there, and there when I was there."[41] This book survived multiple generations as part of the curriculum. For this reason, in a school like Willow Street Elementary the question must be asked, did it remain because it was a successful tool used to instil difference between Black and white children? As Phyllis Yuill contends, *Little Black Sambo* had been recognized as potentially damaging for Black children since the 1940s, but this association did little in the removal of the book from school

[40] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.
[41] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

shelves.[42] What can be said with certainty is through the use of such texts, more covert actions were being implemented to continue a classroom hierarchy.

Establishing a positive Black image in any form is something participants described as absent from their education. There was a longing to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, but it was expected that if something was to appear, it would not be positive. As WT recalls, "…back when I was in Willow Street it was certainly a part of the curriculum. And again, we didn't learn anything about our own history, we learned more American history then we did about Blacks. And we didn't learn a lot of Canadian history period. But we certainly got no Black role models or stories, wasn't in any of the school books."[43] The importance of this is simple, by not providing positive reinforcement, the school, and the curriculum were perpetuating an expectation of failure for Black students. With no role models in the curriculum, being of a generation with more possibilities is not of benefit to those who are unaware such possibilities exist.

Moving beyond the elements of textbooks and into teaching, a concept Neil Sutherland highlights played a prominent role from elementary to high school for African Nova Scotian youth in Truro. Sutherland states:

> What has come to be called the school's 'hidden' curriculum has been an implicit part of what appears above. Learning to survive was perhaps its most important element. Pupils had first of all to learn how to deal with their fears: their fear of the other children in their own class; their fear of the bigger children who might harass them to and from school, or on the playground; their special fear of 'tough' boys and girls; their fear of teachers and the principal; their fear of the

[42] Phyllis Yuill, "Little Black Sambo: The Continuing Controversy," *School Library Journal* 22, No. 7 (March 1976): 73.
[43] "WT Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 19, 2018.

> strap. Others feared that they would not measure up to family expectations for them.[44]

What Sutherland would call 'hidden' curriculum comes up time and time again in these interviews. Learning to survive, which he emphasizes as a crucial element, is undeniable in these testimonies. The survival proves the resiliency of Black students, operating in a system constructed to keep them down. However, not every part of Sutherland's explanation is perfect. He goes on to say, "Children were also the butt of the racial and ethnic stereotypes and slurs that were part of popular culture."[45] By attributing the use of slurs and stereotypes to the popular culture, it could be said he is being insensitive to the complexity and extent of the situation. Popular culture may have played a role, but the stories these narrators tell is one of engrained multi-generational educational norms aimed at continuing the suppression of Black success.

Taking this further, one must also understand how racial constructions in the school contributed to how students experienced the 'hidden' curriculum. As Robyn Maynard explains, "Childhood itself takes on different meaning depending on race, and the category of "innocent youth" continues to be raced white."[46] Lynn Jones experienced this denial of innocence in her elementary years, and the effects of this event still seem vivid. She explained:

> What also had a profound effect on me was, believe it or not, grade one, a teacher fell. In a line up, we were lining up for class. The teacher blamed me for tripping this other teacher. I would never, ever, in a million years do such a thing, but I was expected to apologize for having tripped the teacher. Which I did not do. I can still remember that, and I remember also that now I'm angry, and I'm

[44] Sutherland, *Growing Up,* 213.
[45] Sutherland, *Growing Up,* 213.
[46] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives,* 211.

> angry because I have to apologize for tripping a teacher which I'm not near, or anything like that, and I suppose at the time, that was a form of racism in itself, too, but you don't have the concept. But I had a, I started to see that the system wasn't all good.[47]

Lynn Jones was denied a presumption of innocence, which often accompanies the youthful honesty in making mistakes.[48] When one cannot make mistakes, even when they do nothing wrong there is a prescribed guilt, which is a difficult way to grow up.

Although the difficult memories of Willow Street Elementary seemed to be what remain the clearest in the participants' minds, some did identify aspects of their elementary education which they would classify as positives. For students who were able to attach themselves to activities which emphasised their strengths, they had an easier time finding positive memories. For RW, this was the opportunity for daily sports on the playground, something he excelled in. As he remembers, "But that was… Not really bad, most of the times were great. Cause we had a ball, we had a ball park right behind Willow Street School."[49] For a child who was a local sports star, the ability to play the sports he loved daily seemed to make the negative aspects of the experience easier to bear.

For others, the education itself was where slight positives could be remembered. As GTR stated in her interview, "I think the curriculum was great. We were lucky enough to go to that school because we had kids from Smith Avenue, Longworth Avenue, like, you know, kids that had money…. they had teachers that were very very strict. And you

[47] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.
[48] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives,* 211.
[49] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

didn't move, and you sat there and you listened. Like you know, you might have fear in your heart but you listened and you took it in."[50] This could be seen as a long term advantage for students of Willow Street School.[51] Despite being constantly degraded and made to be the 'other' within the school, they were still receiving the same education as the wealthiest university directed students in their class. Although it often fell on their own shoulders to stay motivated and succeed, if they were doing the work and excelling, the system would have a much harder time blocking their eventual prosperity. Important to note, however, is how much this responsibility was their own. As RW remembered, "They didn't encourage you to do better though. I noticed that part of it. Yeah. If you made a C, they didn't encourage you to make a B. Right, and if you made a C, they said oh that's good for you."[52] The motivation had to come from elsewhere, be it from parents or the student themselves, but despite the system being stacked against them, it was possible.

It is still important to touch briefly on Douglas Street Elementary School, because these students would go on to attend the same junior high and high school as those who attended Willow Street. Perhaps because only three people who grew up on the Hill were interviewed, or possibly because Douglas Street provided a far more balanced environment, little was said or remembered from the time spent at that school. The Hill was a diverse, multicultural community of a fairly level status and class in the 1950s and

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[50] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[51] GTR wanted to clarify the curriculum was not great in terms of inclusivity, the previous quotation was intended to mean the curriculum was the same for all students who attended the school.
[52] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

1960s, so the students who attended Douglas Street seemed to experience far fewer examples of a social hierarchy in the classroom. Some similarities did exist in race-based classroom perceptions, but is hard to determine where these fall in the larger Canadian narrative of elementary education when compared to extremes such as Willow Street. JM remembers some examples, stating, "When it was, it was usually in a way that you were embarrassed because it was the portrayal of the people of Colour was always demeaning to some degree. It always seemed to come to that, I can't put my finger on it."[53] Unfortunately, the demeaning nature of elementary education for Black youth in Truro is almost undeniable.

The purpose of this section was not to present every aspect of elementary school for children from the Island, the Marsh and the Hill. Instead, the objective was to identify ways the schools interacted with race, and introduced children to the social structure and racial hierarchy present within their doors. Whether it be the segregated washrooms, the discriminatory class books, or some aspect of the 'hidden' curriculum, the interviews preserve a history of race-based suppression beginning at the elementary level. The shared experiences and overall clarity of participants' memories of these grades more than fifty years later combine to preserve an important point in Truro's educational history. These years also provide a crucial context for understanding the ones that followed in junior high school.

[53] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.

**Junior High School**

Leaving elementary school meant that students moved on from the smaller schools on the town's outskirts and converged on a larger school in the downtown core. Although there were only two elementary schools which children from the Marsh, the Hill, and the Island attended in the 1950s and 1960s, Truro had at least four. Truro Junior High School further complicated the dynamics of 'hidden' curriculum, with another feeder school, St. Mary's Elementary, the Catholic elementary which many children from Millbrook First Nation attended. For the 1950s and 1960s, Truro may have outwardly appeared almost progressive with such a multicultural institution as Truro Junior High School which transcended the social framework. As was shown in the previous section, this is a false portrayal of progressivism which allowed for both overt and covert racism to prosper, and further work to suppress African Nova Scotian success.

To understand how Black youth navigated race at Truro Junior High School, it is important to once again begin at the first day. Paul Axelrod argues observations from his own childhood attending school in 1950s Toronto, which will help as a comparison to how differently the participants interviewed understood their own education. Axelrod states, "While students were not formally "streamed" in the 1950s, Toronto educators recognized, or at least assumed, that pupils had different backgrounds, interests, and abilities. Some were destined for university, and others for technical and vocational occupations."[54] It seems difficult to accept that educators recognized the differences in

[54] Paul Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s," *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2005): 235.

ability and directed students towards the path they felt was most suitable, while denying any sense of formal streaming. In Truro, the classroom arrangement had far less to do with ability than it had to do with race.

The first day at Truro Junior High School was a shock for some participants. As RW remembered, "But the sad part about it was, I was in her class, I made pretty good marks in elementary, and I was an A student… and back then they had letters on the classrooms, it went from A to H, that was the grade seven classes. So that's quite a few grade seven classes in that school. And somehow I'm in the H. I don't know why I'm in H."[55] Participants consistently remarked on the streaming system being at least partially formal, due to the ways the classrooms seemed to be organized. GTR stated it clearly, explaining, "Some of the other teachers were just out and out mean, plus we were streamed without knowing. Like they did the A, B, C, D, E, F…I think it was done, like, if you were in the A class, that meant you were very very smart, B, average, C, on the cusp of average, D, you're not going anywhere, E, forget it…"[56] This furthers the question of how a high achieving student entering from the elementary level could be streamed to the lowest possible class. Of course, a consideration could be made the grades were not as strong as he remembered, but this does not seem to be the case with his continued success at the Junior High level, despite the placement.

Before trying to understand the upper classes, it seems pertinent to begin at H, in an attempt to understand the historical context. What can be drawn from these

[55] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.
[56] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

memories is how different the school operated than modern schools of comparable size. This is made clear from SM's statement, "… I can remember… when I was going to school, kids could be retained, like, two, three, four years in the same grade."[57] For students entering the seventh grade, this could make for a difficult learning environment if placed in a lower class. This is evident from RW's time in the H classroom:

> I'm sitting there my first day of class and I'm 13, 13 now and I look across at a guy with a beard. This guy got a mustache over here, these guys are 20 years old. And they're still in junior high school in grade seven. And the classrooms were just disruptive all the time, I say poor Mrs. [3], god bless her, wherever she is today, that poor woman, I felt bad for her. Because they did her really really bad. It was unruly as hell, it was terrible, it was terrible. Never got nothing done. You know, cause they were just disrupting all the time, and then she'd try to strap them, and they wanted her to strap them so they could laugh at her, cause she couldn't strap very hard. They held their hand out, and they'd just sit there and laugh at her. It was terrible. It was terrible, I felt really bad for her. But, and she wasn't a young woman. But these kids were 18, 19, 20 years old, and they were in my class.[58]

To be placed in such a 'low' classroom after such success in elementary school has to have more meaning. As Axelrod discussed, had teachers simply decided his educational tract for him, and if so, what was it based on? Axelrod goes on to quote W.G. Fleming, who argued, "Despite occasional attempts to disguise the situation, the lowest group soon identified itself, or was identified by others as the 'idiots' or 'dummies.' Their performance reflected the teachers' low expectation of their capacities."[59] This point must be argued in the case of Truro Junior High, further pointing

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[57] "SM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 21, 2018.
[58] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.
[59] W.G. Fleming, *Schools, Pupils and Teachers – Ontario's Educative Society*, Vol. III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971): 91. In Paul Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate," 236.

to Truro participating in what Robyn Maynard cites as "second generation segregation" through informal streaming.[60] Judging by RW's statement, teachers were not selecting their students, students were being assigned to teachers who had low expectations. This is yet another point which favours the possibility of student sorting being conducted before they arrived at Truro Junior High.

Axelrod also observed, "It was also common for schools to "group" students from "high to low," after grade 9, according to their previous year's grades."[61] Considering this was happening two years earlier in Truro, it is even more important to grasp the reasons why students felt they were being sorted, and what it meant for their continued education. GTR, who was in an upper class, still struggled with the classrooms environment, stating, "I was in B, but you know, we weren't challenged, and they put all the Black kids together at one time. Like, and when we all were together, like it wasn't even like school, the teacher didn't have any control on the classroom, so we just carried on."[62] Although it was by no means the point of this study to attempt to understand the white youth counter perspective of the time, it would be interesting to compare the atmosphere of the A classroom. Participants hinted that they could remember the odd Black student in the A class, or even the A class for a single subject, but no names were given and the rarity of such a situation was made clear.

The importance of this sorting becomes clearer at the high school level, but these examples at Truro Junior High School begin to show a devaluation of Black education,

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[60] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives,* 216.
[61] Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate," 235.
[62] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

and Black students. What students would not realize at the junior high level is these tracks were difficult to break out of once one was placed in them. Coming from the formalized segregation tactics practiced at Willow Street School, these more covert experiences of racism seemed to remain hidden until much more recently, reflecting on the past with the benefit of hindsight. For now, this will be put on hold to explore some other key features of the junior high school experience.

Curriculum experienced a typical jump as the students transitioned from elementary into junior high school. The level of difficulty, as reflected on earlier, was often dependent on the classroom assignment, but much of the course material remained consistent regardless of class. How this is deciphered is, despite the class African Nova Scotian youth were sorted into, one of the most consistent shared experiences of racism came from the junior high school curriculum. A continuing complaint of the junior high school curriculum was the lack of a positive comparable self-images in the literature, with the only depiction of Black people expressing racially charged stereotypes and assumptions. As BM remembers the build-up to these stories, she stated, "And you'd look in the book and we'd all say ah, tomorrow we gotta learn about Bunga. And you get in the classroom and you like, sorta get down low, and Mrs. Craw used to say, today we're gonna learn about BUNGA. I hated her… Because she always stressed that, every time we had to learn about Bunga, and Bunga was a little African kid, I'll say that was in a diaper sitting by a fire."[63]

[63] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

The stories of Bunga and Simba from the textbook, *Visits in Other Lands* were the most commonly remembered experiences of racism and racialization in the classroom narrators remembered while telling their stories.[64] The unfortunate reality was, with no Black history or racial theory being taught to 1950s and 1960s youth, when the story of Bunga was told, others in the class came to associate Black youth with the traits of Bunga. These stories created a Black 'other' in the classroom, and the repercussions were felt in the schoolyard. Many remembered the build-up and anticipation of the stories being a cause of great concern, with the books infamous reputation in the neighbourhoods. As Lynn Jones explained:

> …we knew those stories were coming up, because you knew them within the community, and nobody liked them. So it's not that they were accepting or that we found it a good story, and we dreaded the day that that would come up in school. You would read ahead, to see when that story…. And then you'd have to live through, hearing that story, and people half clad. No clothes, like little loin cloth… we had Ms. [4 C?], in geography, so some of that came in grade 7. And I remember her, her racist attitude to…. Not even knowing she was racist, like you know. And talking about 'these people', these people don't know how to eat, they didn't know what to eat, they don't know how to dress, like you know. These people, I can still hear her say 'these people', and yeah, I had all of that. "I'm telling you" she'd say, "These people" and her face would go, and she'd say "These people, they have nothing, absolutely nothing. They don't have food like you have, like gotta scrounge…." like you know? Her… and we had to sit, and keep in mind, we'd never been to Africa, we'd never been to India.[65]

This story contributes to the idea of 'hidden' curriculum, because despite the obvious message of degrading other cultures, there was a conscious effort being made on the part of the teacher to connect these stories to faces in the classroom. As Neil

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[64] Wallace Walter Atwood and Helen Goss Thomas, *Visits in Other Lands*, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1943, In University of Alberta Libraries, Added 2016, https://archive.org/details/visitsinotherlan00atwo/page/n3.

[65] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

Sutherland stated, “In reading, history, geography, and science lessons, pupils often read sequentially from textbooks. Teachers broke into the sequence to read themselves, to ‘thrust a question at wandering minds,’ or to explicate some point in the text.”[66] No one was more famous, or likely despised by participants for these monumental explications as Mrs. [4]. As a theme of many narrator’s discussions, Mrs. [4] was able to propagate her racist and prejudicial beliefs in the classroom, taking advantage of the strict and authoritarian classroom rule of the time. Once again, as a name who appears over and over in testimony, it is clear the years were moving forward, but Mrs. [4] wasn’t.

Different people remember different stories about Mrs. [4], but what I have realized examining the transcripts is the reason for her specific continued acknowledgement is due to her being the most precise embodiment of all that was wrong with education from the minds of Black youth in Truro. Despite Sutherland identifying at least four types of teachers that students typically discuss when interviewed, participants in this study overwhelmingly discussed the “mean, nasty, sarcastic, cruel, or even vicious” category, speaking to the racism experienced by African Nova Scotian youth in Truro schools.[67] These specific examples build a devastating image, but it cannot be shrugged off as one teacher in a positive system. As GTR stated, “I found that, that the teachers at the junior high were, they were insulting to, to you if you were Black, First Nations, or poor.”[68] It is important to recognize Mrs. [4] was not one bad educator in an institution based on excellence and tolerance, she was the worst

[66] Sutherland, *Growing Up,* 194.
[67] Sutherland, *Growing Up,* 206.
[68] “BM and GTR Interview Transcription,” By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

and most despicable example in a system which consistently failed its students. Participants conveyed far more negative experiences in their schooling than positive ones.

Perhaps what was most detrimental about Mrs. [4]'s teaching style was how she ensured racial inequality was maintained in her classroom. As GTR shared in her interview:

> I remember, I think it was Mrs. [4], we had an art lesson, and she was doing the 8, they called the negroid, [sic] I can't remember the three names. Or maybe it was two names. Negroids, [sic] which meant, you know, people of African heritage, and there was some other name they used, I can't remember what it was. So anyway, she asked one of the Black girls in the class to come up, and one of the white girls, and she did a comparison of their faces. See this nose is flat, this one is more straight, and, you know, look at the hair, this hair is… I said oh my goodness.[69]

As if growing up in a town with a racial history spanning centuries was not hard enough for Black youth, Mrs. [4] made sure in the 1950s and 1960s these children could never feel equal, because she taught them they weren't. Such stories were discussed as if they were a discriminatory rite of passage by the participants who were interviewed.

Raymond Tynes remembered a similar experience, stating, "…but when you got, started going to junior high and then you were able to go to the dances and different things, that's when you really started seeing… the, the discrimination and the racism. I mean, it was nothing for a teacher talking about geography, the different countries, and the cultures, to have one of the Black kids stand up when they were talking about Africa and talk about the thick lips and the big nose, and the coarse hair, and whatever. And,

[69] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

that used to lead to fights. You know, that's when you really started seeing, like, the separations."[70] School fights cannot be seen as an unexpected response to classroom racism being vocalized on the playground. As Mona Gleason explains, "School fights, particularly amongst boys, were also used to establish and maintain hierarchies of power in the schoolyard. This kind of unofficial regulation amongst children, like the officially sanctioned and/or tolerated practices of teachers, worked to entrench gradations of power."[71] This physical fighting would have been one of the few ways Black youth could express their equality, if not dominance over their peers. Unfortunately, a win could likely not be considered a win, with Black children falling outside the protections and presumptions of innocence when reprimanded by authority figures.[72]

The major transition from elementary to junior high seems to be the understanding of race and what in meant. In elementary school, the students were forced to segregate based on concepts that likely would have been beyond comprehension before they physically experienced it. By junior high, the students began to understand how the system was putting them down, with the intention of making Black youth into the undesirable 'other.' Another important recognition from Raymond Tynes's previous quotation is how clearly these statements made impressions on the minds of the class. These were not one-off passages through loathsome mentalities. Once these sentiments were taught, they followed the youth. Sparking fights on the

[70] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.
[71] Gleason, "Disciplining the Student Body," 203.
[72] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives,* 210.

playgrounds, causing further divide, and ensuring classroom unity was never to be achieved were some of the effects of this broken curriculum.

Positive experiences from Black youth at Truro Junior High School were a rarity in this study, and therefore stuck out when they were recounted. GTR could only remember two positive experiences from the entirety of her time in the Truro system, one of which came from Truro Junior. As she remembers, "I went to 7, 8, and 9 at Truro Junior, I remember a positive experience I had in grade seven, I was really good in algebra, so my teacher told me that, and that encouraged me. That was the first time in my school experience that anybody had ever told me, other than my parents, that I was, I was doing well. And she said GTR, you are so good at algebra, would you mind staying in at recess and helping some of the other kids? And she was really nice to me."[73] It is difficult to imagine a system where a student who was excelling in all classes would receive their first praise at the seventh-grade level, but what is even more shocking is how she was one of the only participants who remembered any positive reinforcement.

It would be possible to argue this as a characteristic of the time, and reflective of the classroom regiment, but this seemingly downplays the complexity of the situation. Knowing Black youth were being streamed away from academic pathways and racialized by the curriculum, exposes reasons to believe teachers had incentive to devalue, and hold back praise over the classroom successes of these children. This also introduces an idea which will be explored further later on the role of parents, and by expansion the neighborhood, and community in the educational success and drive. What is clear from

[73] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

this study is some Black children were defying the school's low expectations for their futures, and following an examination of participants' high school experiences I will attempt to explain how and why.

Junior high school can be challenging for many teenagers, but being an African Nova Scotian youth in the 1950s and 1960s complicated the experience even further. Youth were exposed to textbooks which degraded and racially suppressed Black existence to lesser than their British colonial counterparts. The fact these children were subjected to exaggerated stereotypes from a continent they had never been to reflects as poorly on the teachers who emphasized such differences as it did on the curriculum which normalized it. The system made teachers dictators, and gave them the power to share detrimental personal biases as expansions of racist classroom reading material. Truro Junior High School furthered a racial hierarchy amongst its students, and actively engaged in suppressing the opportunities for Black youth to succeed at the high school level.

**High School Education**

Understanding the high school education of Black youth in the 1950s and 1960s is complicated by the fact that a new, modernized high school opened in the time period. Most participants in this study attended the older school, but due to the large age range accepted for participation in this study, there were some who graduated after 1970 from the new high school, Cobequid Educational Centre. Favoring chronology and the majority of experiences in the study, this section will first examine Colchester County

Academy, also commonly referred to as Truro Academy or Truro Senior High School, which opened its doors in 1841.[74]

By the 1950s and 1960s, Truro's population was growing, and the Academy was overpopulated. Classes were assigned in makeshift locations, and a clear need was felt for an upgrade which could accommodate the growth rate. As RW remembered, "But, we had classes in the coal bin there. They ran out of classrooms and they had to clean up the coal bin and put a

classroom down there."[75] At a time of different safety regulations, such stories were likely common as the baby boom generation were coming of high school age, and schools were further condensing from the junior to senior high level. Other aspects of this overcrowding stuck out to RW, and he stated, "Oh yeah. Then they went to staggered classes cause there was too many kids for the school, and I remember going for at least a year, maybe it was two years, we'd go a 7 o'clock in the morning, and we'd be done at 12. 12 in the afternoon. And then another class came in at one o'clock, and they'd go till five. And that's what, five or six, whatever, it was double classes eh."[76] This rotating schedule would have proved difficult for everyone, straining teachers, administration, and the students. Although it is difficult to prove, this quite possibly played a role in the level of strategic streaming Black youth experienced during high school in Truro.

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[74] Memory NS, "Colchester County Academy (Truro, N.S.)," https://memoryns.ca/colchester-county-academy-truro-n-s?fbclid=IwAR2Gz3UPqEnZVvsH60gdOQGi2SQ_ct5PPc1KM670F5b7Nb4Ek-qKL6Ds_Lg.
[75] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.
[76] "RW Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 29, 2018.

Before going any further, some of the most damning evidence depicting how severely African Nova Scotian youth were failed by the system must be introduced, in order to further contextualize the truth to the common narrative occurring throughout the study. A 1994 report by the Black Learners Advisory Committee titled "BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequality – Empowering Black Learners" detailed in three volumes and over 450 pages how exceptionally horrendous Black youth were treated in the Nova Scotian educational system. The study, which gave particular focus to the eras of 1950 through the 1970s concluded with similar findings as those experienced by the participants in this study. Perhaps most alarming is how accurate the accounts of streaming and second wave segregation truly were. As the report states, "Not only were Black students made not to feel welcome through outward acts of hostility by both White teachers and students alike, the system developed a mechanism, known as streaming, which systematically moved Black children into a general course of instruction and away from an academic stream and hence post secondary opportunities."[77] What remains a mystery from the perspective of this project is how this conclusion has been drawn and proven, but little has been done to preserve the voices of those who suffered the consequences of the system.

These voices will, however, be preserved at least to some extent in this project, as the factors contributed immensely to how Black youth navigated high school. As WT remembered it, "Well the school system told me you… you should probably go into, in high school, go into the general education because you're not university material. So, I

[77] Black Learners Advisory Committee, "BLAC Report on Education," 32.

mean there were the expectations for me. You're a good athlete, maybe you can go somewhere and play sports for a little bit, then maybe get a job on the railroad."[78] There were some roads to success even a racist system wouldn't supress, seeing as sporting excellence reflected positively on the school. The unfortunate truth WT recognized was even though he was an excellent student, the only way his path to post-secondary education would be recognized and accepted under the societal structure of the time was if the way was made through sports. He also recognized a push towards general education at the high school level, a factor the BLAC report attributes to race, rather than academic ability.

JM remembered the time similarly, but without the sporting ability, the direction into general classes was more persuasive. He stated, "…and Truro Senior, and then I, I got kind of split up because I was, wasn't going to go to university and wasn't… So then I got streamlined into general, general academic. Well it was general math, and some things, you know, and then I found out jeez I want to go to university."[79] An unfortunate factor of this reality was students were being directed towards general studies without a complete understanding of what this would mean for future academic or vocational prospects. By the time one began looking into university entrance requirements, it was too late, and their fate had been set towards technical and labour-intensive careers. The school was actively engaging in the suppression of Black youth in Truro.

[78] "WT Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 19, 2018.
[79] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.

The participants in this study experienced this streaming in a number of ways, some more directly than others. Sometimes, a more subtle approach would direct the class selections away from an academic course load, and sometimes the students required more explicit interactions with school administrators to change their academic direction. As GTR expressed in her interview, there was nothing subtle about her streaming process. She remembered, "…when I was in grade 10, we were allowed to consult with the guidance councillor and I asked if I could. She said what are your plans, and I said well I'd like to be a social worker, and she said GTR you should rethink that, I think you'd do better going to business college working in an office. I said well why is that? She said well when Black kids do go to university, they don't do that well."[80] The guidance councillor at the high school told her university was not only the wrong fit for her, it was the wrong fit for Black youth generally. The school worked to make them question their potential, and then push them in a direction they felt better suited an African Nova Scotian of the time. Mentally, GTR expressed how detrimental this conversation was, stating, "So that reinforced for me that, maybe I'm not smart. Maybe I just think I am."[81] One must understand the true magnitude of what Black youth in the 1950s and 1960s overcame if they wanted to succeed.

This is a point where once again Neil Sutherland's work can be taken further to understand how racialized the system was in Truro. As Sutherland expressed, "Schooling sorted children within rather than between schools. Thus, all schools encouraged the

[80] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[81] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

'bright,' and told those who were not as able as their peers that they were not going to climb very far up the educational ladder."[82] This statement does not explain the situation in Truro unless one implies 'bright' is synonymous with 'white', because brightness and academic capability played little role in the streaming of Black youth in Truro.

Examining another factor proven in the BLAC report, how Black youth were treated with hostility and made to feel unwelcome at school, shows further connections between participants experiences and the inquiry's findings. GTR remembered one such experience clearly during the interview, "I don't have great memories of high school. Like, number one, when I wanted, I wanted to… I like to read, and I like to talk, so I heard there was a debating club, so I kind of went in the room like, for, cause it was a sign up after school. And a lot of the white girls were going like this when I went in, and I felt really embarrassed.[83] So I left and didn't go back."[84] By making students feel unwelcome in the classroom, and expanding this sentiment in extracurricular activities, white students and faculty were actively engaging in 'second generation segregation.'[85]

The closing of Colchester County Academy in 1970, and the opening of Cobequid Educational Centre the same year seemed to bring a much-needed change to the town. Although it cannot be said that a new building fixed all problems, some progress was made for African Nova Scotian youth who attended the new high school in its early years

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[82] Sutherland, *Growing Up,* 218.
[83] During the interview, GTR made a facial expression, which was intended to suggest she was not welcomed by the debate club.
[84] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[85] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives,* 216.

after inception. Lynn Jones was a breakthrough student from the day the school opened its doors. Participating in band, sports including track and field, and the student council, Lynn Jones was determined to not be limited by the new environment.

Two of the major breakthroughs deserve particular attention, seeing as they fall so far outside what the BLAC report would consider normal for the time. The first is the presence on student council, and as Lynn Jones remembers it, "…[Principals name] was wonderful because he, because I had no intentions of running for president, and he had actually come to me and said well, what do you think? I said I don't think so! And he said, well you're in everything. You're doing everything. [Both laugh] So why not run? So I actually launched a campaign. To do that… well it wasn't a contest, I must say."[86] Two factors stand out in this quotation, first of all being a white administrator encouraging a Black youth in 1970 to run for student council president, and acknowledging the importance of her presence on campus. This would have been unheard of for the time in Nova Scotia, and must be recognized at least as the beginning of a shift in administrational mentality. The second consideration is Lynn Jones won the presidency as an African Nova Scotian youth in a majority white school. The significance of this is monumental, and presented an opportunity for a shift towards equality in Truro following the racially charged 1960s. Students were able to look past race, and select the best and most involved candidate to be their president. With Cobequid Educational Centre open to this day, and the pictures of all presidents greeting visitors as they enter the foyer, it is safe to conclude Lynn Jones set a precedent of inclusivity at the new

[86] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

institution and made it possible for future African Nova Scotian students to follow her path.

Another important event which helped instil a new mentality in the opening years of the new high school was championed by Lynn Jones and her student council committee. With the new institution continuing to suffer from a lack of Black representation in the curriculum, Lynn Jones and her peers saw an opportunity to once again bring change, and modernism to a town which was in desperate need of it. Lynn Jones remembered the experience fondly in the interview, stating:

> We organized what was really moving for people, which I found out more and more later in years, was we organized… There was no Black History Month then, celebrations, and we organized what we called soul day, and it was soul day at CEC. Which was to be a celebration of Black history and culture. And first, the teachers and things, they didn't want to do it, and they didn't know what this would create. And what it meant, and everything. And I said no, it's gonna be good, like we've never had any Black history, what have you. So anyway, we were given permission, by then I'm president of the Student Council.[87]

If the school was unable to provide the examples, role models, and celebration of culture the students deserved, the student council would bring it to them. Lynn Jones as a high school student did more to shift the school's mentality than the school board would be able to accomplish in the next twenty years, judging by the BLAC report. Students with such drive were needed province wide, but luckily for Truro, they had Lynn Jones, and some supportive staff who saw the need for change.

[87] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

**Overview and Conclusions**

S. Pratt made an important conclusion in a 1972 Master's thesis on Black education in Nova Scotia, which was revisited in 2015 in a report from the Committee on Aboriginal and Black/African Canadian Student Access and Retention. As the report cites, "In Nova Scotia in 1969, only 3% of Black students graduated from high school and only 1% of the graduates attended university."[88] Taking this further, in 1960, only twenty Black students were attending high school in Halifax.[89] Truro has not previously been researched in order to quantify a statistical comparison, but that is not the intent of this oral history project. Understanding the African Nova Scotian youth experience in Truro is important when comparing the conclusions of reports with similar findings, but there is no reason to force these experiences to conform. The reason for this is in part selfish, for after conducting lengthy interviews and transcription, I truly believe these experiences deserve their spot in history, regardless of their comparative value. Another reason for this is a need for a shift in the preservation of such voices, with studies favoring quantitative methods over the experiences of those living, who felt the ramifications first hand. Researchers seem to have no doubt that African Nova Scotian youth have historically suffered the wrath of a broken system, but I aim to conclude with the reasons the experiences of the participants in Truro should not simply be lumped in as part of a larger Nova Scotian narrative on education.

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[88] S. Pratt, "Black Education in Nova Scotia," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University (1972), quoted in Amy Bombay Kevin Hewitt "A Report from the Committee on Aboriginal and Black/African Canadian Student Access and Retention: A Focus on Financial support," Dalhousie University (October 1, 2015): 31.

[89] Black Learners Advisory Committee, "BLAC Report on Education," 27.

Although the three neighborhoods, the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh represent separate entities, with individualized community values and structures, they each worked as support systems for their youth, and pushed for educational success. As I hope has been made clear throughout the chapter, 1950s and 1960s schools did not provide Black youth with adequate resources and support to reach their full potential. Participants consistently remarked on the push coming from family, and local support systems to ensure they were able to have a better, and less oppressive life than that of their parents' generation.

The diversity of educational pathways taken by participants in this study is fascinating. Although this was a difficult conversation to have in some interviews, it seems that of ten participants, at least seven graduated from high school, and at least five attended university at some point in their educational journey. Although it is impossible to say how this reflects on the greater Black population in Truro, or if these results are specific to my sample, the results are significant when observing the earlier stated statistics of the era. Another important, and significant observation is how much some participants overcame to further their education, even after being pushed down a general academic stream. JM remembers a particularly difficult path, stating, "Well it was general math, and some things, you know, and then I found out jeez I want to go to university…. So then I had to go back, so I was split up then, I had to take academic courses, and physics and biology, chemistry."[90] JM was eventually able to achieve the grades necessary to attend Acadia University, and despite that fact that his aspirations

[90] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.

eventually led him in a different direction, his resilience and dedication is a testament to the resiliency of Truro's African Nova Scotian community as a whole.

GTR was forced to take a similar path, after following the advice of a high school guidance councillor. As the BLAC report indicates, "Black students were routinely counselled away from the academic stream into the general stream and drop-out rates soared."[91] GTR's advisor was able to convince her that business college was the best route, but once again resiliency and motivation prospered. She explained:

> Cause I worked, cause I did go to business college. And I did that type of work, and I said I really want to go to university, like it's not that that's a bad job, like you know it was a… I'm good with people and I enjoyed it, but I just felt that I want to prove to these people that… I want to prove to myself I can do it. Yeah, so I did go to Dal. And did alright, and St. Mary's, did alright, had glowing reports from my practice teaching, and it was on from there. And I did start a masters, but I had two kids in university at the time and I said, well I'm nearing the end of my career, I can use that same money to help them.[92]

GTR went on to become the first teacher of African Nova Scotian descent at Willow Street Elementary School.

From the beginning of the chapter, I have portrayed Truro as an anomaly in the larger Nova Scotian system. This is not because the system treated Black youth in Truro much differently from schools of comparable demographics across the province, it is because of the people themselves, and how their experiences demonstrate a historical narrative not possible anywhere else. Children from the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh each experienced school differently, and relied on their communities for support. Navigating elementary, junior, and senior high school for Black youth in the 1950s and

[91] Black Learners Advisory Committee, "BLAC Report on Education," 26.
[92] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

1960s meant compliance with systems of power which aimed to continue a racial hierarchy in the town. The experiences show the resiliency of Truro's African Nova Scotian youth, how they view themselves, and their place in educational development seen in the town today. Although this chapter describes horrible experiences of racism, suppression, and mis-education, it also in turn celebrates the youth who survived it, who went on to prosper, and who continue to enhance the history African Nova Scotians.

## Chapter 3

### Youth Legacy and Conclusions

Understanding the experiences of African Nova Scotian youth in Truro in the 1950s and 1960s requires recognizing the long-term impact of these experiences. It is important to consider participants' interpretations of generational progression, as an observation of both progress, and continued suppression. Narrators consistently identified aspects of their adult lives that reminded them of the segregation and overt racial discrimination of their youth. The majority of participants in this study were able to break from the racialized pathways set forth by the education system and the determination of the local white community to continue a racialized hierarchy. Participants reflected on their historical narrative in comparison to those of their parents (the previous generation) and their children (the generation that followed them). This chapter considers how racialized youth in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s reflected on how the youth phase of their lives impacted their long adulthood. The chapter will also offer conclusions on the project as a whole, and reiterate the significance of these preserved memories of growing up Black in an unforgiving Nova Scotian town.

The questionnaire developed at the beginning of this project was specifically targeted toward the analysis of youth experience. I had not realized how readily participants would connect their racialized youth experience to their adult life. As the interviewer, I was asked a question I was unprepared for in my interview with Raymond Tynes, who asked, "I know what you're doing your thesis on, but the other question, has

anything really changed?"[1] This question needs to be addressed in order to understand the legacy of youth experiences in their lives as adults, and where participants place themselves in the historical continuum. As Robyn Maynard states, "The realities of Black life in contemporary Canada remain shrouded behind a carefully curated national mythology of racial equality. According to this national myth, the late 1960s and early 1970s began the dawn of a new era in Canada, characterized by a commitment to human rights and racial equality."[2] She goes on to say later, "…the realities of ongoing Black subjugation only remain more hidden from view."[3] With this in mind, participant experiences can be examined for signs of change, or lack thereof in the decades which followed.

With the benefit of hindsight, numerous participants placed their experiences along a historical continuum, in which they analyzed their lives in comparison with other generations. As JM put it, "…things are a lot better. I'm so glad I was born when I was, because my mom tells me that's a whole new story, after growing up with the things she's seen."[4] Throughout the project, a common theme appeared in which participants compared their childhood to that of their parents, and their own kids, or children of the next generation. Participants consistently recognized how things were better for children of the 1950s and 1960s than they were for their parents, as displayed in JM's statement. JM followed this by saying, "I'm hoping that the youth that follow us, they

[1] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.
[2] Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to Present* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 50.
[3] Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to Present,* 51.
[4] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.

can, you know have a little, not a little*, a lot* more access by whatever means… that can facilitate that, cause it's always a long way to go for everyone isn't it."[5] It is an unfortunate place to see one's self, as a historical landmark in the slow-moving pathway to progress and equality, but it is an astute recognition. Black youth in Truro during the mid-twentieth century were unknowingly engaging in a hierarchal battle that ultimately created more opportunities for the generation which followed with every victory in the classroom and community.

Understanding this period as transitional, it is important to next identify aspects of Truro that participants feel have changed for the following generation, and those which continue to reflect the legacy of segregation and racialized space experienced in their youth. For Lynn Jones, who no longer lives in Truro, the town continues to hold connotations reflective of Maynard's new era myth analysis following her youth, as she stated, "Even to this day if I come home I can see more, more racism, it's more readily that people are dealing with here. Then say for example, Halifax there's more concentration, in particular areas. And people are more likely to be verbal. But even going from another city to Nova Scotia, you can see the difference. Like it's quite amazing."[6] Participants shared many lingering aspects of racial profiling that were not limited to their youth in the town.

[5] "JM Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 30, 2018.
[6] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

The subtlety of racism does not change the intent, and much like the 'hidden curriculum' of their youth, participants learned to interpret discrimination in their adult lives. As GTR stated in her interview:

> And still every day I think we live with micro-aggressions, because you're wondering… Like for example, I went into Charm Jewelry, and even though I was standing there right in front of the counter, there was a young guy there, he didn't say hello, may I help you, and a white person came in and he went right to them, and I said excuse me, I was here first. He said oh I thought you were waited on…[7]

Although as a contemporary experience, one could argue this has little to do with the far removed racialized youth, the important connection to this legacy chapter is how the participants embraced their transitional historical situation as a place for racial empowerment.

This racial empowerment, and pride, was displayed differently through the interview process, but continuously reflected the intent of creating more opportunities for generations to follow. Some participants used the experiences of their youth as pathways for social justice. For WT, this meant seeking employment where he could target anti-Black discrimination in his home town. As he explained in the interview, "See, like I said before, Truro… like I did some work with the Human Rights Commission, where they would, they were testing apartments, and they'd send me, then they'd send a white person. And I'd go the day before and the apartment was gone, the white person would go the next day and they would get it."[8] The widely known, but difficult to

[7] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[8] "WT Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 19, 2018.

prove housing discrimination happening in Truro was a noble cause, with advantageous results following WT's exposure of the situation.

For BM, housing discrimination resonated deeply with her youth experience. Leaving home was a frightening and unexplored pathway, as she identified in her interview, "And you know what I remember when, when I was younger, and I first left the Island, of course I moved up, up on the Hill, and I thought we can't get an apartment, because we had to move out of there, I said because I didn't think Black people were allowed to live in town, and all the apartments were in town."[9] BM continued to persevere, and after gaining employment with a prominent local business, moved with her daughter to an apartment on Crowell Drive.

This was another connected pathway in the legacy of youth, displaying how racial empowerment was creating change. As BM also stated in the interview, "…where I worked at the carpet factory. I don't drive, I lived up in that area. She [her daughter] loved St. Mary's School, she loved it, then when I moved so she could go to Douglas, she wouldn't go to Douglas Street School, she went back to St. Mary's."[10] The importance of this cannot be understated. Within one generation, barriers had been broken down in both housing and education, providing opportunities unavailable to earlier generations of Black youth in Truro. BM's resilience gave her the opportunity to live in a neighbourhood she would have thought not possible as a child, and send her child to a school none of the participants of this study attended. This analysis is by no means to

[9] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

[10] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

discount the importance of the neighbourhoods, and the community support, but to celebrate the racial empowerment which was enacting elements of change in Truro.

For Raymond Tynes, the racial empowerment and avenues for change came in part from his time on Truro Town Council. Being privy to the inner workings of the community he grew up in, Raymond Tynes learned a great deal about how pervasive segregation and racism was in Truro. In the interview, he stated:

> Because don't forget, I had to spend when I first got on council, I made them go through all their by-laws, and they had bylaws on the books that after dark a Black man had to carry a lantern. Here in the town of Truro…. That was back in like, the 30s the 40s…. Yeah, it was still on the books in, what's this 21st century? It was still on the books 21st century. It was [Removed name] who went through the books, and took them out. And…. Yeah. And technically speaking they may have taken them off the books but because it never came before council to be voted off, technically, they're still there. You may not see it, the paper trail, trail anywheres, now, but yeah.[11]

Raymond Tynes's statement brings the importance of the project, and the continued preservation of African Nova Scotian memory to the forefront. I would add to Robyn Maynard's 'national myth' theory with perspectives such as Raymond Tynes who emphasize historical erasure. In the process of embracing 'multiculturalism' and 'racial equality,' towns like Truro have explicitly covered the darker sides of their history. As Raymond Tynes himself identifies, this is difficult to prove, as without someone there who witnessed it, the paper trail can simply be destroyed. With this, the importance of oral history and community preservation come to light, and show the necessity of Black communities preserving their own history, in advance of further external destruction.

[11] "Raymond Tynes Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 22, 2018.

As Bridglal Pachai concludes in his book, *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks,* "If any one single generalization can be permitted to exemplify the history of black [sic] people in Nova Scotia from 1800 to 1989, it must surely be their unrelenting search for the best way to use every opportunity that came their way."[12] In the generation of Black youth in Truro raised the 1950s and 1960s, the clearest embrace of opportunity themed from the interviews are those of racial empowerment. Reaching back to education, this generation has responded to the missing Black perspective by empowering from within. As GTR states:

> I'll tell you how deeply it's engrained, Peter, in people's heads about their culture, when they were, when they were getting ready, trying to organize to build a Black Cultural Centre, like I had different people call me and say, why do they want a Black Cultural Centre, they don't have a white cultural centre. That's just foolishness, like because it's the way people were taught that inward hate… You know, why put ourselves on display, we're not worth anything, we didn't do anything. And they built it, and it's been successful, but people, a lot of people who don't have that Black consciousness don't have the awareness of how important a, you know an institution like that is on preserving what we do have.[13]

By recognizing the multigenerational trauma and discrimination the African Nova Scotian community has faced in Truro, the leaders of GTR's generation have been able to use their racial pride and empowerment to create a legacy of change. As GTR stated later, "Like I looked at the, at the barriers that I faced because, based on my Blackness, and also on my gender. And I try to pass that on to other young women, try to encourage them, and like knowing that it was really tough for us, and the things that we

[12] Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks, Volume II: 1800 – 1989* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press Ltd, 1990), 301.
[13] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

were told, and we were indoctrinated, and you know, told mistruths."[14] GTR recognizes the change has not been quick, which once again speaks to the importance of this generation's role in change, and creating a sense of pride for the generations to follow.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, much has changed for Truro's African Nova Scotian neighbourhoods. Gentrification has overtaken the Hill, with many families moving on, and the Marsh is seemingly integrated into the surrounding landscape. The Island was on a similar path, as MJ remembers, "Yes, you know we never had any young children in this community for, for years, well actually since my children, my youngest son's generation and he's almost 40… and it just seemed like it was all seniors."[15] A similar statement by GTR supported this, saying, "And you know, it's, so there's still that distinct kind of way that we think, and live and breathe and be, that I think is… and I think that's probably in every African Nova Scotia community that you can think of. That wanting to keep our community alive, because at one time the Island was dying wasn't it?"[16] This distinct African Nova Scotian culture depicts the importance of community preservation and racial empowerment.

Today, the Island is thriving, with youth moving home and revitalizing the community. As GTR put it, "I'm glad that a lot of the young people have made the decision, and some of the older people that have retired, to move back to the Island. It's, I think the Island is a lot more vibrant now, with the young people they want to get

[14] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[15] "MJ Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, May 2, 2018.
[16] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.

things going, and they want to help the kids more."[17] The legacy, whether it be through education, employment, or activism, has been to show the next generation the ability to break from an engrained social hierarchy. This legacy aspect of their youth which participants were so eager to discuss and report adds another layer to this study on the intersections of time, place, and race for 1950s and 1960s Black youth in Truro. The importance of this generation recognizing themselves as a landmark in the historical continuum, speaks to the value of preserving their voices. As has been examined throughout the project, change has had to come from within, and the leadership and perseverance in Truro's African Nova Scotian community has ensured a legacy of pride, and opportunity for future generations.

**Project Conclusions/Reflections**

> As Robin Winks ruled in *The Blacks in Canada*:
>
> > Negroes in Canada were often responsible for their own plight, since they by no means made use of all the channels of opportunity or all the roads to progress and all the sources of strength open to them. As in the United States, Canadian Negro leaders strove for accommodation to the dominant white community. They accepted the dominance of that community and worked neither to undermine it nor to become equal to it but to find a guaranteed role to play within it.[18]

Similarly, Frances Henry's work concluded, "If our hypothesis with respect to the commonalities between the Black value system and those of the wider society is correct, and it appears to be so as substantiated by the data, a relative absence of a core or

[17] "BM and GTR Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, February 23, 2018.
[18] Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 480.

unique culture or value system amongst this population becomes evident."[19] These deductions, from the perspective of this research beg the question, did they even ask for African Nova Scotians' perspective?

Culture is a recurring theme in this analysis of the Black youth experience in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s, so as an essential aspect of the conclusion, it is important to identify if participants saw themselves as having a distinct culture. Perhaps Lynn Jones put it best, stating "Of course there's a culture!... Yeah. And it's as strong, and vibrant, as it is today. As it was then. And how… it gets reported is different over time, but certainly."[20] There is, undoubtedly, an African Nova Scotian culture, and it lives on in Truro. As explored through the chapters of this thesis, the data of previous historians' research studies may not have identified it, but the shared experiences and eventual racial empowerment shaped a unique African Nova Scotian culture in Truro, which is identifiable in the testimony of the youth who grew up living it.

The communities, the Island, the Hill, and the Marsh played a crucial role in shaping African Nova Scotian youth in the 1950s and 1960s. In a town which prided itself on a history of segregation and exclusion, Black youth flourished within their communities, enjoying childhood regardless of distinguishable racialized oppression. Children made the most of bad situations, experiencing environmental racism from dumps, and social seclusion based on age, the youth of this generation embraced their neighbourhoods as a common point for resilience. The neighbourhoods offered children

[19] Frances Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* (Don Mills: Longman Canada Limited, 1973), 3.
[20] "Lynn Jones Interview Transcription," By Peter Millman, April 27, 2018.

freedom of movement, and safety which was otherwise not guaranteed in the larger Truro community. Youth interactions with space provided introductions to sports, friendship, and inevitably, racism. These shared and analyzable components contribute to the culture of Black youth in Truro during the period, and also provide perspective on the individuality of the three communities.

Education in Truro during the 1950s and 1960s played a fundamental role in the continuation of racial hierarchies, and the devaluation of Black children. Teaching segregation at the elementary level at Willow Street School, and providing curriculum which racialized and isolated African Nova Scotian youth was the first step in this continuation. Followed by streaming, and 'hidden curriculum' and the junior high and high school levels, once again the push had to come from within to succeed. Black youth were consistently pushed away from academic pathways in Truro, but the importance of this generation is once again demonstrated, as numerous participants sought post-secondary education, or learning enhancement coursework. The value placed on education by the Black youth of the mid twentieth century in Truro provided a community turning point in upward mobility, and produced the first substantial numbers to break with the employment of their parents' generation.

The legacy of youth in the communities, in education, and in their later lives, provides a final link to the distinct Black Culture in Truro. By embracing routes for racial empowerment and social change, the African Nova Scotian youth of the 1950s and 1960s in Truro created a lasting legacy for the benefit of generations to follow. Going back to an earlier question, how much has it changed, the appropriate response is

substantially. Although racial equality is still a working objective in Nova Scotia, this generation who were youth in the 1950s and 1960s have been a major force in instituting change, and providing opportunities for Black youth today. This project is by no means a fully encapsulating work, nor does it represent every perspective equally, but my hope is that it provides a building point for the continued preservation of oral histories from underrepresented African Nova Scotian communities. I hope these oral histories, and lessons from the incredible participants can help to preserve the African Nova Scotian youth experience, so youth can continue to close the gap on racial inequality in Nova Scotia.

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## Appendix

**Consent Form**

Black Teen-Age Culture on 'The Island', 'The Marsh', and 'The Hill': A Study of Truro Nova Scotia in the 1950s and 1960s

April 30, 2019

Dear _____:

You are invited to participate in an interview for an oral history project on Black teenage culture in Truro, Nova Scotia during the 1950s and 1960s. This oral history project is being completed as research for Peter Millman's Master's degree in History. We will be talking about your experiences with community, education, church, dating, popular culture, and racism when you were a teenager. Some of the memories may make you uncomfortable so you can pass on any questions you don't wish to talk about.

**The Interview:**

I, _____ (Interviewee) consent for the interview recording and the written copy of my interview on _____ (Date) to be stored on Peter Millman's password-protected computer. I understand the purpose of this oral history project and I realize that the information I share with the interviewer is to be used for the purposes of the interviewer's MA thesis, and continued research.

An interview will be held at the place of my choosing and is expected to last between 30 minutes to 2 hours. Additional interviews may be conducted if necessary at my convenience. Peter Millman will record the interview. If the research questions in the interview cause discomfort, or the project is not what I anticipated from an earlier description, I am able to take a break, or end the interview at any time. Payment is not offered for participation in the study.

I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time or may choose not to respond to certain questions without penalty. This interview conducted by student Peter Millman, who is being supervised by Dr. Heidi MacDonald (Department of History). If I have any questions or concerns about the research or the conduct of the researcher I am welcome to contact Dr. MacDonald at (403) 329-2544 or by email at heidi.macdonald@uleth.ca or by mail at Dr. Heidi MacDonald, Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, AB, T1K 3M4. Questions regarding my rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Office of Research Ethics, University of Lethbridge (Phone: (403) 329-2747 or email at research.services@uleth.ca.

**Conditions of Participation:**

Please review the following conditions and options with the interviewer. Feel free to ask questions if they appear unclear.

I will receive sections of Peter Millman's project in which my interview is cited for my approval and suggested revisions before the completion of the project, that may include part of my interview. I will be able to review and suggest changes before my interview is used. I understand that my comments must be returned to the student by a specific date. I will have one month to reply with my comments after I receive the written copy of the project paper. It is important to note that my feedback to the student will be needed by a specific date to avoid missing significant deadlines in the student's project completion. I will have one month from the date it is received to respond with any concerns.

**In terms of identification and reproduction of my interview, I agree to the following conditions:**

_____ My identity may be revealed in the project, any presentations that may result from this project, or any further work on this topic by Peter Millman. Another copy will be held by Peter Millman and his supervisor Dr. Heidi MacDonald (Department of History), as well as members of the supervisory committee.

_____ Should I prefer anonymity, Peter Millman will agree to use a pseudonym throughout the project, and other academic publications and presentations, and my identity will not be revealed.

My chosen pseudonym is:

I understand that I will be able to see all sections of the publications and presentation in which I am quoted or referenced to highlight sections where my identity could be determined, as well as make suggestions on how to increase my anonymity.

**In terms of storage, transcription, and preservation of this interview, I agree to the following conditions:**

_____I give Peter Millman permission to keep the one copy of the interview for his personal records after the project is completed.

_____ I agree that the recording of my interview will be transcribed into a written copy and used by the researcher in this oral history project. I allow for Peter Millman's supervisory committee to receive copies which they may choose to share with the Centre for Oral History and Tradition. I also grant Peter Millman permission to donate my interview and transcription to an archive for its continued preservation and use. This archive may include, but is not limited to the Truro Museum and Archives, or the Black Cultural Centre.

_____ I agree that the recording of my interview will be transcribed into a written copy and used by the researcher in the oral history project. I allow for Peter Millman's

supervisory committee to receive copies which must not be shared outside of the committee. I DO NOT grant permission for the interview to be donated to an archive, as I wish to preserve my anonymity.

_____ I would like my interview and transcript to be destroyed following the completion of Peter Millman's project.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I freely and voluntarily agree to participate in this project.

_____ (Printed Name of Participant)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

_____ (Printed Name of Researcher)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

Peter Millman
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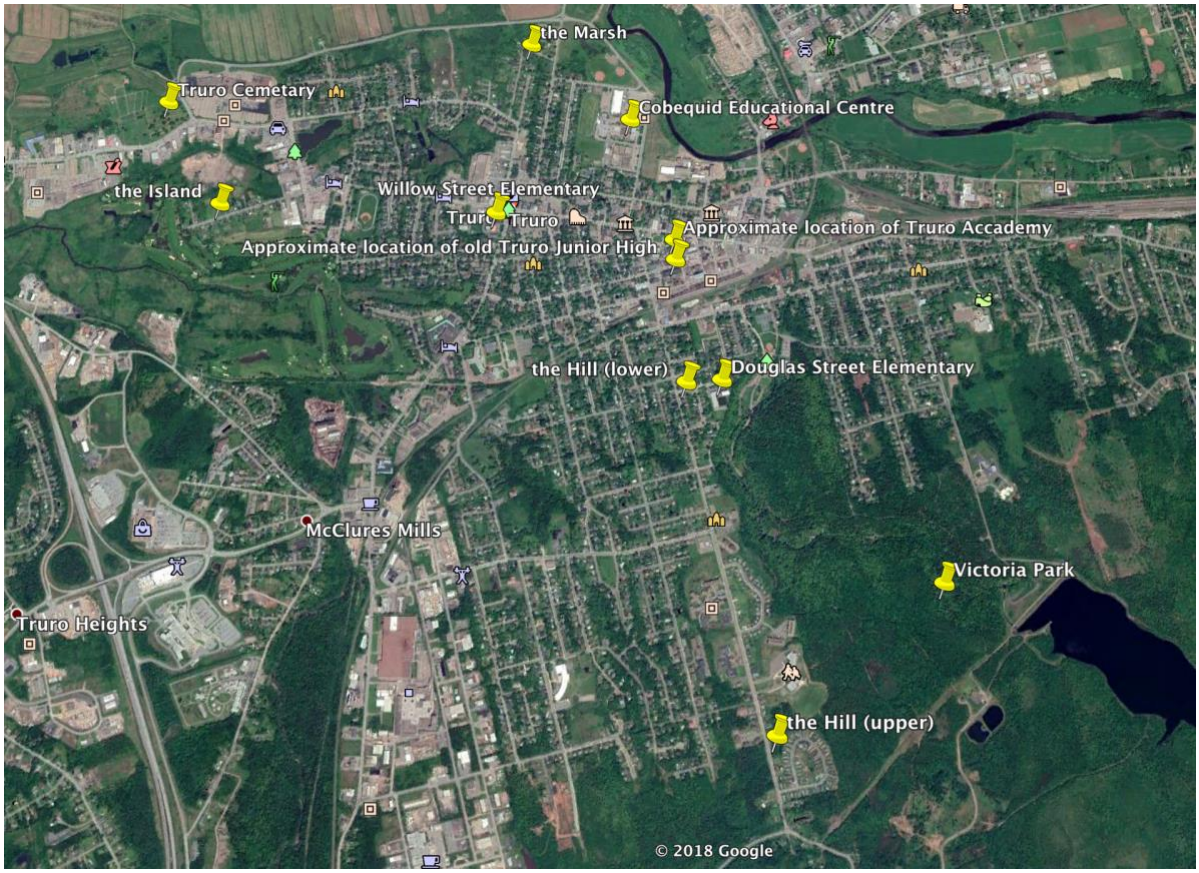
A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

**Questionnaire**

**The tentative questions to be asked are as follows:**

How do you prefer to be referred to, i.e. Black, African Nova Scotian?
When were you born?
Where were you born?
Do you have any siblings?
What did your parents do?
What neighbourhood did you grow up in?
Can you tell me about what it was like growing up in that neighbourhood?
What types of music did you listen to growing up? Did you even make your own music?
Did you work as a teenager?
Where did you go to school? Elementary/ Jr./ High
What was school like in Truro as a Black teenager?
What was the best part of Jr./High school?
Did you ever experience racism at school? Could you tell me about any particular incidents you can recall?
Do you remember any significant news events from when you were a teenager?
Did you go to church growing up?
Was the church important to you as a teenager?
What role did the church play in your community?
Did you play sports as a teenager?
Were sports an important part of life for teenagers in the Truro Black community?
How was your relationship with your family when you were a teenager? Did you get along? Rebellious?
Was your family active in the community?
What did you do with your friends as a teenager? Dances? Sports? Hanging out?
What was dating like for you as a teenager in Truro? Could you tell me about any particular relationships that were significant?
How was it perceived if someone dated outside of the community in those days (50s, 60s)?
Could you describe how racism affected your teenage years?
How have your experiences from when you were a teenager influenced you later in life?

**Truro Map**




"Truro, Nova Scotia." *Google Earth.* April 16, 2019.