

For Immediate Release

**July 12, 2021**

***Nova Scotia Government to fund the first African Nova Scotian Justice Institute, paving the way for a more equitable justice system for African Nova Scotians.***

**Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia** - The African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition (ANSDPAD) is pleased to have been awarded \$4.8 million in funding from the Nova Scotia Government, for the establishment of the first Provincial African Nova Scotian Justice Institute (ANSJI).

Rooted in the foundational work of African Nova Scotian people, organizations and justice champions over many generations, ANSDPAD's Justice Strategy Working Group has developed the framework for the ANSJI as a body focused on addressing issues of anti-Black racism in the criminal justice system, and working to ensure the fair, just and constitutional treatment of African Nova Scotians.

"The establishment of the ANSJI is the culmination of generations of work by the African Nova Scotian people and communities," said Prof. Michelle Williams, Schulich School of Law-Dalhousie University, and member of the Coalition's Justice Strategy Working Group. "We appreciate that the Nova Scotia government recognizes the institutional and systemic anti-Black racism faced by African Nova Scotians and their families when dealing with human rights, policing and corrections, and the justice system as a whole – and is willing to support African Nova Scotian-led work to address these issues." As a leader in legal research, advocacy, and education on justice issues, the ANSJI will be a place where African Nova Scotians can seek legal advice, guidance and support.

The ANSJI will take both a proactive and reactive approach in its response to the pervasive institutional anti-Black racism experienced by African Nova Scotians in their interactions with policing, the courts, prison, and related systems, providing court support, and providing legal education for African Nova Scotians based on the needs and concerns of African Nova Scotian communities throughout the province.

**ABOUT THE ANSDPAD COALITION:**

The ANSDPAD Coalition was established in 2016 as a group of organizations and individuals serving African Nova Scotian people, communities, interests and needs. DPAD recognizes African Nova Scotians as a distinct people and works to ensure that African Nova Scotian people and communities are recognized and supported as an integral part of Nova Scotia's past, present and future. The group's members recognize that the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) provides a unique opportunity to build provincial, national and international momentum for change that will benefit people of African descent in Nova Scotia and beyond.

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## PREMIER'S/OFFICE/JUSTICE/AFRICAN/NOVA/SCOTIAN/AFFAIRS — African Nova Scotian Justice Institute Launched

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The province is investing \$4.8 million in a new community-led justice institute that will support African Nova Scotians in contact with the law and help address overrepresentation and anti-black racism in the justice system.

“Our justice system must do better for African Nova Scotians. We need real and meaningful change in our criminal justice system,” said Premier Iain Rankin. “The African Nova Scotian Justice Institute will be led by community and driven by African Nova Scotian subject matter experts whose work will support programs and services that will help address institutional racism.”

The establishment of the Institute, one of the first of its kind in Atlantic Canada, will be led by the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition. The institute will provide eight justice-related support, research and outreach programs, including:

- Units dealing with Race and Cultural Assessments & Treatment Services
- A data collection and policing accountability unit
- An African Nova Scotian Court Support Program
- A community justice legal defence program
- A bail alternative, incarceration support and reintegration program for African Nova Scotians
- An alternative justice and victim services program
- Public legal education and Youth development program
- Human rights and policing accountability programming

The program funding will allow the institute to be fully staffed and begin offering programs and services within a year.

### **Quotes:**

“The establishment of the ANSJI is the culmination of decades of work by the ANS community,” said Prof. Michelle Williams, Schulich School of Law-Dalhousie University, and member of the Justice Strategy Working Group. “We are very pleased that the Nova Scotia government recognizes and values what is required to address the institutional systemic anti-Black racism faced by African Nova Scotians and their families when dealing with human rights complaints, forms of law enforcement and incarceration, and the justice system as a whole.”

“The African Nova Scotian Justice Institute is part of a new path, where community experts will help lead the way as we work to build a more equitable province, together. I commend the members of the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition for their hard work in making this institute a reality.”

-Tony Ince, Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives

**Quick Facts:**

- African Nova Scotians continue to be overrepresented in the province's criminal justice system, when compared to the general population.
- African Nova Scotians represent approximately 2.4 per cent of the province's population, but 10 per cent of admissions to sentenced custody and 11% of admissions to remand in provincial correctional facilities.
- Advancing social justice and inclusion, taking steps to eradicate racism and move forward on an African Nova Scotian Justice Plan is a priority of government in Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent.
- There are few examples of justice-related programs and services specifically for African Canadians across the country. The Black Legal Education Centre in Ontario provides free legal advice to low income Black Ontarians, as well as support for police complaints, education, work law, housing law and human rights.

**Additional Resources:**

Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent: <https://novascotia.ca/international-decade-for-people-of-african-descent/>

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## African Nova Scotian Justice Institute

The African Nova Scotian Justice Institute (ANSJI) has grown out of the Coalition's desire to design a body focused solely on carrying out an African Nova Scotian Justice Strategy led by African Nova Scotians.

Given the current state of affairs on street checks, the continued treatment and over representation of African Nova Scotians in the Criminal Justice System, and building on reports such as the Donald Marshall Jr. Commission, the Coalition recognizes that it is time for a major overhaul of not only policing but all other facets of criminal justice system, policy and practices to ensure fair, legal and constitutional treatment of African Nova Scotians.

The ANSJI will serve as a criminal justice focused organization that is both proactive and reactive in its response to the pervasive institutional racism experienced by people of African descent in their interactions with policing, the courts, prison and related systems. Taking on legal cases, providing court support and creating unique legal education opportunities for African Nova Scotians are just a few of the initiatives planned for the ANSJI.

### **ANSJI MANDATE**

To address issues of systemic racism in the criminal justice system that negatively impact African Nova Scotians while ensuring fair, legal and constitutional treatment of all African Nova Scotian community members.

### **ANSJI VISION**

To create programs and services that adequately address institutional racism faced by African Nova Scotians and their families when dealing with human rights complaints, the justice system, all forms of law enforcement and incarceration.

The ANSJI will be a place African Nova Scotians can turn to when seeking legal advice, guidance and advocacy that understands African Nova Scotians as a distinct people.

Government, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and community groups will look to the ANSJI as a leader in legal research, advocacy and education on justice issues affecting African Nova Scotian communities.