



AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF BLACK FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS IN NOVA SCOTIA: CHALLENGING ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS

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Land Acknowledgement

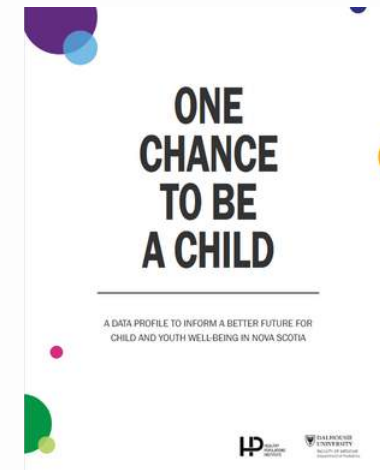
We are located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship," which the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources but recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) titles and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

We also pay respect to the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotian communities that have been here for over 400 years and the 52 African Nova Scotian communities throughout the region today.



Study Background

- There is an opportunity gap in the early childhood period that impacts a child's mental and physical wellbeing, academic achievement, and access to learning, recreation, and play opportunities.
- With the Canada-Wide early learning and child care agreement, we need to understand and address racial disparities to ensure we achieve the goals of an inclusive, high-quality, and culturally responsive child care system.



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LeBlanc J, Hamilton-Hinch B, Harkins MJ, McIsaac JLD. (2019).

Study Goals

- How Black children in Nova Scotia experience and access play, including risky and outdoor play.
- How racism and discrimination are experienced by Black children and families in Nova Scotia during the early years.
- How families and ECEs view early learning and child care environments for Black children in Nova Scotia.



Critical Race Theory and Black Critical Theory

Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Dumas and Ross, 2016

Our research was guided by five tenants of Critical Race Theory with a focus on anti-Black racism

- 1) Racism, particularly anti-Black racism, is endemic across systems
- 2) Storytelling and personal experience is invaluable
- 3) True fight for equity requires more than remaining neutral, objective, and colour blind
- 4) Experiences from people who have been marginalized must be heard
- 5) Research must commit to social justice and action

Participants

Participants	Racial Identity	Location	Gender/ Relationship
7 Parents of Black children aged 18 months - 5 years old	6 Black 1 White	6 HRM 1 Preston Township	1 Father 6 Mothers
8 Early Childhood Educators who work in African NS communities	2 Black 2 Biracial/ African Descent 4 White	4 HRM 2 Preston Township 2 Rural	1 Man 7 Women

Outdoor Play for Black Children in Nova Scotia



- Black and ANS families and ECEs value outdoor play

"Yeah, I definitely think outdoor play is important... He loves it outside and he loves playing, getting dirty... Even at home when he's just watching, he goes to the door, gets his coat, and his boots, and kind of just looks at me."
-Parent

- Families are fearful of over-policing, stereotyping, and over-surveillance

"They're gonna get hovered over if they go to the [children's hospital], and we've had situations in the past where the mom would call me and say, 'The social worker is gonna call you and you need to let them know that this happened at daycare,' so yeah there is a fear of that extra policing."
-ECE

Outdoor Play for Black Children in Nova Scotia Cont'd

- Outdoor play spaces are limited in many historic ANS communities

"As a child, we lived right off the main road. So, the risk of us going to the end of the driveway was scary for my parents. They were scared I'd be running out on the road with the cars going by. I didn't really get to do a lot of that, and it wasn't until much later on that I really got to experience going outside. Still wasn't doing what we would consider risky play. I had still none of that, no climbing, even going to something as simple as the Lake or the beach, we didn't do that. And too because my parents didn't get to experience that, I think they were scared for us to experience it."

-Parent



Black Families and ECEs Experiences Within Early Childhood Settings



- Mainstream Approach to Curriculum

"I feel like certain educators and people that may be doing it for years and years and years and things have been a certain way for so long and they're not changing their practice I feel like there needs to be a little bit more investigation as far as like who we are actually choosing to just work with kids in general but also if you don't have the education then really make sure that quality education is being given to the Early Childhood Educators that are working with African-Nova Scotians."

-ECE

- Lack of Responsiveness to Racism, Social Justice and Equity.

"After the [discovery of the] Indigenous children [remains] I tried to do something with them and they were like no I don't think you should do that because they wouldn't understand it or their families wouldn't talk about it.. I feel like with the George Floyd thing they definitely didn't do anything either."

-ECE

Black Families and ECEs Experiences Within Early Childhood Settings Cont'd

- Absence of Cultural Safety

“ [...] When I picked him up I told you about the biting so he bit someone right before I picked him up just now and I was kind of reading through the paper and it's like "she made him go sit by himself and told him not to bite his friends ".

-Parent



Racism and its Impact on Black Families in Nova Scotia

- Intergenerational impacts of racism

"My mom tells me stories of teachers actually mentioning my hair being too big or how to put it in braids... Or children making fun. I was called the 'N' word... Unfortunately, I feel my children are probably going to go through the same thing"
-Parent



- Experiences of racism across systems

"I remember one of the nurses. She said, 'Coloured babies, they have this Mongolian spot.' And I was just taken back, because she said 'coloured.'"
-Parent

- The importance of positive self-identity and cultural pride

"My wife is often sitting with my daughter, and she's telling her about her hair, she's telling her about her skin colour, and reminding her about the proud families that she came from."
-Parent



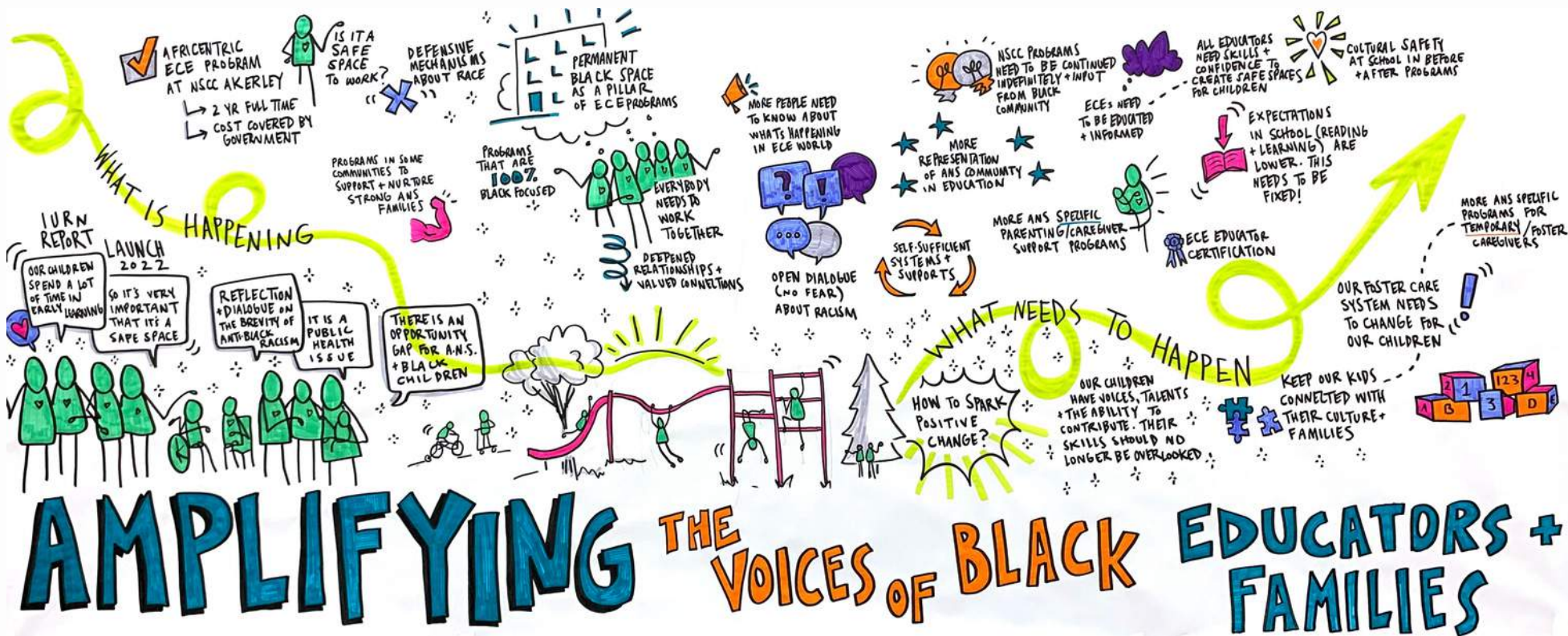
Key Takeaways

- Black children's experiences with racial discrimination, stereotyping, stigma and over-surveillance, diminishes their identity, and autonomy.
- Generational trauma and fear exist among Black families in the early childhood period with play, reinforcing a cycle of oppression for historically ANS neighbourhoods.
- Inequitable opportunities to engage in outdoor play remain pervasive in early childhood for Black children in Nova Scotia.
- Mainstream approaches, colour-blind attitudes, and implicit biases ignore the socio-economic and racial disparities present in the early learning and child care system.



Critical Policy Actions

- Continue to voice the needs of Black children, families, and educators to create equitable systems and prioritize funding for African NS communities.
- Address the lack of infrastructure, stereotyping, and racism to improve cultural safety and empower Black children to embrace their culture and identity.
- Provide additional professional development to support educators and service providers to deliver Africentric and culturally responsive programs.





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Discussion Questions

1. What is currently happening in early childhood to support Black and African Nova Scotian children and their families?
2. What else needs to happen to create culturally safe and responsive early childhood programs for Black and African Nova Scotian educators young children and their families?



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