

Segregated Education in Nova Scotia

While we often like to think of Canada's school system as progressive and equal, history reveals a different reality. Canada not only had its infamous residential school system but also its lesser-known segregated schools. ¹In the 1860s, Nova Scotia introduced the Free Schools Act, which was intended to provide equal educational opportunities to all communities. The act was designed to bring education to previously underserved regions and aimed to create a system that was fair for all residents. However, despite these intentions, the province started a troubling practice of segregating black individuals in separate schools. This segregation was in stark contrast to the principles that the Free Schools Act was said to uphold. ²From the 1860s to the 1960s, and even as late 1983 in Guysborough county, Canada maintained a segregated schools system that barred black individuals from attending white schools. Although this was not a national mandate, it was an official law in both Ontario and Nova Scotia. Both provinces operated segregated schools throughout the 19th and 20th century. These schools cast a dark shadow over our education system and warrant further review and analysis. This exploration can help us understand not only our history but also the lingering impacts that still affect us today.

Segregation in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's education system has a history marked by somber episodes, one of which revolves around the era of segregated schools. In the 1860s, Nova Scotia introduced the

¹ Johanne Jean-Pierre (2021) 'British Journal of Sociology of education' *How African Nova Scotians envision culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy as civic repair*. Volume 42, Issue 8, pg 1153-1171.

² Natasha Henry (2021) *Racial Segregation of Black Students in Canadian Schools*. Published online

concept of free schools, open to children. However, this seemingly inclusive approach excluded black children, who were compelled to attend separate schools, essentially barring them from entering white schools. ³This practice of segregation persisted until 1884 when reforms were introduced, formally allowing black children to attend white schools. However, despite these early reforms, racial segregation endured due to opposition from school trustees, teachers, officials, and various community members who staunchly resisted integration efforts. The aftermath of the reform resulted in minimal change, with segregation persevering over time. ⁴While some schools gradually integrated due to financial constraints, others faced closure, necessitating the transfer of students to white schools. Both white and black communities, in certain cases, resisted integration, underscoring the complexity of this struggle that spanned generations. This prolonged period witnessed the persistence of segregated schools, despite societal shifts and evolving attitudes. ⁵From the 1940s and 1960s, numerous segregated schools primarily in rural areas faced closure or were phased out. However, a handful persisted, with the last segregated school finally closing its doors in 1983 in Guysborough county. Remarkably, this school held the distinction of being the last segregated institution not only in Nova Scotia but in all of Canada. This narrative sheds light on the deeply ingrained nature of segregation within Nova Scotia's educational history. The struggle against racial discrimination in schools lasted for decades, reflecting the broader societal challenges faced by marginalized communities. The eventual closure of these schools symbolized progress; it also serves as a reminder of the work that still remains in achieving genuine equality in education.

³ BLAC, Anne Martell,cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax:Black Learners Advisory Committee.

⁴ Department of Education (1890-1910) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer.

⁵ Natasha Henry (2021) *Racial Segregation of Black Students in Canadian Schools*. Published online

Segregation in the Annapolis and Digby County

Annapolis and Digby counties had four segregated sections: Weymouth Falls, Inglewood, Fundy, and Joggins in Digby. ⁶These schools were spread throughout the county and were located in predominantly black communities. For these communities, the segregated schools were their only option for educating their children, as they were barred from sending them to the local white schools. ⁷Without having any alternative these communities embraced the chance at education and did their best to provide for their children, making financial sacrifices for the sake of their education. Despite this, most schools still struggled to secure sufficient resources, and many would be forced to stay closed for extended periods of time or run for a shorter school year.⁸

The isolation problem

Many of these schools were situated in remote areas, isolated from neighboring communities and main travel routes. This geographical isolation posed a significant challenge for students, as many found it difficult to reach these schools due to lack of transportation services and poor maintenance of roads. This struggle with accessibility led to lower attendance rates, compounding the problems these schools already faced.

⁹Additionally, the isolated locations of these schools meant that they received fewer visits from school officials, this led to far less formal oversight which further contributed to their

⁶ Doris Evans, Gertrude Tynes (1996) *Telling the Truth: Reflections Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia*. Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press.

⁷ Department of Education (1900-1915) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer.

⁸ Department of Education (1891-1912) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer.

⁹ Department of Education (1890-1915) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer.

issues. Furthermore, this isolation made these schools less attractive to potential teachers, as the lack of connectivity to larger communities affected the appeal of working in such settings.

Financial difficulties of running a school

Financial difficulties plagued these schools as well, receiving little to no funding from the provincial government. ¹⁰As a result, these schools struggled with maintenance and attracting any potential teachers. Many of these hardships were ignored by school officials, with blame sometimes being placed on the communities themselves. Nonetheless, these schools continued to operate to the best of their ability. However, most of these schools were limited in what they could successfully achieve, often closing for extended periods due to the previously mentioned reasons. ¹¹However, there were a few exceptions to this trend: such as the one in Inglewood, a small one-room schoolhouse located not far from the town of Bridgetown. This school managed to overcome many of its disadvantages and functioned efficiently. Very few other segregated schools could achieve similar success, the exception being black urban schools which had far more resources, funding and provincial oversight.

Shortage of teachers

¹⁰ Department of Education (1890-1917) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

¹¹ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program.

Nova Scotia schools faced a crisis during the 19th and 20th centuries: that being a severe shortage of teachers in rural areas. ¹²Numerous rural schools in Nova Scotia struggled to attract and hire competent teachers due to a combination of factors. These schools were often located far from major cities, requiring many teachers to reside in the accommodations provided by the local communities. Additionally, budget constraints were a significant issue for rural schools, as they operated with more limited funds compared to their urban counterparts. ¹³Consequently, salaries offered by rural schools were lower than those offered by city schools. Many of these schools faced difficulties in acquiring sufficient funds to pay teachers and provide suitable accommodations. For schools unable to secure a teacher for the academic year, they would remain closed until a teacher was available. Due to challenges of this nature, a considerable number of schools almost exclusively in rural areas would remain closed indefinitely or were merged with others. ¹⁴Despite the severe shortage of teachers, school trustees remained exceptionally selective in their hiring process. Married women faced significant hurdles in securing teaching positions, effectively being prohibited from acquiring teaching positions. ¹⁵Likewise, black teachers were often confined to teaching exclusively in segregated schools. These societal and educational views further deterred teachers from considering rural schools as viable career options. ¹⁶Many teachers left for opportunities in places like Maine, leading to a School Inspector describing the situation as an "exodus." This migration to the United States or other employment

¹² Department of Education (1880-1944) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer.

¹³ BLAC, Anne Martell,cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax:Black Learners Advisory Committee.

¹⁴ Johanne Jean-Pierre (2021) 'British Journal of Sociology of education' *How African Nova Scotians envision culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy as civic repair*. Volume 42, Issue 8, pg 1153-1171.

¹⁵ BLAC, Anne Martell,cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax:Black Learners Advisory Committee.

¹⁶ Department of Education (1885-1920) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer.

opportunities resulted in a predicament where numerous schools were compelled to employ teachers with less experience or education or cease operations altogether.

Disqualified due to skin color

Amidst the significant shortage of teachers across rural Nova Scotia, to the extent that numerous schools had to permanently close, a distressing trend emerged: the government's refusal to grant permanent teaching licenses to highly capable and willing black individuals.¹⁷ Instead, most black teachers were issued temporary licenses that only permitted teaching for a period of time. These licenses were referred to as permissive licenses. These teachers were also predominantly confined to instructing in segregated schools. In a report from an Inspector responsible for Annapolis County, the observation was made that¹⁸ "During the seven years I have had charge of this inspectorate, I have known of only one colored teacher with a permanent license". For black individuals, the prospect of obtaining a permanent teaching license was exceedingly rare, with many enthusiastic and qualified individuals denied this opportunity based solely on the color of their skin. Many teachers of color were barred from teaching in white schools and were relegated exclusively to segregated institutions. This policy not only severely constrained the growth of these teachers and the development of segregated schools, but it also had a self-defeating effect. By not allowing these teachers to contribute to white schools, the school board inadvertently exacerbated the ongoing teacher crisis of the time. The Department of Education's own ignorance and

¹⁷ Department of Education (1890-1924) (1938-1944) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

¹⁸ Department of Education (1923-1924) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

racial bias not only hindered progress but also exacerbated the very issues they were trying to address.

The struggle hiring a teacher

Financial constraints compounded the issue, as many schools struggled to allocate sufficient funds to entice teachers, and even when they managed to do so, these arrangements were frequently short-term.¹⁹ These challenges were particularly pronounced in small, isolated communities. To secure teachers, these communities not only had to cover teachers' salaries but also provide them with accommodation. In contrast to urban areas, rural communities offered significantly lower salaries and fewer resources, which presented a substantial hurdle.²⁰ As a result, numerous segregated schools were unable to afford such expenses, leaving them without teachers and consequently unable to open their doors. The lack of support from school officials made their already bad situation worse as school officials would often overlook these segregated schools in favor of staffing white schools. Trapped in this harsh situation, many of these schools faced closures, with their facilities deteriorating over time. Shockingly, despite the systemic challenges, blame was often placed on the communities themselves for the failure of education in these areas.

²¹An excerpt from the 1910-1911 inspector's report underscores this viewpoint: "The Fundy section, as previously stated, has had no school for five years, and now has no board of trustees. With one or two exceptions, the people of this section manifest no desire for a

¹⁹ BLAC, Anne Martell, cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee.

²⁰ Department of Education (1890-1904) (1910-1923) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer

²¹ Department of Education (1910-1911) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer

school. It would be almost impossible for obvious reasons to establish a school in this section under section 103 of the Education Act." This unwarranted blame ignored the fact that these communities struggled to access the necessary resources to maintain a proper educational environment. In essence, the difficulties of attracting teachers to rural segregated schools were compounded by financial constraints, community blame, and a systemic bias against black schools. These challenges often left these schools understaffed, under-resourced, and unable to fulfill their crucial role in providing education to their communities.

Successful schools

Despite the challenges posed by segregation, certain segregated schools managed to not only attract but also retain teachers for extended periods. ²²Inglewood stands as a prime example of this success. Despite its small size, Inglewood consistently had a teacher for almost every year, experiencing only a few gaps without one. ²³This achievement significantly outperformed many other segregated schools, even larger ones such as Weymouth Falls that struggled immensely in recruiting and retaining teachers.

²⁴Inglewood's triumph can be largely attributed to its close-knit community. Not only did the community at Inglewood embrace education, but they were also pioneers, being among the first to establish a segregated, one-room schoolhouse even before it was provincially

²² BLAC, Anne Martell, cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee.

²³ Department of Education (1910-1925) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer

²⁴ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program.

mandated in 1864. The driving force behind Inglewood's achievement was its community, which displayed unwavering determination and made sacrifices to ensure quality education for its children. The residents of Inglewood were vociferous advocates for their educational needs. ²⁵A historical example of their dedication is seen in 1859 when they petitioned the government for funds to complete the school building. ²⁶This request was granted, with \$10 being allocated for the purpose. ²⁷Walter Grayson, an early black educator, was one of Inglewood's first teachers. His presence highlights that Inglewood could attract highly capable educators even in its formative years. ²⁸When comparing Inglewood to other segregated schools, it becomes evident that Inglewood stands out for its noteworthy track record. Unlike many others, Inglewood consistently reached commendable heights. It even rivaled larger white schools like Bridgetown in terms of attendance rates, despite the inherent disparities between the two. ²⁹For a more fitting comparison, consider Tupperville, another one-room schoolhouse, which shares similarities with Inglewood in terms of isolation, student numbers, operational era, and ups and downs.

The following chart provides a concise comparison between Inglewood and Tupperville (Note: Tupperville's registry data is from 1934, as it was among the oldest and well-documented records available):

²⁵ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program.

²⁶ Department of Education (1859-1864) *Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax: Kings Printer

²⁷ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program.

²⁸ BLAC, Anne Martell, cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee.

²⁹ Margaret Gavel (1934) *Register of the Attendance and General Standing of the pupils; and of the statistics*. Halifax: The Imperial publishing Co., Limited

	Tupperville	Inglewood
School Registry	1934	1892
Normal College teachers license	yes	no
Period of service in other sections	17 years	8 years
Period of service in this section	2 years	6 months
Number of children between 5-15	25	30
Number of children over 15	1	1
Total number of children in the school	26	31
Number of boys	11	12
Number of girls	15	19
New students this year	0	13
Number who did not go to school	0	3
Number of visits by inspector	2	0
Number of visits by MLAs	0	0
Number of visits by clergy	0	5
Number of visits by teachers	2	2
Number of visits by others	4	9
Number students daily present on average	24.7	23.4
percent enrolled daily percent	95	75.6

³⁰The lack of visits from School Board officials or School Inspectors is a significant indication of the limited oversight provided by the formal educational authorities. ³¹Instead, it highlights the active involvement of the local community in the school's affairs. Inglewood's numerous visits from the clergy and other community members shows the close-knit nature of the community and its commitment to overseeing the school's operations. These visits from local figures suggest that, in the absence of formal oversight, the responsibility for the schools well-being and progress fell squarely on the shoulders of the community itself.

Inglewood as a school

³²In the 1850s, the small community of Inglewood embarked on the construction of a humble one-room schoolhouse. Eager to see their vision realized, community members, including George Tallow, Joseph Jackson, Abraham Clements, Frederick Hill, and Edward Dixson, petitioned the government for financial assistance. ³³Their collective effort resulted in the allocation of \$10 to finalize the school's construction, which soon led to the school's inaugural opening. ³⁴Throughout the subsequent decades, Inglewood's educational journey unfolded, marked by periods of success and challenges. However, by the late 1890s, the school encountered significant difficulties, falling into disrepair due to a lack of funds for

³⁰ Department of Education (1892-1915)*Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

³¹ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program

³² BLAC, Anne Martell,cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax:Black Learners Advisory Committee.

³³ Department of Education (1859-1864)*Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

³⁴ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program

maintenance. ³⁵The status of the school shifted, and the 1897-1898 inspector's report indicated a dramatic change: "Inglewood Section No. 30, Annapolis East, has virtually ceased to exist. It has been partially included within the corporate limits of the Town of Bridgetown. This section was an anomaly in its formation, and its existence was never formally sanctioned by the Council of Public Instruction. Its schoolhouse is unfit for further use, and its organization as a section has ceased." It's worth noting that while some readers speculate that the School Inspector aimed to consolidate students in Bridgetown, analysis suggests otherwise. The building and opening of Inglewood was never formally sanctioned as it was built before the Free Schools Act but held all the same recognition and responsibilities as sanctioned schools. ³⁶With the turn of the century, Inglewood experienced a revival. By 1903, the community achieved formal recognition as a school section and was now officially, responsible for overseeing maintenance, hiring staff, and ensuring educational standards. Demonstrating resilience, the school diligently restored the building and earned commendation in the 1910-1911 inspector's report. ³⁷The subsequent change in School Inspector, from L.S. Morse to Mayhew C. Foster in 1914-1915, marked a positive shift. Foster championed a progressive mindset, actively supporting segregated schools like Inglewood. For decades, Inglewood persevered as a steadfast bastion of education. ³⁸However, in 1944, as a wave of small schoolhouses underwent incorporation, Inglewood's fate took another turn. Responding to the request of the

³⁵ Department of Education (1897-1899)*Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

³⁶ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program

³⁷ Department of Education (1914-1916)*Province of Nova Scotia Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia*. Halifax:Kings Printer

³⁸ BLAC, Anne Martell,cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax:Black Learners Advisory Committee.

school's final teacher, Edith Cromwell, and under the guidance of Mayhew C. Foster, the school was consolidated into Bridgetown. This transition was marked by the relocation of all remaining Inglewood students to Bridgetown, bringing an end to Inglewood's educational journey.

Inglewood's legacy

Inglewood stands out as the finest segregated schools in Annapolis county and one of the finest in Nova Scotia. ³⁹The educational accomplishments achieved by Inglewood are nothing short of amazing. ⁴⁰The support and affection of the community helped to propel Inglewood beyond its limitations, allowing it to flourish. ⁴¹Personal anecdotes about the school consistently hold it in high regard, often mentioning the bond that existed between the school and not only the students but the whole community. Inglewood's legacy endures; today, it has been preserved and transformed into the community center for Inglewood, providing a fitting continuation of its story. Since its establishment in the 1850s, Inglewood's school has stood as an inspiring model of community passion and dedication, particularly in the context of community support for education. The success of Inglewood is fundamentally attributed to the resolute commitment of the community; without their sacrifices, the school could never have achieved the level of success it did. Despite facing numerous inherent disadvantages as a segregated school, Inglewood managed to thrive and

³⁹ BLAC, Anne Martell, cmc, Dr. Patrick Kakembo (1994) *B Report on Education: Redressing Inequity - Empowering Black Learners*. Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee.

⁴⁰ Edith Cromwell (1994) *Inglewood My Community*. Nova Scotia: Department of Education, Extension Services Adult Education Program

⁴¹ Doris Evans, Gertrude Tynes (1996) *Telling the Truth: Reflections Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia*. Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press.

achieve a level of success on par with its white counterparts. This achievement can be attributed primarily to the unwavering strength of its community.