

# Restorative Inquiry – Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children

## Journey to Light: A Different Way Forward - History & Context



### History & Experience of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children

The Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (the Home) was a private child caring institution established to care for orphaned and other African Nova Scotian children in need. It was established as part of a larger vision by a few leaders from the African Nova Scotian community to ensure care, education and training for African Nova Scotian children and youth. The Home was needed because mainstream child-caring institutions generally did not welcome Black children into their care. The Home was a private institution that operated with support from members of African Nova Scotian communities including the AUBA. The Home was also supported by the Nova Scotian government and through donations from members of the white community.

### Key Facts about NSHCC

- The Home opened in 1921.
- It operated as a large institution from 1921 until 1978 when the original “Home” building closed.
- The “New Home” was opened in 1978 and operated more as a group home for youth.
- Residents were generally placed in the Home by the State and some were placed privately by families in need of help and support.
- The Home ceased operations in 2015.
- Since 1998 some former residents revealed they suffered neglect and significant physical, sexual and emotional abuse while living at the Home.
- Following these first reports many former residents that lived in the Home throughout its history shared similar stories of abuse and neglect.
- Former residents said they suffered in silence as children at the Home and felt silenced when they came forward as adults.



### The Home: A Complicated Story

The history and experience of the Home is not, as some would have it be, simply a story of bad actors and actions. It requires attention to the context, causes, and circumstances that shaped processes, roles, patterns of interaction, and behaviours. It is a difficult story of how systems and ways of working structure relationships and impact how we think, act, and react to one another.



### Former Residents & The Journey to Light

- Many of the former residents formed the group VOICES (Victims of Institutional Child Exploitation Society) in order to support one another and advocate for a just response to their experiences at the Home.
- They described their work together as a “Journey to Light” reflecting their commitment to bring to light what had happened to them in the past and to move forward out of the darkness of the past and toward the light of a better future.
- They were committed to a different way forward that would “do no further harm” “leave no one behind” and listen to the voices of those affected.
- Former residents wanted what happened to them to matter – so that it would not happen to any other young people. They wanted to make a difference for the future – for young people and families in the African Nova Scotian community and across Nova Scotia.

In 2015 the Government of Nova Scotia apologized to former residents of the Home for the experiences they suffered and to the African Nova Scotian community for the impacts and harms of systemic racism that shaped the history of the Home and the province of Nova Scotia. The government established the Restorative Inquiry to understand the history and experience of the Home and support a different way forward.

