



December 10-18, 2022
Nairobi

Re: Two rich days of solo travel in Halifax, a very multicultural place

Dear Friends and Family,

On my way to the city of Halifax¹ from the airport², I appreciated nature that inspires so many paintings. Check out the majestic White Pines pictured above.

For ease of reading this travel letter, note that Canada is comprised of 10 provinces and 3 territories.

Halifax is in the province of Nova Scotia. The three provinces of **Nova Scotia**, **Prince Edward Island**, and **New Brunswick** make up the “maritime provinces” of Canada.



¹ The city of Halifax is known as **Kjipuktuk** by the Mi’kmaq.

² The airport artwork featured is by **Arjan Lal**: “I am inspired by the individuality of people in Canadian culture. This piece acknowledges “**identities that add diversity and vibrancy within communities**. I wish those arriving into Halifax feel **welcomed** and know that our culture recognized a growing awareness of identities.” (emphasis added)

If attentive, upon arrival at the airport, one learns right away about the people that were among the first to live in these lands – the Mi’kmaq – from over 10,000 years ago.

They were nomadic and lived by fishing and hunting for geese, cod, seal, salmon, beaver, bear, moose, and more. The Mi’kmaq are described as being attentive to the visible and the invisible.

They believe in equality among human beings. **A sense of measure** is preferable to one of perfection.

“The excess of something can be harmful, but everyone should **break free from limits** when the opportunity arises and seek to surpass themselves.”



2023 JEUX AUTOCHTONES
de l'Amérique du Nord
HALIFAX • NOUVELLE ÉCOSSE



North American
INDIGENOUS GAMES 2023
HALIFAX • NOVA SCOTIA

July 15 - 23, 2023
NAIG2023.COM
@NAIG2023

Note that the 10th annual **North American Indigenous Games** are to be held in Nova Scotia in July 2023, with the participation of more than 5,000 young athletes from 756+ nations

across Turtle Island. The games are an opportunity to witness and experience the potential of body, mind, spirit, and people. As the promotional materials say: **“Let your spirit out to play.”** **Pjilita’q Mi’kma’ki:** You are all **welcome** to Mi’kmaw territory.

This engaging **1-minute video** provides more information: [NAIG 2023 | Pjila’si - YouTube](#)



Celebrating culture is a large part of The Games. NAIG 2023 will incorporate Mi’kmaq values, customs

"This wonderful book is filled with new information and insight about an extraordinary woman's contribution to Canada's history."
— Constance Backhouse, University of Ottawa



Before leaving for Halifax, I had purchased at the Octopus Bookstore in Ottawa a book on the life of **Viola Davis Desmond** (1914-1965). Ms. Desmond started a beauty school in Halifax and produced and marketed beauty products for Black women.

One day, on her way to deliver some beauty products, her car broke down, and she had to spend the night in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, 100 miles northeast of Halifax. She decided to take in a movie at the Roseland Theatre.

There, after others who had also protested racially-based seating arrangements at the theatre – she made history, not without costs to her business and

wellbeing, and later became recognized for her contributions to human and civil rights.

Viola Desmond did not go upstairs to the balcony seating when requested to do so. She refused to give up her downstairs seat. Angered, the theatre manager called the police, and Ms. Desmond was forcefully evacuated from the theatre and spent the night sitting on a cot in prison.

The situation upset some people in the Black community who did not want to draw attention to themselves. Nonetheless, Viola Desmond pressed charges but lost her case. Even the appeal, supported among others by Pearleen Oliver (whom we meet later) of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church in Halifax and the NSAACP³, was lost, but with one Justice referencing the racial nature of the incident.

Teacher, poet, author, journalist and editor **Carrie Best** (1903-2001) covered the appeal in December 1946 on the front page of *The Clarion*, a newspaper she co-founded and that was published “in the interest of Colored Nova Scotians.”



³ NSAACP: Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples

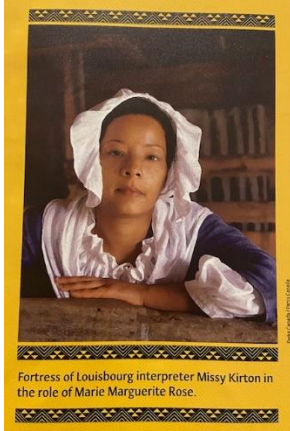
I asked people I encountered in my travels about who features on the Canadian ten dollar bill. One young woman said, “Of course I know; we studied about that in high school.” Another said, “I’ve no idea because I immigrated to Canada just four years ago and always use cards, not cash.” The waitress at the airport in Ottawa pulled out her pocketbook, and we studied her ten dollar bills. I was grateful to see Viola Desmond on one of them and she for the new knowledge.



Viola Desmond is the only woman besides the Queen of England, as I understand, to feature on her own on Canadian currency and that, since 2018. The vertical format of the \$10 bill is said to symbolize that “Canada is moving in a new direction, away from the injustices of the past.” See www.canadashistory.ca/explore/women/viola-desmond-an-unlikely-crusader and www.bankofcanadamuseum.ca/2022/11/changing-face-our-money

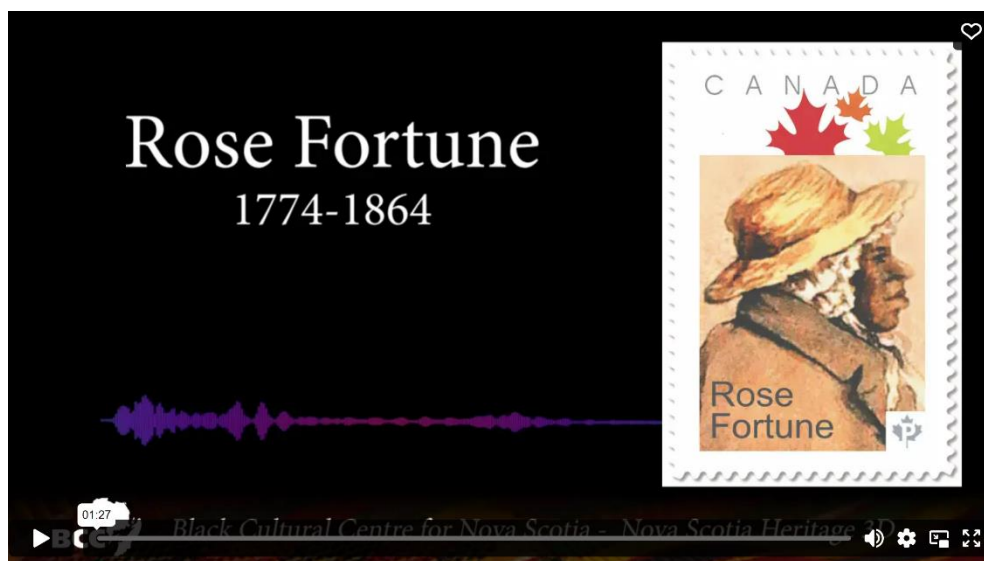
The first stop on **Day 1** of my two full days in Halifax was at the **Black Cultural Centre** – the first and largest museum dedicated to Black history in Canada. As it turned out, the taxi driver, of Ethiopian descent, who drove me there was also up for his first visit to the Centre and said he looked forward to returning with his family.





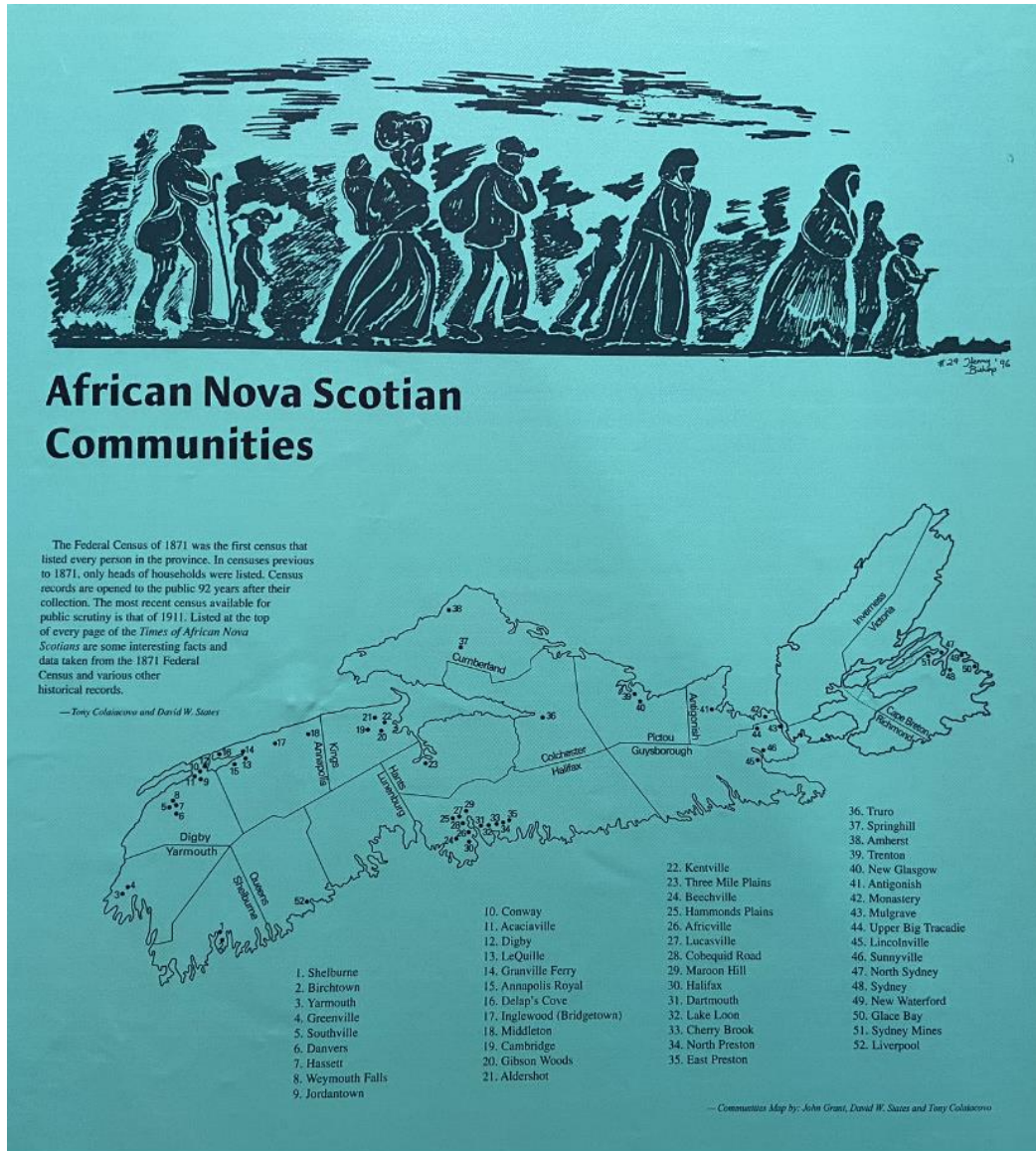
One of the historical figures I met at the Black Cultural Centre is **Marie Marguerite Rose** (1717-1757). She was captured in Africa at the age of 19, transported to Île Royale and sold to a member of the colonial elite. She was baptized and possibly branded. She gained her freedom after 19 years in slavery and married a Mi'kmaw man. They opened a tavern in Louisburg.

I also met **Rose Fortune** (1774-1864). At the age of about 10 years, she migrated from Virginia with her family (during the Black Loyalist migration) to settle in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. She started a transport company, at the age of 51, which later became known as the Lewis Transfer Company, and carted luggage between the ferry docks and nearby homes and hotels. She also provided a wake-up service to rouse travelers in time for the local ferry. “Her strength, trustworthiness, honesty and constant presence on the waterfront led her to become entrusted with safeguarding property and maintaining order on the wharves and warehouses of Annapolis Royal, acting as the town’s waterfront police officer.⁴” She became known and recognized as the first woman police officer in North America. Her descendants continued her transport business into at least the 1960s. Though buried in an unmarked grave, a plaque on the waterfront commemorates her life, the opportunities she created, and the contributions she made. Her direct descendant Daurene Lewis became the first mayor of Annapolis Royal, in 1984, and as such was the first Black female mayor in Canada. See this short video: www.nsheritage3d.ca



⁴ [Rose Fortune - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Fortune)

I learned that people of African descent – free and enslaved – settled in over 50 communities in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia over the centuries, beginning in the 1600s. Nova Scotia is considered the birthplace of Black culture and heritage in Canada.



The in-person and [virtual tour](#) of the **Black Cultural Centre** begins with an introductory film. At the Centre, I recall from the film this Yoruba proverb:

*However far a stream flows,
it never forgets its origins.*

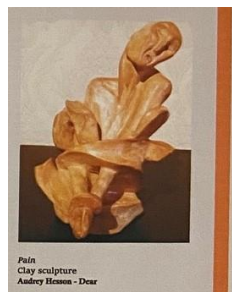


Who else did I meet at the Black Cultural Centre?

I met **educator** Miss De Wolf of Five Mile Plains, **grandmother** Eliza Brody of Sunnyville, **basket maker** Edith Clayton from Cherry Brook, **barrel maker** Charlie Symonds, **fiddler** Joe Izzard of Guysborough Country, **opera singer** Portia May White, **boxer** and **founder of the Nova Scotia**

Human Right Commission and Director of the Black United Front Delmore “Buddy” Daye, and “singing” miner Maurice Ruddick who for nine days kept up the spirit of other survivors of a coal mine collapse by singing aloud and leading the group in prayer as they waited for underground for rescuers.

I met **landscape artist** Edith MacDonald-Brown, born in Africville, and **sculptor and occupational therapist** Audrey Hesson-Dear who attended Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University, **deaconess** Jeanette (Stevens) Johnson, **teacher and founding member of the Black Cultural Centre** Edith Hope Cromwell, **hockey player** Tracey Mulder of Dartmouth, **Senator** Calvin W. Ruck of Sydney, Hon. Maryann E. Francis of Cape Breton Island, named by Canada’s former Governor General Michaëlle Jean as **Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia**, and many more people.



Four the Moment



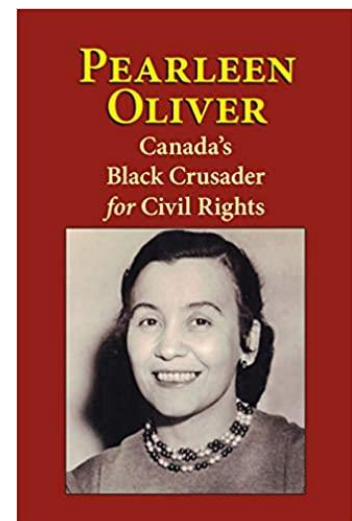
Nationally renowned **Four the Moment** was an a cappella quartet formed in 1981 in Halifax. The four women founders made their debut at an anti-racism rally in Halifax, where they sang "[Joanne Little](#)" from the

repertoire of the US a cappella quintet [Sweet Honey in the Rock](#). Four the Moment drew upon many diverse and rich threads of African music such as blues, soul, reggae, gospel, and spirituals.



One woman's life that moved me is that of **Pearleen (Borden) Oliver (1917-2008)**. I found a book about her at the Black Cultural Centre gift and book shop.

Her father and two uncles were killed in the mines, and two of her brothers served in the World War. Pearleen helped her grandmother, a midwife, carry baskets of blueberries and homemade butter to the market, where she learned bartering. She had all that history and "all this blood" – African and Mi'kmaw and Dutch – running through her.



Growing up, she felt that "something was wrong" when she and other Black students were "moved back" to the back of the classroom and ignored. "There was no one to take interest in you if you were Black" (p. 16). History and reality were "covered up" at school, and Black people were not permitted in the public library. "I knew, growing up in New Glasgow, what racial prejudice was, what it did to you." In her work she "went with the grassroots because I was from the grassroots." (pp. 65-66)

Among other contributions, she **fought for Black nurses to be accepted into nursing schools** in Nova Scotia and across Canada. Her public speaking skills were instrumental in the fight. She would find herself walking coolly into hotels

in Halifax and across the Maritimes to address businesspeople, not even realizing she was crossing color lines of the times. She spoke from the heart, telling stories about the lives of people as part of raising awareness of the need for change. The press coverage of her talks carried her calls for justice far and wide.

Her husband, Dr. William Pearly Oliver, became Pastor of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church. The church, in 2018, was renamed New Horizons Baptist Church, according to Senior Pastor Dr. Rhonda Y. Britton, “to identify ourselves by a name that better reflects the church’s values” (from book centerfold of photos). Dr. Oliver founded, among other organizations, the **Black Cultural Society for Nova Scotia**. He concluded that “no amount of education, wealth or political power was worth anything unless and until a deep sense of pride, identity and cultural awareness” was cultivated among Blacks⁵. He and his wife worked together in complimentary ways to restore pride, break down discriminatory barriers and structures in society, and create opportunities.

I recognize that I was – and many other people are – able to **learn history in a reflective and personable way via the Black Cultural Centre** because of decades of dedicated efforts of people active in community and provincial associations and because of the work of advocates and local historians. I render them homage.



What a full first day – so far – in Halifax!

After visiting the Black Cultural Centre, the taximan dropped me off at **Alderney Landing**, where I could take the ferry from Dartmouth back to Halifax for dinner with friends. At the landing, there is a public library, art exhibits, and all kinds of small stores. Here is an interlude of pictures from my walk around the landing.



⁵ From chapter 5, “Blacks in the Maritimes in the Early 1980s,” in *Peoples of the Maritimes: Blacks*, by Bridglal Pachai, published in 1997 by Nimbus Publishing in Halifax (p. 63).



Community Weaving Project
 Please do not take your CD home!

- 1 Choose your first yarn. It will be the center of your weaving. Attach it on the non-shiny side of the CD by tying it to one of the spokes.
- 2 Knot the other end to the needle. Push the needle up through the center hole to the front (shiny) side.
- 3 Weave over under, over under, around the spokes, from the inside out.
- 4 You can keep using the same colour yarn, or tie in new yarn as you go along.
- 5 When you add a new yarn, leave the tail long enough to tuck in at the end.
- 6 When you get to the last round, end by tying the yarn to one of the spokes and tucking in the end.
- 7 Place your finished weaving in the basket so it can be part of our community mural!
- 8 If you want your weaving returned to your office display, please write your name and number on the back!

1

2

3



I took in a late lunch at **Wooden Monkey restaurant** with a view of Halifax Harbor, before taking the ferry at sunset. Wooden Monkey is run by two women, one who is a farmer and knows the farmers from which the restaurant buys – to offer **farm to table meals**. The other lives in the city and manages administrative matters and supervises staff. One of them started the restaurant in 2004 because of her realization after Hurricane Juan that Nova Scotia had only three days of food supply were value chains to be disrupted. That spurred her to want to **help grow the local food economy**.



The waitress at Wooden Monkey pointed out where cruise ships dock in the harbor (near the cranes in the photo) and tourists offload to visit the city. I visited just after the season of cruise ships.

On the way “home” to Garden South Park Inn, I noticed a lit-up tree in the middle of a park. I asked the taxi driver about the place. “It used to be called Cornwallis Park. **The Mi’kmaq protested about the statue of Cornwallis in the middle until it was removed.**”



I later learned that Edward Cornwallis, when he was Governor of Nova Scotia (1749 to 1752), put a bounty out on Indigenous people, and some people say that has contributed to the ongoing disappearances and murders of Indigenous women in Canada.

"It was part of the hidden history of Nova Scotia. The scalp proclamations, they weren't discussed openly until I came along in the late 1980s and brought them out on the table and said let's have a talk about these⁶," said Daniel Paul, a Mi’kmaq elder and author of *We Were Not the Savages: Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations*.



The statue was **removed** in January 2018, and the park has been renamed **Peace and Friendship Park**. Further, as part of reconciliation efforts,

treaty education is being integrated into school curricula in Nova Scotia, with the understanding that “we are all treaty people.”



The **Peace and Friendship Treaties**, signed in the 1700s between the British and representatives of Mi’kmaw and other nations, are about “peaceful coexistence and fostering long-term relationships⁷.”

I recommend this 1-minute video on **Treaty Education in Nova Scotia**: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JvtHpR7zqg&t=58s.

⁶ www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/cornwallis-statue-rally-goes-on-after-statue-removed-1.4519085

⁷ www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/treaty-day-nova-scotia-mikmaq-peace-and-friendship-treaties-1.5304137

The way in which I stumbled into learning about **treaty education** – sparked by an interest in a lit-up tree in a park – attests, for me, to the **importance of public spaces** as sites that need to be interrogated and negotiated so they become meaningful places of learning within a community and for newcomers and visitors. A spirit of openness and curiosity and wanting to know more about his/her/ourstory – beyond what was taught at school – and the predicaments and aspirations of others also helps, I think.



See this informative and uplifting video about **being treaty people** and a “blanket exercise” that explores the **impacts of 500 years of colonial history**: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8h5QhkZzrbY&t=409s (13 minutes). There is more to Mi'kmaw history than learning in school about living in wigwams.

Knowledge has been held in trust by the Mi'kmaw for centuries – for everyone. And: “Reconciliation is... a Canadian issue,” says Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.



- who are the Mi'kmag?
- why are treaties important?
- what happened to the treaty relationship?
- How can we reconcile our shared history?



A trip to **Africville** is how I began **Day 2 of two full days in Halifax**. I first heard about Africville when I read *The Book of Negroes* by Lawrence Hill. He recounts how people of African descent that had fought alongside and supported the British against the American revolutionaries were compensated with freedom from slavery and a ship ride to Halifax. Upon arrival, promises about receiving land were broken⁸. The “Black Loyalists” settled in many communities in Nova Scotia, including in what eventually came to be known as Africville, along Bedford Basin.



The City of Halifax collected taxes in Africville but did not provide services such as paved roads, running water, or sewers. In the 1950s, the city built an open-pit garbage dump on the western edge of Africville. In the 1960s, the government appropriated the land upon which

the Africville families lived, ordered the destruction of the community, and displaced all 400 inhabitants.

Residents of Africville were given a formal apology by the mayor of Halifax in February 2010.⁹

Today the beautiful hilly land is the site of Seaview Park and Africville Museum. Learn more through poets, storytellers, and musicians who put Africville into their works...



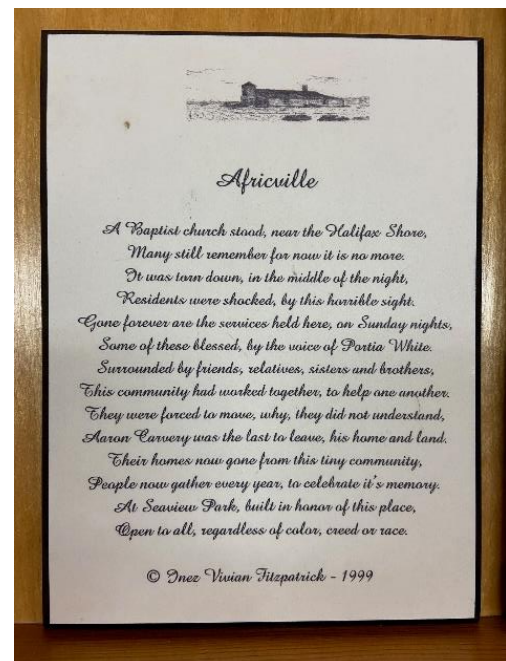
⁸ *Peoples of the Maritimes: Blacks*, by Bridglal Pachai, published in 1997 by Nimbus Publishing in Halifax (pp. 12-16).

⁹ [Africville | The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

Africville

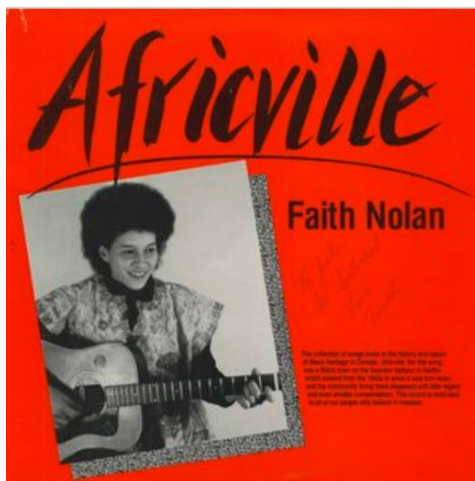
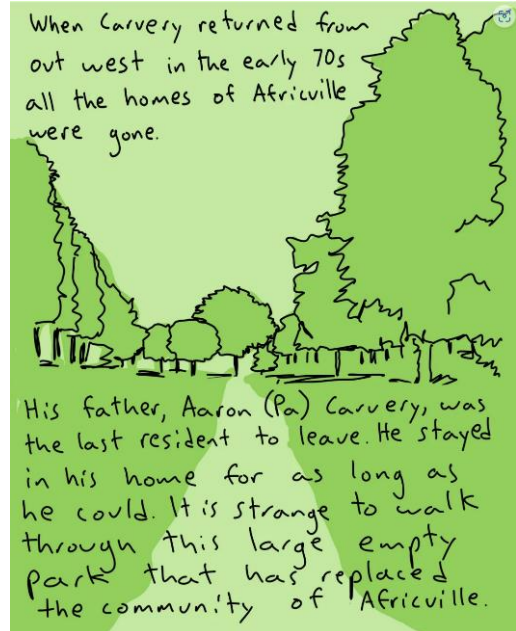
*A Baptist church stood, near the Halifax Shore,
Many still remember for now it is no more.
It was torn down, in the middle of the night,
Residents were shocked, by this horrible sight.
Gone forever are the services held here, on Sunday nights,
Some of these blessed, by the voice Portia White.
Surrounded by friends, relatives, sisters and brothers,
This community had worked together, to help one another.
They were forced to move, why, they did not understand,
Aaron Carvery was the last to leave, his home and land.
Their homes now gone from this tiny community,
People now gather every year, to celebrate its memory.
At Seaview Park, built in honor of this place,
Open to all, regardless of color, creed or race.*

Inez Vivian Fitzpatrick, 1999



“Before the Halifax community of Africville was demolished in the late 1960s and replaced with what is now a park, it was Nelson Carvery’s hometown,” writes artist Jon Claytor for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Learn more about Africville through Claytor’s rendering in drawings and words of the story of Nelson Carver.

www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/nelson-carvery-africville-halifax-1.6645615



The music of [Faith Nolan](#) is very moving. She lived in Africville and moved at a

young age with her family to Toronto. She is a Canadian social activist, folk and jazz singer-songwriter and guitarist of mixed African, Mi’kmaq, and Irish heritage. She is “one of the African-Canadian artists working to prevent the

erasure of the black presence in Canadian history.” Have a listen: <https://citizenfreak.com/titles/293905-nolan-faith-africville>



I could not visit the Africville Museum because it was being prepared for the annual Tree Lighting. I was invited to the November 27 event, but, alas, I was due to travel the morning of November 26 to return to Nairobi.

[2022 Africville Christmas Tree Lighting - YouTube](#)



Readers, thanks for traveling through time with me and through Halifax and Dartmouth in Nova Scotia. We've another stop before wrapping up this trip – to the **Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21**. Like so many places all over town, it was decked out for the holidays.

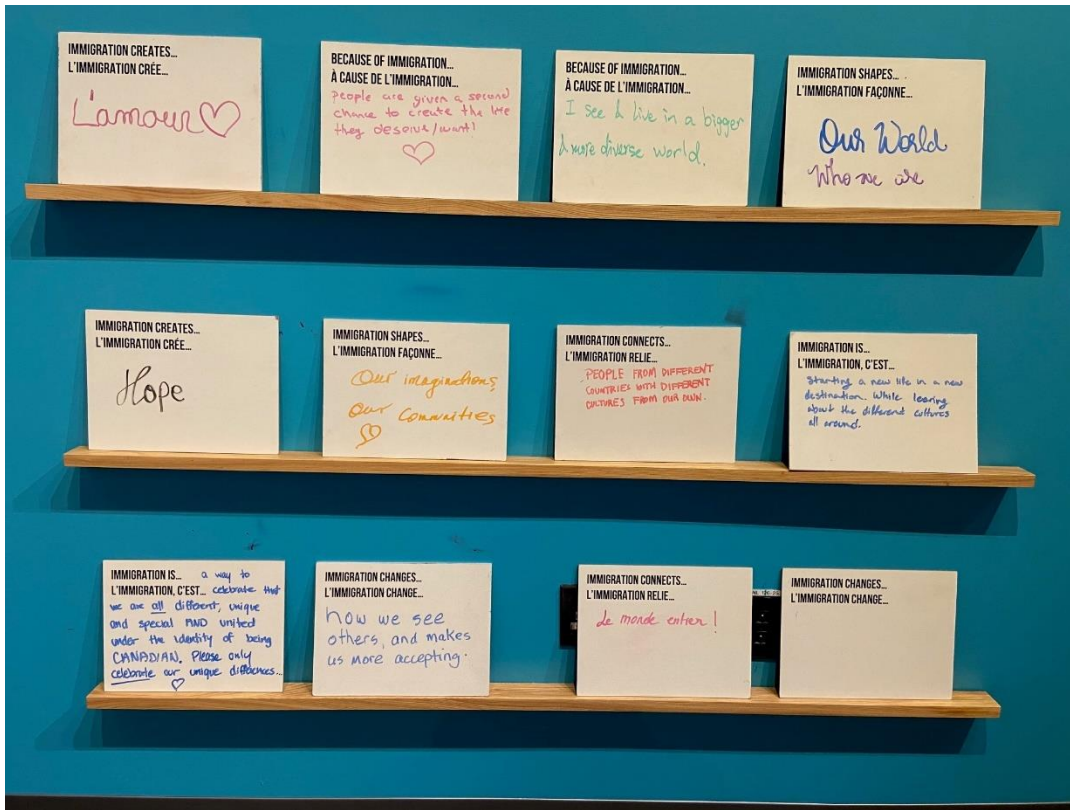


From the 1880s to the late 1920s, the main immigration buildings were located at Pier 2. Between 1928 and 1971, over a million people entered Canada through [Pier 21](#) – a “Gateway to Canada” – and many traveled by ship for the first time.



There could be up to 2,200 people on each arriving ship, with about six people – who likely spoke different languages – per cabin. Some people made lifelong friends on board the ships. The Pier 21 assembly hall could accommodate 10,000 people at a time. Some people continued by train from Halifax to Vancouver – perhaps seeing snow throughout the seven-day trip and wondering how they would survive.





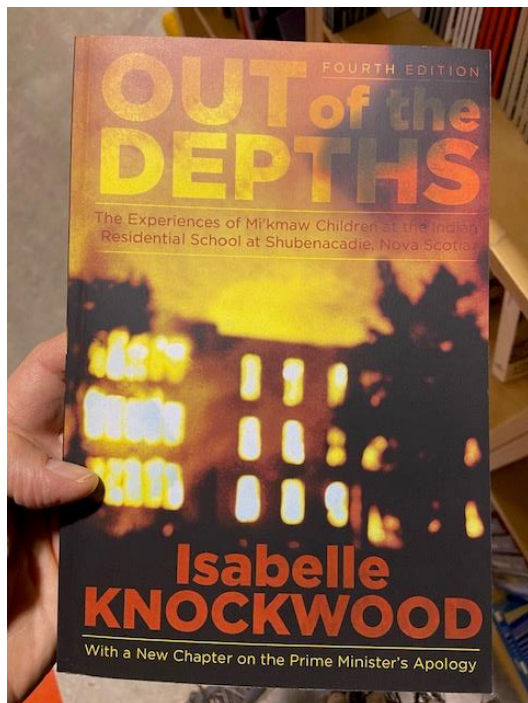
The experiences of children at **residential schools** came to the consciousness of the Canadian public, and September 30 was declared in 2021 as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which was one of the 94 [Calls for Action](#) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012-2015.

At the Museum of Immigration gift and book shop, I do not regret purchasing the book by Isabelle Knockwood about the experiences she and her classmates had at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. Her book was originally published in 1992. The Fourth Edition, published in 2015, includes a chapter on the Prime Minister's 2008 apology.



As difficult as the book was to read on the plane back to Nairobi, I was impressed with the courage of Knockwood – to go and find her 5-year-old self that was brought to the school and bring her “out of the depths.”

Isabelle Knockwood writes how her language was “pounded out” of her (p. 40). She and her classmates were forcibly disconnected from everything their parents and elders had taught them (p. 56). Nothing was taught about Native philosophy, and the children were cut from their spirituality and land (p. 57). Isabelle wondered why her language and culture was such a threat that the White Man would “pull it from your heart” (p. 85).



She argues that what saved her from the harshest of treatment was that her parents visited her and her siblings every weekend. Those with faraway parents were singled out for punishment (p. 38). Children were known to vanish. It seemed that sick children “evaporated” from the infirmary (p. 112).

Wednesday afternoons with the “Sewing Sisters,” however, were a break from oppressive classrooms. Clita and Rita “never yelled or scolded.” They “taught sewing in a calm and patient way.” (p. 72)

There were revolts and instances of running away from the school. “Perhaps **the most important form of resistance was inside our heads** even though it produced little outward sign at the time. Once when Wikew told us, ‘Don’t you dare move a muscle,’ I was wiggling my toes under the blankets thinking, ‘You ain’t by boss and I’ll wiggle all I want.’” (pp. 128-129)

“Nearly everyone had many difficulties when they left the school finding an identity and a place in the world... Even those of us who had parents who welcomed us home were suspended in limbo because we could no longer speak Mi’kmaw” (p. 160). One student recalled how “it took me a long while to find myself” (p. 101).

“The extent of the trauma and loss to me and to my family only became fully clear to me when I researched and wrote it in *Out of the Depths*” (p. 168). The federally funded **Aboriginal Healing Foundation**, established in 1996, was mandated to address the “legacy of abuse” resulting from the Indian residential school system.

Its healing programs provide a “safe place for survivors to break the code of silence” that had been imposed on them as children (p. 168). “By the time the federal government issued the formal statement of apology in 2008, we had already revived Indigenous traditional healing methods and techniques and practiced the very same spiritual beliefs once deemed inferior... Three years were to pass before the government amended the Canadian Human Rights so that it extended to people living on reserves.” (pp. 168-169)

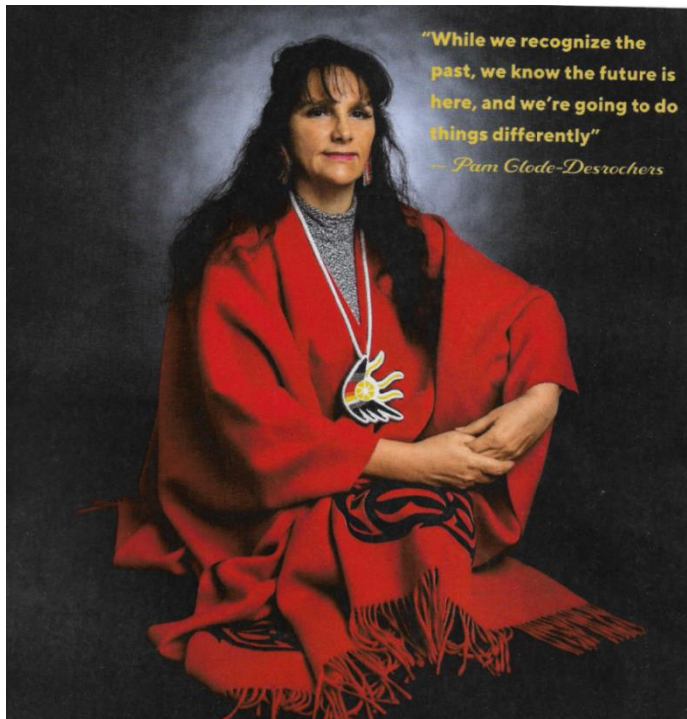
Signs of hope and of changing times?

The **Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre**, part of the national friendship centre movement in



Canada, saves lives and changes the “impact of colonization on our community,” according to the Centre’s Executive Director Pam Glode-Desrochers.

A new 70,000-square-foot centre will be possible because of the transfer of land from economic development into community use. Glode-Desrochers has seen “members of my staff shift and change and believe in and be proud of who they are when they’re given a little bit of language, culture, ceremony, and tradition... We may support over 5,000 people now, but I suspect there’s more than 20,000



working and living in Halifax... We... have people from all First Nations right across Canada. We have Metis from out West. We have also seen a huge influx of Inuit people... The need for the new friendship centre is not just for breaking down barriers and building relationships,” but also for “providing **safe space for my own community members to come in and see themselves**” (emphasis added).

Alex Paul, executive director of the Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office

says he would not likely have understood what it means to be Indigenous without a Native centre.

“It was where I got my first sense of belonging.”¹⁰

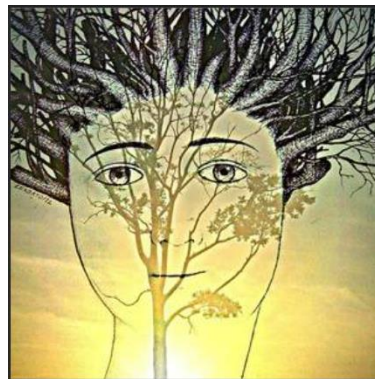
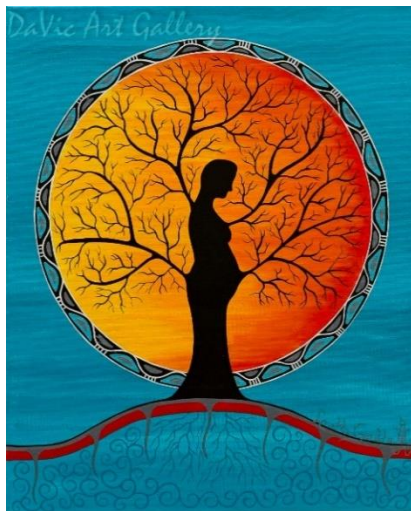
Where, dear readers, do you get your sense of belonging?

Well, that wraps up the stories and reflections about places I visited and people I met during solo travel to Halifax. Thanks for your interest.



People have asked me why I take time to write letters about my travels. I find that the personal touch of letters is a good way to connect and share with others. Also, I find the letter-writing process reflective. It allows me to introspect, read, do a little research online, and learn more about myself and the places and people I visited. I hope the sharing provides insight or inspiration in some small ways.

Love / Gesaltingewei¹¹,



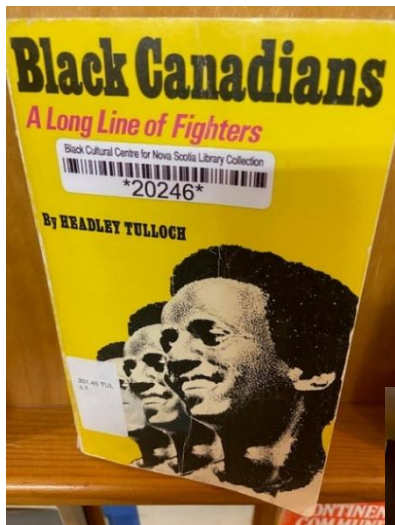
Kathryn Toure¹²

PS: My letter to you is shared and shareable from here: www.kathryntoure.net
As per usual, I take responsibility for any errors herein.

¹⁰ <https://unravelhalifax.ca/a-place-to-finally-call-home>

¹¹ See Mi'kmaq-English dictionary, <https://glosbe.com/mic/en/gesaltingewei>

¹² Works of art: “**Love for Life**” by Mi'kmaq artist Loretta Gould; “**Tree of Self Insight**,” digital art by Paulo Zerbato



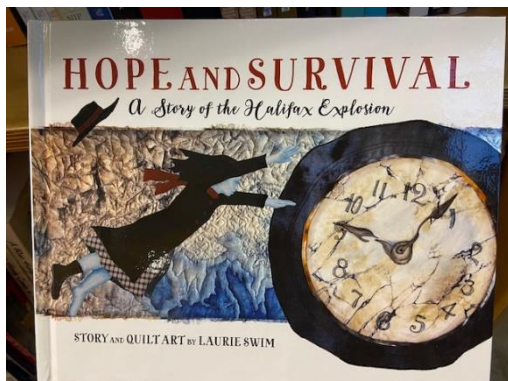
At Peace By Chocolate, started by Syrian refugees



Enjoyed hot handcrafted Bulwark cider on my last - rainy - evening in Halifax



Had the pleasure of meeting with friends for dinner one evening



View from my room at the Inn