

African Nova Scotian Inclusion Guidelines

This checklist is for service providers (government, non-profit, and corporate) who work with, for and support people of African descent living in Nova Scotia.

TERMINOLOGY

African Nova Scotian – the Nova Scotia government uses the term African Nova Scotian to reference all people of African descent living in Nova Scotia.

Indigenous African Nova Scotian – Indigenous African Nova Scotians are the descendants of free and enslaved Black Planters, Black Loyalist, Black Refugees, Jamaican Marrons, and other Black people who have inhabited the fifty-two historic Black communities of Nova Scotia. These are a group of distinct people whose families/ relatives have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years. Their culture is unique to other people of African descent because of this history.

Immigrant African Nova Scotian – people of African descent who have recently migrated from another place in the world. These are people who cannot trace their lineage or ethnic origin to historic Nova Scotian communities. They may also identify as African Canadian, Jamaican-Canadian, Caribbean, etc

GENERAL

1. Be intentional and open minded when dealing with individuals living with trauma
2. Be nonjudgmental
3. Be respectful
4. Apologize if you make a mistake

REPRESENTATION

Have employees who have similar lived experiences as them.

- a. People from Indigenous African Nova Scotian communities working with Indigenous African Nova Scotians
 - i. Sometimes there is a barrier between Indigenous ANS people and Immigrant ANS because of the different cultures they have been raised in. Although the complexion of their skin may be similar, Indigenous ANS members have a different world view due to centuries of racism, systemic racism, and colonization.
- b. Have ANS employees throughout all levels of the organization
 - i. Sometimes ANS people are only seen working in positions such as janitors/ cleaners, and servers.

Realize that all ANS people do not know each other.

- a. DO NOT assume that all ANS people, especially Indigenous ANS, know each other. There is a shared sense of community amongst Indigenous ANS community members, but that does not mean that every community member knows each other.
- b. DO NOT state "I have a Black Friend" or bring up stories about your experience with other Black people. -
 - i. this does not validate your ability to engage with ANS people.
 - ii. This is a microaggression because to ANS people it says "I've had an interaction with one person from your community, so you should trust me"
 - iii. ANS people do not feel more comfortable around you because you said you have a "Black friend". This actually sends a red flag because most of the time the comment is used to build an artificial bridge of trust. Trust takes time and simply having one positive interaction with a person of African descent does not automatically make you a trusted individual to the ANS community.

Have a warm and inviting space.

- a. Historically, clinical feeling spaces have not been welcoming of minority groups especially Indigenous ANS community members
- b. Ways of making your space inviting would be:
 - i. Colorful atmosphere
 - ii. Local artwork that reflects the culture

CULTURE

People who know the culture, understand and can respond appropriately when in uncomfortable situations

- a. Due to the history of colonization and intergenerational trauma a lot of times people from the ANS community feel they must constantly be on guard when interacting with people from other races. By knowing this history, being patient and asking questions will help to make people feel less uncomfortable.

Ask questions to better understand – admit when you do not know or don't understand something

- a. Go into the community to build relationships and to become a trusted ally.
 - i. Don't show up only in times of need.
 - ii. Don't reach out only during Black History Month.
 - iii. Don't show up with the mentality that you are going to "fix" or "save" people.

Realize that all ANS people are not the same and the communities they come from are all unique.

- a. Be accepting of people's clothing and the way they speak.

Due to ANS History the presence of service providers can create uneasy feelings.

- a. Specifically, Law Enforcement – Police and Judicial System- have a strained relationship within ANS communities
- b. Medical Services – Doctors, nurses, etc have not always been welcoming. People of African descent are often misdiagnosed because medical literature does not show how medical conditions impact people of African descent differently than people of European Descent

Do your homework, it's not the responsibility of ANS people to educate you on history, culture, and beliefs.

- a. Understand the difference in beliefs and tone and be accepting of it
 - i. ANS people are the experts for their own experiences

Be educated on intergenerational trauma and be trauma informed

Do Not use racial slurs, and be cautious of biases and micro aggressions

- a. Not allowing other participants to act unfairly to ANS participants
- b. If you see injustice "Speak Up".

PERSONAL

Allow a support person to be present

- a. In some cases, people of African descent have barriers to accessing services (Ex: thick accents, lack of transportation, low literacy levels, etc). It helps to be able to bring someone who they trust with them, so they communicate and get the right services they are looking for.
- b. Sometimes a support person can help to create a comfortable atmosphere.

Be conscious of personal space

- a. DO NOT touch people's hair
- b. DO NOT comment on their hair (especially if it was short one day and long another), stating that their hair looks nice is accepted. (Quit while you're ahead)
- c. DO NOT hug without being given permission. While it is a part of ANS culture to greet people they know with a hug it is not always welcomed.

Be helpful and respectful to elderly folks

- a. Pay attention to them
- b. Make sure they have somewhere to sit while waiting for services
- c. Let them speak without being cut off

Have resources close by for all ANS people (Indigenous and Immigrant) to share with them because sometimes they come from different cultures and/or are not aware of services available to them