

**YOUTH  
PROJECT!**

# **STORIES OF OUR BLACK EXPERIENCES**



*AMPLIFYING 2SQTBIPOC VOICES*


From The Youth Project  
@nsyouthproject  
nsyouthproject@gmail.com

Edited by Teo Ferguson:  
Creative Programming Facilitator

Illustrated by Tobias Hayes:  
Resource Development and Graphic  
Outreach



# TABLE *of* CONTENTS



4	Intro
6	Jade Byard Peek
9	Ethan Adams
12	Aaliyah Paris
15	Joe Smith
18	Michael Davies Cole
22	Closing

TEO



# INTRO

Living in Kjiptuk/Nova  
Scotia as a Black queer  
person is a unique  
experience and one we get to  
cherish, cultivate, and feel  
a sense of ownership for.  
We have been the needle  
holding the thread of  
society for years creating  
culture and art while  
shedding our tears.

There is beauty in pain and  
though we are not all made  
the same we do have our  
stories and our truths at  
the end of the day. In some  
ways we still get held back  
or told our truth doesn't  
need to be on blast, but  
these are our stories, our  
lives, our tales. No one can  
tell it as best as we can.

JADΞ



BYARD  
PEEK

I am proud to be an African  
Nova Scotian (ANS) and L'nu  
woman, especially since  
leaving my homeland to  
experience life in Ontario. I  
came out starting in 2011 and  
eventually, after some  
pushing, a majority of my ANS  
family and community  
supported my transition.

We as a people can be  
stubborn, like real stubborn,  
we all have that auntie; but  
we have an innate ability to  
thrive, revolt, change, grow  
and embrace, and that comes  
from the fact that we been  
maintaining and growing a  
culture here for 400 years  
here in Mi'kma'ki.

We are more than Black, we are family. Our unique history among the landmarks and historic bricks built by our ancestors, our sweat and tears that nourished the soil.

We know our history, we don't have to search far to know where we come from, so we should always take the time to figure out who we are. Discover yourself, I am glad I did.

ETHAN



ADDAMS

Being Black and in Nova Scotia has taught me a lot about accountability and taking up space without apology. The nuance of this area being low in the Black population, I feel contributes to a lot of events I personally encounter in my life as a queer Black performer millennial. Sure- I get followed in stores and sure, I get asked to take off my hat in the NSLC while other white seeming people aren't policed at all.

My hurt by racism hits the hardest in queer spaces where even the woke people ask me to be their council and even will show-off their woke experience as if I give out gold stars for anti-racist behavior. And still, there is a lack of representation in spaces and a lack of general appreciation for spaces tailor-fit to Black individuals. I find more people need to unpack even their woke side to make sure it isn't taxing on their Black peers.



I'd also like to see more appreciation and a show of support for spaces created by Black people for Black people and not just share their support in a post online. Bring it to the respective spaces at home.

I don't need anyone making shows to debate whether or not putting Black members in shows and such is best to do just because they are Black or because they're talented.

[ I have been asked this, and there's aren't talentless Black performers that I know of.] I need more of an out-poor of support by other communities and our own when individuals hold spaces showcasing the unabashed brilliance of Nova Scotian Black artists.

AALIYAH



PARIS

My name is Aaliyah Paris and  
I am a Congolese-Canadian  
nonbinary Queer femme. That's  
a mouthful isn't it? I  
represent both the African  
community, and the Afro-Nova  
Scotian communities.

I fully embrace my identity  
and love myself. I would be  
lying if I said Multiple  
Minority Stress, was  
something I don't struggle  
with.

I work as Both a Sexuality Educator and Anti-Racist Educator, I am one of the very few BLACK Sexuality Educators in this province. To be Black, Queer, and myself in Kijipuktuk is to struggle, with harassment, slanderous articles, and dealing with people who came with the intentions of misunderstanding who I am, and what my work is about.

My Blackness and my Queerness exist together, my Blackness and Queerness are what has aided me in finding a second family in this community. While there are lots of struggles, the benefits have far outweighed them, I get to do what I love while being surrounded by amazing 2SQTBIPOC individuals who hear me, see me, and who come with the intentions of standing by me.



My Experience growing up as a Queer, Black, Non binary Person makes me feel a lot of joy, and pain. Although I battled with navigating to find where my "people" were; I never left any part of me behind.

Having false illusions of having to choose between being Black or Queer, but knowing I would always be Black first to folks, literally everyone. I channeled my energy into what looked familiar, and what looked similar to me. I studied the dance form of vogue, with my access point being youtube.

Voguing is essential to ballroom culture, these balls were founded by Black/Latinx folks in NYC in the 80's. There wasn't a ballroom scene in Halifax, so I expressed myself in drag. Halifax provided the stepping stones to the meaning of community.

It was not easy while also carrying the weight of my mental health, what continues to keep me going is the strength of my ancestors, Manny Dingo and the love from my family, both chosen and biological.





What does it mean to be Queer and Black and Indigenous in Nova Scotia to me. It means that a lot of your experiences are centred in Blackness and Indigeneity that revolves around whiteness, and not self-dependent on any one particular thing that you do. It means that most of your accomplishments will be overshadowed by the colour of your skin, and not through anything you have done. It means that you will hear queer history recited without the Black voice in it.

It means an eraser to any early queer Black and Indigenous identity, one that was very large and strong within Nova Scotia but that has been replaced by whiteness. It means you will have to look to your community to hear those stories and in these communities be met with a different form of silence, because historically our lives had become silenced within Black and Indigenous communities. It means that you will sit on a stage with others from the queer community and hear them recite your accomplishments in their own name.

It means that even when the white community talks about the inclusion of Black and Indigenous within their ranks they cite names from away, lacking in the understanding of how strong these communities were and are here in Nova Scotia. It means that at some point you will give up repeating over and over to people that you were part of queer history in this province and had been written out.

Because it means that the very reason that you were written out, that colour of your skin, the identity of your culture, is the shield that gives you strength. It means that you have been given the historical tools from your ancestors to stand up and know what you did yourself and that means everything.



From the tales we keep  
and the lives we lead,  
We are the backbone to society.  
We shoulder our weight  
and still find a smile each day,  
Though times can be hard  
and leave us drained  
We QTBIPOC people survive  
with each breath  
we get to take and  
No one can take  
our stories away...

Or the power that flows  
from being born this way  
We are much more  
than the eye can see  
We are a future only  
our minds can dream  
But we are still human...  
Worthy of of respect  
and nothing less,  
No more hangings,  
harassment or shootings.  
Please understand  
what it is that you are doing,  
Whether black, trans or queer  
We are at the end of the day,  
just human, and more then  
one month can prove it.

- Teo Ferguson

From The Youth Project  
@nsyouthproject  
nsyouthproject@gmail.com

Edited by Teo Ferguson:  
Creative Programming Facilitator

Illustrated by Tobias Hayes:  
Resource Development and Graphic  
Outreach

**YOUTH  
PROJECT!**