

The Intricacies of Integration:
The Case of Graham Creighton High School

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A Thesis Submitted to Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Atlantic Canada Studies

July 2017, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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21 July 2017

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ABSTRACT

In 1964, when Graham Creighton High School in Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia opened its doors for integration, many of its feeder communities were relatively rural and isolated. Racial tension emerged, creating a legacy of conflict. Graham Creighton was the predecessor to Cole Harbour District High School, which has received considerable attention in the media regarding racial tensions. While racism was undoubtedly a contributing factor to tensions between the communities, it must be considered that integration at Graham Creighton was not simply an integration of two races; rather, it was an integration of several very distinct and relatively rural communities. This thesis examines institutional racism, while adding layers of analysis such as class, socio-economics, and geographic considerations, to demonstrate the complexity of the situation. In consulting a range of primary source material and oral accounts, this thesis places Graham Creighton High School within the broader context of desegregation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the process of conducting my research I have become indebted to those who have assisted me. Although I cannot name my interviewees by name, I would like to sincerely thank all of those who took the time to give me their reflections on Graham Creighton High School. Your experiences are invaluable and I am privileged to have had the chance to record them. I would like to thank the staff at both the Saint Mary's University Patrick Power Library and Halifax Municipal Archives for their assistance in gathering my materials.

Thank-you to my parents, Rosemarie Hudak and Wayne Slaunwhite (both Graham Creighton alumni) for not only helping me to percolate my ideas, but for their ongoing support. A special thank-you to Magen Hudak and Sandrico Provo for stimulating intellectual conversation as I unraveled the story of Graham Creighton. I also extend appreciation to the extensive list of friends and family who have supported me throughout this journey.

I would like to extend thanks to Dr. Hugh Millward for his expert advice and for the permission to include his excellent maps. Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Peter Twohig, for his ongoing support of me and my project.

Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, July 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction – Integrating the Historical Consciousness	1-6
Chapter I – Evaluating Black Education in Nova Scotia: An Historiographical Review of the Black Nova Scotian Educational Experience at Graham Creighton High School	7-29
Chapter II – Considering Creighton’s Context: The Historical Narrative	30-55
Chapter III – The Institution and Integration: Municipal Management	56-90
Chapter IV – Reflections on Racism: The Oral Account	91-115
Conclusion – A Legacy of Conflict	116-123
Bibliography	124-127
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Humans	128
Appendix A – Oral History	129-131
Appendix B – Images	132-136

TABLE OF IMAGES

Figure 1: Photograph, Graham Creighton High School, yearbook photo, 1967.	132
Figure 2: Map, Development of the all-weather road network, 1920 to 1988, showing locations of original village nuclei (1920) and extent of built-up area in 1988.	133
Figure 3: Map, 1917-20 building count, by square-kilometre quadrats	134
Figure 4: Map, 1960-7 building count, by square-kilometre quadrats	135
Figure 5: Map, 1988 building count, by square-kilometre quadrats	136

INTRODUCTION

Integrating the Historical Consciousness

When I set out to begin my Master's thesis in 2015, I quite frankly had no idea the amount of times I would be asked the following question: "Why would you— a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white woman of Germanic and Slavic background—want to study integration of Nova Scotian Blacks?" Indeed, I am all those things, so when I started to write the introduction to this thesis, I figured I might as well address it from the beginning. My reasons for researching and writing this history are abundant. I was born and raised in Cow Bay, Nova Scotia. I attended Cole Harbour District High School, where I received my International Baccalaureate Diploma in 2009. My parents, as well as numerous aunts and uncles, attended Graham Creighton High School, Cole Harbour's predecessor. Graham Creighton High School originally integrated the black communities of Cherry Brook, North Preston and East Preston with the white communities of Eastern Passage, Cole Harbour and Lawrencetown, and Cole Harbour High consisted of a similar make up. I began to draw parallels between my experience and those stories I had heard growing up of integration. It was unfathomable to me that, nearly fifty years later, many of the same prejudices that occurred at Graham Creighton were still playing out at Cole Harbour. My burning question at the time was: Why does racism continue to permeate the lives and educations of those who attend Cole Harbour District High School, regardless of their respective races? To answer that, I needed to go back to the beginning.

Historical prejudice towards blacks in Nova Scotia dates to their very arrival. Their migration to Canada was often in the wake of a war, and blacks arrived in

impoverished conditions. Colonial practices pushed blacks to the outskirts of society where they existed in relative isolation from the predominant white community. Fast-forward to twentieth century: The Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the United States and blacks everywhere were fighting for agency. Integration in the American context took place following the landmark *Brown v. Board* case in 1954. Heightened political awareness began to crumble the existing barriers that kept blacks in the margins. Similar movements began in Canada, although they have not been as well-documented as their American counterparts.

This thesis will consider the existing black history in the province and examine an entirely new area of interest. In using Graham Creighton High School as a case study, I examine the dynamics of race and education in Nova Scotia in the 1960s and 1970s. I apply critical race theory to my framework to present a multi-faceted analysis on the idea of race and race relations in Nova Scotia. In using Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's definition of critical race theory from their definitive work on the topic, I endeavour to pick apart the systemic nature of racism in Nova Scotia. As Delgado and Stefancic state:

The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.¹

¹ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 2-3

Critical race theory questions the state and origins of racial thinking and its relationship to power. In the case of Graham Creighton High School, it is imperative to think critically in terms of the origins of racial thinking. With roots in history, economics, and even the public consciousness, Nova Scotia's racism is a blend of collected and inherited attitudes and ideas. Critical race theory aims to combat racism at its very core and from all angles as opposed to following a linear, step-by-step process. It is here that I hope to contribute to race relations and understanding in the province. With my critical consideration of Graham Creighton High School, I hope to highlight historical injustices and inherited prejudices and inspire a conversation. After all, critical race theory aims to inspire change. I draw on Delgado and Stefancic's activism statement to highlight my sentiments on academic activism:

Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but how to transform it for the better.²

I wrote the following thesis to start a dialogue, to spark an interest, and to inspire change. While some consider social change lofty, I do not. I recall a Margaret Mead quote on a Habitat for Humanity t-shirt I received as part of my Global Village experience in Honduras. It read: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I am a firm believer that every effort towards a more just and equal society is important. As an academic, I hold

² Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 3

this value highly: if we are not writing with a purpose, with a critical observation on a meaningful topic, then why are we writing at all?

Historians have begun to critically explore topics in Black Nova Scotian history. For example, the Africville relocation has received considerable attention from scholars. The relocation occurred concurrently to integration at Graham Creighton High School and sheds light on race relations at the time. Tina Loo examines the relationship of race and power in her article “Africville and the Dynamics of Power in Postwar Canada.” She argues that while racism was a contributing factor to the difficulties experienced by blacks, the reality of the situation was much more complex. As Loo writes:

Racism might have been the reason Africvillers were disadvantaged and immobilized both socially and spatially, but the solutions liberals offered were aimed at meeting Africvillers’ needs – for education, employment, adequate housing, and access to capital – rather than eliminating racial prejudice directly. The first step towards doing so was to move Africvillers out of their ghetto and physically integrate them into the city. As Africvillers discovered, however, integration was not belonging. In laying bare the gulf between the two, Africville shows us both the possibilities and the limits of the liberal welfare state to create the good life.³

Politics and power in the liberal welfare state played into the relocation and extended beyond the Africville community. The liberal welfare state attempted to create ‘the good life’ by integrating communities in Africville and beyond. The logic was that integration would level the playing field, allowing blacks access to white education. In considering integration at Graham Creighton critically, it is important to recognize the broader context. The history of integration at Graham Creighton is not simply a history of integration of black and white communities, nor is it accessible from one viewpoint;

³ Tina Loo, “Africville and the Dynamics of Power in Postwar Canada,” *Acadiensis* XXXIX, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010), 27.

rather, it is a history of complex power relationships, and can only be considered from multiple angles. This includes consideration from historical, political, economic, geographical, anthropological and sociological perspectives. I am not asking the question: “Was integration at Graham Creighton High School a racialized experience?” There is no doubt that it was. My thesis by no means attempts to undermine the racial aspect to inter-community relationships. Rather, I am critically evaluating the successes and shortcomings of the integration process. In doing so, I hope to shed light on both the shorter history of Graham Creighton and the longer history of race relations in the communities in question.

The case study of Graham Creighton brings much-needed attention to the broader consideration of black literature in Nova Scotia. The historiography of blacks in the region is incomplete at best, as will be examined in Chapter I. Major topics considered to date have mainly been limited to Black Loyalists, Jamaican Maroons, Black Refugees, and Africville. Other topics have received little to no attention and the quality of the information provided is sometimes questionable. Harvey Amani Whitfield argues that black history in the Maritimes needs to move beyond the usual topics. He writes:

Do we really need more studies about Black Loyalists, Jamaican Maroons, Black Refugees, or Africville? Or is it time for historians to till new ground by focusing on difficult parts of the region such as New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and also different time periods where we do not know enough—such as the contours of race relations in the decades before the confrontation and successes of the 1960 Civil Rights Movement.⁴

⁴ Harvey Amani Whitfield, “Reviewing Blackness in Atlantic Canada and the African Atlantic Canadian Diaspora,” *Acadiensis* XXXVII, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2008).

The study of integration at Graham Creighton breathes fresh life into a rather stagnant narrative. It highlights some of the successes of the Civil Rights Movement and considers communities that have not received much attention academically. I truly want to till new academic ground and in turn, I hope to inspire some more dialogue around other topics in black history in the region.

The thesis is divided into this introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter I explores historiographical trends in Black Nova Scotian history from an educational perspective. Chapter II provides a narrative history of Graham Creighton. Chapter III delves into the records of the Halifax Municipal School Board and the Halifax Regional County Council that concern Graham Creighton High School. Chapter IV examines oral history accounts of former students and teachers at Graham Creighton and draws parallels and divergences between the two accounts. Finally, the conclusion considers the aftermath of Graham Creighton High School in bringing the situation up to the present day. It is my hope that I can contribute, at least in part, to the larger history of race relations in Nova Scotia. The history of Graham Creighton High School is part of the history of black communities but also of the Eastern Shore region and of the Province of Nova Scotia. When we consider racial history as a part of, not separate from, the overarching historical narrative, we truly begin to integrate the historical consciousness.

CHAPTER I

Evaluating Black Education in Nova Scotia: An Historiographical Review of the Black Nova Scotian Educational Experience at Graham Creighton High School

In the case of Nova Scotians Blacks, it is especially important to examine the historiography as there has been very little scholarly work published and the existing material tends to regurgitate much of the same information. Most works concerning Nova Scotian Blacks fall into one of two categories: they are either short, specific, and to-the-point articles; or they are larger, generalized, and more broad-sweeping texts. The incomplete nature of the existing literature becomes especially apparent when examining specific facets of the black experience, such as education. In using integration at Graham Creighton High School as a lens through which to examine the literature surrounding black education, this historiography will tie together the threads that connect the existing literature and examine the divergences in analysis when possible.

The first comprehensive study Nova Scotia Blacks was published in 1948. Compiled by archivists C.B. Fergusson and D.C. Harvey, *A Documentary Study of The Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia Between the War of 1812 and the Winning of Responsible Government* provides a preliminary examination of the black population in the province. As the authors declare:

Nova Scotia has an honoured place on the scroll recording mankind's advancement in human relations. She has been in the vanguard of those who have successfully striven to abolish political and religious disabilities and... might proudly claim the privilege the soil of this province in itself confers freedom, even on those who had been Negro slaves.¹

This celebratory comment commends Nova Scotia in human relations and implies a very imperialistic viewpoint. Nova Scotia represented freedom for the black population, namely the refugees from the War of 1812. The attitude that Nova Scotia was a free and forgiving place, or the promised land, was certainly reflective of the time. Fergusson and Harvey's work was an important contribution at the time of its publication but presents the prevailing attitudes of the day.

The tone of Nova Scotia's dealings with human rights changed by the time the civil rights movements stirred in the United States. The quality of life for Nova Scotia Blacks became exposed as civil rights became a part of the public consciousness. A series of publications by the Institute of Public Affairs Dalhousie University show a shift in thinking. As a 1962 report states: "The Negroes of Halifax City are under-employed, under-educated, and ill-housed; that their employment and housing opportunities are restricted, and that they have been living under a form of segregation."² Attitudes towards human rights were replaced with a more paternalistic view. The problems of the black community became evident to the prevailing white society and attracted some scholarly attention. A 1961 study by Gwendolyn V. Shand on adult education in the black

¹ C.B. Fergusson and D.C. Harvey, *A Documentary Study of The Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia Between the War of 1812 and the Winning of Responsible Government* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1948), I.

² Guy Henson, *The Condition of Negroes of Halifax City, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs Dalhousie University, 1962), ii.

community, also conducted through the Institute of Public Affairs, is a perfect example of growing public interest. As Shand writes:

In more recent years, probably because changing economic conditions have given rise to new and different problems, the status and condition of the Negro in Nova Scotia has established a new claim on the public interest, and concern has been shown. This is reinforced by the fact that as a result of improved roads and communications the Negro communities are no longer remote. Their problems have been exposed, and even more important, are recognized as problems of the whole community.³

Shand argues that the problems of the black community were now becoming part of the whole community and served as a precursor to events at Africville. The interests of the previously isolated communities became of public concern when those issues became apparent.

As the black community attracted more attention, the first comprehensive work on blacks in Canada was published in 1971. Robin Winks' *The Blacks in Canada: A History* traces the history of blacks from the era of slavery in New France until 1970 and offers one of the first comprehensive publications on blacks in Canada. Of interest to the exploration of Graham Creighton High School, Winks dedicates a chapter to schools, entitled: "Source of Strength?—The Schools."⁴ The analysis of this 1971 publication is especially informative as it is concurrent with Graham Creighton and engages with the popular "separate but equal" discourse of the period. Winks argues that blacks in Canada accepted the "separate but equal" concept well into the 1950s, long after their American counterparts, especially those in the North, had 'discarded the idea that a man who is kept

³ Gwendolyn V. Shand, *Adult Education Among the Negroes of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs Dalhousie University, 1961), 3.

⁴ Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), 362.

separate can consider himself equal in dignity and therefore in opportunity to those who keep him separate.’⁵ In this regard, Winks considers Canadian Blacks a generation behind Americans. According to Winks, the monumental *Brown v. Board* sparked awareness among Canadian Blacks. He writes: “Not until after the Supreme Court of the United States moved against separate education... did either whites or Negroes in Canada appear to be aware of the far-reaching role played by the school in the more generalized problems of race relations.”⁶ Segregation was ingrained into Canadian society and separate school legislation based on religion was commonplace; provisions for separate schools based on race were therefore yet another form of pre-existing separation.⁷ While Winks’ analysis flirts with the idea of complacency within black society, something this thesis will counter, his work is canonical in the exploration of black history in Canada and therefore a crucial inclusion.

The civil rights discourse of the 1960s and 1970s inspired a varied range of publications on blacks in Canada. Donald H. Clairmont, a sociologist at Dalhousie University, and his co-author Denis Magill of the University of Toronto produced studies on Nova Scotian Blacks, including *Nova Scotian Blacks: An Historical and Structural Overview*, as well as a report (and supplement) on the then-contemporary issue of the Africville relocation (*Africville Relocation Report*). In the foreword to *Nova Scotian Blacks*, they acknowledge the lack of publications and analysis concerning Black Nova

⁵ Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 362.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 362.

Scotian history, a problem that continues to the present day. The authors rectify this lack of scholarship, offering a socio-economic analysis of Nova Scotian Blacks. As they write:

[I]t is appropriate in this brief to give particular attention to the Blacks, for throughout their settlement in Nova Scotia they have had to carry a special burden, the burden of the White man's prejudice, discrimination, and oppression: indeed, their poverty is rooted in the structural and historical conditions of Nova Scotian society. Structural conditions existed in Nova Scotia which forced Blacks, from their first settlement, to the bottom level of the social hierarchy.⁸

The authors attribute the struggles of the black community to prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. Socio-economic circumstances 'beyond the immediate control of the poor'⁹ contribute to poverty in among blacks. The authors link these ideas of poverty to education, arguing that blacks were at a disadvantage educationally, although 'there was not a qualitative difference between Blacks and poor-White communities.'¹⁰ The authors bring attention to the concept of *de facto* segregation, prevalent in the case of black communities. Segregation occurred because of pre-existing geographic separation, encouraged by factors of prejudice and discrimination.¹¹

Clairmont's co-publications with Magill on Africville in 1971 and 1973 are also worth noting, given their concurrence with the opening of Graham Creighton. The *Africville Relocation Report* and its supplement were completed for the Institute of Public Affairs at Dalhousie University. The work examines the effects of the relocation process as well as the symbolic importance of Africville within the broader community. The

⁸ Donald H. Clairmont and Denis W. Magill, *Nova Scotia Blacks: An Historical and Structural Overview* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1970), 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

authors use post-relocation interviews to truly highlight the impact of the entire process.

The authors cite a young leader from North Preston:

[The Africville relocation has had an effect] not only on North Preston, but also in other Black communities. They figured that if Africville was gone, people also wondered which community was going next— all the people in North Preston were afraid they would be next. I am quite sure these people would want to stand up and fight for their homes.¹²

This work brings a sociological analysis to the black mindset in the period of the Africville relocation. The relocation was a critical moment of the black experience in the 1960s, and its impact was long-lasting.

Clairmont and Magill wrote another co-publication in 1974 on the Africville experience. Four years after writing the relocation report and supplement, the authors revisit the topic and state that the relocation was part of the ‘rhetoric of liberalism.’¹³ They state that the relocation was ‘presumably to represent a step forward in improving relations.’¹⁴ However, the authors argue that the liberal-welfare model did not work in the case of Africville. As they write:

The Africville Relocation, in intention, rhetoric, and administrative arrangement, clearly is an example of the liberal-welfare model. The relocation’s lack of success in effecting significant and positive social change among Africville residents needs to be examined for the insight it can yield into problems in welfarism and the liberal-welfare approach to social change.¹⁵

The authors are critical of the intentions and results of the Africville relocation. Africville has received significant attention from scholars in juxtaposition with other topics in Black

¹² Donald H. J. Clairmont and Dennis W. McGill, *Africville Relocation Report* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1971), 367.

¹³ Donald H.J. Clairmont and Dennis W. McGill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), 240.

¹⁴ Clairmont and Magill, *Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community*. 240.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

Nova Scotian history. Clairmont and Magill are at the basis of this exploration, but Africville has generated the most dialogue, from history to the social sciences.

The 1970s continued with a social science approach to Black Nova Scotians. Anthropologist Frances Henry published *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* in 1973 with the aim ‘to describe and analyze the attitudes and values of Black Nova Scotians.’¹⁶ Since the work was published in 1973, it offers academic perspective of the black population around the time of integration at Graham Creighton. Henry argues that the cycle of poverty contributes to the plight of Black Nova Scotians in this period. She writes:

The marginality of the Black Settlers in terms of their lack of access to environmental resources is demonstrated today by their lack of education, their low level of occupational skills, their poverty and their dependence on welfare and government related subsidies, plus the racism to which they have been subjected.¹⁷

The focus on socioeconomic conditions carries through the historiography of Black Nova Scotians. The circumstances of poverty continue to repeat based on environmental and geographic limitations, combined with racist attitudes of the prevailing white communities.

While sociologists and anthropologists examined the impacts of economic disparity in the black community, Selina Lani Pratt’s 1972 thesis, entitled *Black Education in Nova Scotia*, was the first work to bring attention specifically to education. In her thesis, Pratt addresses the main concerns with black education in the province at

¹⁶ Frances Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* (Don Mills: Longman Canada, 1973), 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

the time of Graham Creighton. She examines the effects of legislation and curriculum and investigates the nature of settlement patterns and their relationship to educational development in black education.¹⁸ Pratt includes interviews from informants of the black community, concluding that ‘Black people were caught in the circle of economic deprivation—educational deprivation—and back to economic deprivation.’¹⁹ The literature of the 1970s is characterized by themes of economic dependency amongst blacks.

The next wave of black history analysis began with James W. St. G. Walker’s 1976 publication: *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* which highlights the Black Loyalist experience in Nova Scotia. Walker reiterates the idea of dependency among the Black Loyalists and discerns that discrimination began upon their arrival. As he argues: “That same ‘slave mentality’ was perpetuated and reinforced by their experiences in Nova Scotia. They continued to feel dependent on whites, in the economic sphere, neither encouraged nor capable to strike out on their own.”²⁰ The slave mentality that Walker references remains at the heart of most historiographies: the historic reinforcement of prejudice allowed attitudes to be carried forward into present day perceptions.

Walker’s 1980 publication *A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide for Teachers and Students* offers an overview of black history. Designed as a tool for educators and students, the work covers major themes in Black Canadian history. In

¹⁸ Selina Lani Pratt, *Black Education in Nova Scotia* (1972), abstract.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁰ James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (Halifax: Dalhousie University Press, 1976), 57.

terms of education specifically, Walker argues that white prejudice was sustained from the arrival of blacks in Canada. Walker demonstrates that white prejudice contributed to the continual cycle of black discrimination in the province. As he writes:

Their isolation, bolstered by white prejudice and neglect, meant that most blacks received a poor education for the only schools available to them were segregated, with poor teachers, poor equipment, and no senior grades. Their poor education and their physical isolation meant limited employment opportunities: low-paying jobs at the bottom of the prestige scale.²¹

The separate schools provided to blacks echoed the story of discrimination; blacks received substandard education and therefore limited job opportunities were available to them. The idea of isolation, both geographic and societally, as a contributing factor to the ongoing problems within the community is a theme that is reverberated in historiography and impacts the current black experience. Intolerance experienced by blacks was only exasperated by white prejudice. As Walker writes:

Their poverty and their menial jobs served to create an image of blacks as ambitionless, lazy, and suited only for the simplest and dirtiest jobs. This image supported white prejudice, for the typical white observer, if he ever saw blacks at all, saw them only in their employment situation. White prejudice, obviously, enforced black isolation and entrenched the lack of opportunity open to blacks. With feelings like these in the white community, blacks clung even more closely to their own communities. And so on it went.²²

The key factors of geographic isolation and continuing racism are prominent within the historiography of Black Nova Scotians. It is also important to note that Walker played a huge role in shaping how black history was approached by Canadian educators.

Combining Walker's 1980 study guide with his 1986 article in *Teaching Maritime*

²¹ James W. St. G. Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide for Teachers and Students* (Hull: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1980), 44.

²² Ibid.

Studies, it becomes clear that Walker had a major influence in how black history is approached in the classroom. The article, entitled: “Black History in the Maritimes: Major Themes and Teaching Strategies”, highlights many of the same points of his study guide. He walks the reader through the major waves of black immigration in the Maritimes, including the Black Loyalists, the Black Refugees, and the Maroons. These groups receive significant attention from scholars and are often at the basis of most courses on the subject.

Walker also published two short pieces on black history: *The Black Identity in Nova Scotia: Community and Institutions in Historical Perspective* and *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*. In the former, derived from a presentation at the Second Anniversary Celebration of the Black Cultural Centre, Walker comments on the limited scholarship concerning black history. He purports that the literature published establishes similar themes. Walker identifies these themes as: Black Nova Scotians as submissive; the concept that Blacks are factionalized and divisive; and a reliance on religion.²³ Walker notes that there are two interpretations of how Black Nova Scotians are, in his words, ‘in such a mess.’²⁴ The more antiquated thinking attributes the problems in the black community to biology, genetics, and race.²⁵ According to Walker, the more ‘modern’ thinking (1985) attributes the black plight to ‘conditioning’: historical experience ‘utilized to explain and elaborate a contemporary

²³ James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Identity in Nova Scotia: Community and Institutions in Historical Perspective* (Halifax: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1985), 1-2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

condition of inferiority.’²⁶ He argues that both interpretations are problematic because they arrive at the same conclusion of inferiority. Walker challenges this interpretation, offering an historical analysis considering the role of black institutions. Walker lists these as: schools, religious bodies, and various societies and bodies promoting betterment.²⁷ Walker’s tone is a touch condescending (in today’s terms), but his work is significant to the overall historical narrative nonetheless.

Walker’s *Racial Discrimination* examines the history of discrimination in the broader context. He opens the booklet with reference to the “The Fugitive’s Address to the North Star” by Alexander McCarthur.²⁸ The poem alludes to Canada as the North Star, a place of freedom and hope for black fugitives. Walker argues that this perception is an illusion. He writes: “The North Star myth entered the Canadian identity and became a major feature distinguishing Canadians from Americans: only south of the border were blacks subjected to violence, denied their citizenship rights, forced into ghettos.”²⁹ Walker uses the example of the highly publicized American freedom struggle as an way to highlight the perpetuation of the North Star myth. He poignantly states: “[M]ost Canadians genuinely sympathized with the blacks and admired the leadership of Martin Luther King, while at the same time congratulating themselves that no such problems existed here.”³⁰ Walker reiterates this point in the ‘shocking’ news of a 1970s poll that

²⁶ Walker, *Black Identity*, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ Walker includes verses from Alexander McCarthur’s poem, 15 January 1852 in *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), 3.

²⁹ Walker, *Racial Discrimination*, 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

revealed that ‘large numbers of whites harboured prejudicial attitudes.’³¹ This led to the conceptualization of racism as a problem ‘whose roots must lie in the recent past.’³²

Walker argues that the problem of racism is longstanding and that he wishes to ‘expose the very deep roots of racial disadvantage in our heritage.’³³ Walker highlights Canadian perspectives of discrimination, especially pertinent in the time period of Graham Creighton. He directly addresses events post-1945 in a section dedicated to race and adjustment. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Walker writes that black achievements in other places of the world, namely the United States, influenced blacks in Canada to rally with organizations such as the Black United Front.³⁴ Walker offers a concise analysis of trends in racial conceptualization in Canada and examines a period crucial to this thesis.

Colin A. Thompson’s 1986 work *Born with a Call* introduces a key figure in the black community in Nova Scotia: William Pearly Oliver. Oliver was a minister, educator, and advocate for black rights in the province. His involvements spanned over numerous areas: the African United Baptist Association, the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NSAACP), the Black United Front, and the Department of Education. Thompson’s work provides an overview of Oliver’s life and contribution to the black community and offers insight into the life of an influential leader. An over-arching belief in the importance of education marked Oliver’s life and is reflected in his rhetoric. Thompson draws on Oliver’s view on separate schooling, demonstrating Oliver’s abhorrence to segregation. To quote Oliver: “Segregated schools

³¹ Walker, *Racial Discrimination*, 7.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 19.

are a barrier to good inter-group relations. They are a visible symbol of separation, and a denial of the right ‘to belong.’ Such schools become a stamp of approval in the mental apartheid that exists in many white minds.”³⁵ Oliver’s influence on the black community was profound and important to consider in the context of 1960s integration at Graham Creighton. Thompson’s *Born with a Call* offers a biographical focus of Oliver’s life and influence on the black community in Nova Scotia.³⁶

A final book from the 1980s, Mohamed Abucar’s *Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia 1784-1987*, presents itself as the sole publication dedicated specifically to the communities of the Prestons. Abucar notes two theories of socio-economic development: the orthodox approach, which considers factors of social structure such as population growth, innovation, and economic psychology as pre-conditions for social mobility; and the structural approach, which highlights themes like social formation, uneven development, dependency and marginalization.³⁷ Abucar adopts a structural approach, considering topics of geographic isolation, human constraints, institutions, and interactions.³⁸ In his chapter on community and educational institutions, Abucar speaks directly of Graham Creighton as he discusses school integration. He highlights integration as a positive

³⁵ William Pearly Oliver as quoted in Colin A. Thompson, *Born with a Call: A Biography of Dr. William Pearly Oliver, C.M.* (Cherry Brook: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1986), 102.

³⁶ It is worth noting that scholar Bridglal Pachai also published a work through the Saint Mary’s University International Education Centre entitled *Dr. William Pearly Oliver and the Search for Black Self Identity in Nova Scotia* in 1979, and that Pachai references Thompson’s then unpublished PhD manuscript.

³⁷ Mohamed Abucar, *Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia. 1784-1987* (Cherry Brook: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1988), 4-5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

occurrence, as students of the communities ‘felt the wind of change and a new era of opportunity for education.’³⁹ Abucar’s work is invaluable to this project, given its direct topical relevance and analysis of information.

The 1990s experienced a resurgence of black literature, and in the 1990s Bridglal Pachai (a prolific scholar of Black Nova Scotian history) authored many publications, including *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia’s Blacks*. Of interest to this thesis is Volume II: 1800-1989. The title of this series is reminiscent of the North Star myth in its symbolic use of clouds in the Promised Land. Pachai’s time frame is broad, however there is some topic-specific information. Pachai writes that the community institutions of church and school were intricately intertwined in the black community.⁴⁰ His section on the postwar timeframe highlights the ‘reconstruction’ period and covers a vast amount of black experiences. Of particular interest to this thesis, Pachai emphasizes the importance of organizations such as the Black United Front.⁴¹ His postwar history of Nova Scotian Blacks offers a detailed look at events and figures in a comprehensive work.

Telling the Truth – Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia by Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes offers an examination of the segregated schooling system in Nova Scotia. The work offers a brief description and history of all segregated schools in Nova Scotia, as well as reflections of former teachers. Of interest to the topic of Graham Creighton are the schools located in the Prestons and Cherry Brook: Lake Loon School

³⁹ Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 48.

⁴⁰ Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia’s Blacks* (Halifax: Black Educators Association of Nova Scotia, 1987), 19.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

(Cherry Brook), New Road School (North Preston), and Partridge River School (East Preston).⁴² This work is important as it offers a history not found in the other works included in this thesis: the perspectives are organic and from the community. These stories are useful in constructing a narrative around the experience of segregated schooling in Nova Scotia.

The 1990s continued to pay attention to black education. In 1997, Pachai gave a lecture at the Nova Scotia Teachers College and published a booklet entitled *Education in Nova Scotia: The African Nova Scotian Experience*. This work highlights attitudes and histories concerning Black Nova Scotians. As Pachai writes: “The history of education for the upliftment of African-Canadians in Nova Scotia... is replete with examples of self-help, of efforts to transform obstacles into opportunities, of reaching out and educating and enlisting the support of the wider society.” Pachai briefly comments that the end of legal school segregation brought ‘both evolutionary as well as revolutionary changes,’ citing the “Education Fund for Negroes” in 1965 as evolutionary and the addition of the African-Canadian Services Division in the Department of Education in 1996 as revolutionary. Although Pachai’s work is brief, he offers insight into Black Nova Scotian Education over time.

Another 1990s publication includes the Black Learners Advisory Committee’s study on black education: the *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity – Empowering Black Learners*. This three-volume series covers a wide range of topics relevant to black education. Mostly importantly to this thesis, the authors write a history

⁴² Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes, *Telling the Truth: Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press, 1995), 24-28.

of black education in Nova Scotia in Volume II and offer a case study of “North Preston’s Struggle to Obtain Equality in Education.”⁴³ The authors highlight important events at Graham Creighton High School, such as the establishment of a Black Student Union in 1969 (the first of its kind in Nova Scotia and possibly in Canada).⁴⁴ The student union called for black students to spend their free time working in the library in order to improve academics. The union called for a meeting with the school board several times, but in each case they were denied. As the authors write: “School board administration threatened the then Student Union President with expulsion and placed him on suspension. The Union was effectively dismantled formally ceasing operations two years later.”⁴⁵ This example poignantly displays a lack of involvement and neglect on the part of the school board. More positively, it shows that students were consciously organizing themselves for their own betterment (echoing the self-help model above). This publication emphasizes student life more than any other work, which is essential to understanding the full story of integration.

The 2000s brought a new generation of thinking and some different perspectives in Black Nova Scotian history. Some of the veteran academics published works, like Pachai and Walker, while other scholars emerged. To begin, Pachai’s 2007 entitled *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries* calls for more work on the Black Nova Scotian history. The book acts largely as a comprehensive overview of the black experience in Nova Scotia, up to and including the 2000s. In reflecting on the

⁴³ *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity— Empowering Black Learners Volume II* (Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994).

⁴⁴ “North Preston’s Struggle to Obtain Equality in Education,” *BLAC Report Volume II*, 84.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

historiography and scholarly pursuit of black history as well as the black experience itself, Pachai echoes that work remains to be done. As he states: “When the history is traced from beginning to end it would be possible to say that while many successes have been achieved, many challenges still lie ahead.”⁴⁶ Pachai calls for a greater understanding of the black experience that he believes would benefit those of all backgrounds. As he writes:

The lessons learned from the stirring and often times heartbreaking saga of the black experience in Nova Scotia over the centuries can contribute in some measure to a more informed understanding of the factors and circumstances that have shaped the society in which Nova Scotians of all persuasions and backgrounds live and work.⁴⁷

Pachai argues that learning more about the black experience is important on all levels, from the classroom, to the workplace, to places of power. An understanding of the black experience, according to Pachai, contributes to an understanding of society overall.

Pachai’s call for more work on the black experience in Nova Scotia was certainly answered. Jennifer J. Nelson’s 2008 publication, *Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism*, explores a familiar topic in the Nova Scotia Black experience through a geographic lens. Her understanding of Africville is a racism of geography through spatial management. As she writes:

I have come to see Africville not as an isolated event in history. Rather, it *is* history... the razing of Africville is a story of white domination, a story of the making of a slum, and of the operation of technologies of oppression and regulation over time. This study frames Africville as both an image in the white imagination and a concrete place against which progress and respectability are measured, and around which borders, real and symbolic, are placed. I see

⁴⁶ Bridglal Pachai, *The Nova Scotia Black Experience Through the Centuries* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2007), 3-4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

Africville's destruction as a deliberate moment within a larger colonial project of spatial management.⁴⁸

While authors have certainly touched on the geographic isolation as a factor in the Black Nova Scotian discrimination, Nelson frames the entire experience within a physical geography of isolation, relocation, and urbanization.

Though Nelson's work is refreshing in some respects, there has also been a lot published on the subject of Africville. It is no wonder that Tina Loo's 2008 article "Africville and the Dynamics of Power in Postwar Canada," opens with the question: "Is there anything more to say about Africville?"⁴⁹ Loo indeed contributes to the understanding of the Africville relocation from a viewpoint of political and state problem. She argues that while racism may have been the reason Africville residents were disenfranchised, it was not the reason that the Africville relocation failed. Rather, it was a failure on the part of the liberal-welfare model that framed much of the relocation. As Loo argues:

The Africville relocation also sheds light on some of the tensions inherent in the liberal welfare state... While current scholarship frames Africville in terms of racism, for officials of the City of Halifax, and the liberal-minded more generally, Africville was a "welfare problem."⁵⁰

Loo examines the Africville experience from the viewpoint of political power—while racism certainly contributed to the experience, the liberal-welfare model influenced the decision to relocate. The subtleties of state power examined in Loo's work are a crucial

⁴⁸ Jennifer J. Nelson, *Razing Africville: A Geography of Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 5.

⁴⁹ Tina Loo, "Africville and the Dynamics of Power in Postwar Canada," *Acadiensis* XXXIX, no. 2 (Summer 2010), 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

consideration to the integration process at Graham Creighton. Loo profoundly states: “integration was not belonging.”⁵¹ Although the political rhetoric was centred around integration, the main focus of the liberal-welfare state was not to eliminate racial prejudice entirely; rather, it was to physically begin the integration process into society by providing for concrete needs. Loo’s article examines politics and power at the time of Graham Creighton High School and demonstrates the nuanced nature of the black experience in Nova Scotia.

Another scholar to enter the field of black Nova Scotia history in the 2000s is Harvey Amani Whitfield. Whitfield published several works on the black experience in Nova Scotia. To begin, in 2006 Whitfield published *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860*, the first book dedicated to the study of the Black Refugee experience. Whitfield examines how geography influenced the lives of the Black Refugees and argues that the border symbolized more than a border between two countries but a line of separation between slavery and freedom. Moreover, while the boundary existed, blacks North of the border continued to maintain connections to the larger black population. As Whitfield writes:

For the Refugees, the border also represented the line between slavery and freedom. Yet, while it marked an important barrier between their old and new lives, the Refugees did not use it to cut themselves off from events in the United States... In short, the border served as a reified demarcation between slavery and freedom, but it was also a negotiated state of mind that connected the expatriates with events and persons in their former homeland.⁵²

⁵¹ Loo, “Africville”, 27.

⁵² Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 6.

The idea of interconnectivity between blacks in the North American context is a thread that has been further developed by Whitfield in his subsequent works. In 2008 he published an article in *Acadiensis* entitled: “Reviewing Blackness in Atlantic Canada and the African Canadian Diaspora.” The article is a review of scholarship of blacks in the Atlantic region and is an excellent and thorough historiographical examination of publications on the topic.⁵³ More importantly, Whitfield calls for historians to turn their attention to black history in the Atlantic region. He writes:

Here, we have a rare opportunity to make a contribution to multiple historiographies including the United States, Canadian, British Empire, Atlantic World, and African Diaspora. African Atlantic Canadian history is strikingly unique because of its position in the midst of three competing and complementary worlds (Canadian, American, and British).⁵⁴

Whitfield pulls the thread of thinking about the African diaspora in his most recent book. His 2016 publication: *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes*, illuminates the idea of the African diaspora and the ways in which the black experience was connected. As Whitfield writes: “There is no periphery in the African diaspora. Rather, the experiences of black people in the Maritimes were intimately connected to those black people throughout the Atlantic world and beyond.”⁵⁵ The concept of the African

⁵³ There have been numerous historians who have tackled Black Canadian history, such as Constance Backhouse, Barry Cahill, Afua Cooper, Judith Fingard, Suzanne Morton, Simon Schama, David States, David Sutherland, to name just a few. The areas of study include both Nova Scotian Blacks and Canadian Blacks. The subject matter covered by these authors are not directly related to the subject matter at hand but deserve due mention nonetheless. Furthermore, the impact of George Elliott Clarke on the black narrative in Nova Scotia is immeasurable, not only on the world of literature, but on history as well.

⁵⁴ Harvey Amani Whitfield, “Reviewing Blackness in Atlantic Canada and the African Atlantic Canadian Diaspora,” *Acadiensis* XXXVII, no. 2 (Summer 2008).

⁵⁵ Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 7.

diaspora connects to the topic of Graham Creighton High School as it inextricably links Nova Scotia with the broader black experience of desegregation.

Graham Reynolds' 2016 publication brings attention to the civil rights movement in Nova Scotia. *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* highlights a black businesswoman's experience in Nova Scotia. She was wrongfully arrested at a racially segregated movie theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, for sitting in the white section. Desmond has 'come to symbolize the struggles for civil rights and racial equality in Canada,'⁵⁶ at the very least in academic representation. However, most Canadians are unfamiliar with her story. Reynolds argues that Canadians are painfully unaware of the civil rights movement in Nova Scotia, and on the broader topic of race relations in the country. He states: "On the subjects of race and racial segregation, Canadians seem to exhibit a form of collective amnesia."⁵⁷ This amnesia neglects a large portion of the history of the black experience in Canada. As Reynolds argues: "This narrative is part of a critical subtext of our larger national history, and it chronicles the centuries-long struggle for freedom and racial equality in pursuit of the Promised Land."⁵⁸ A broader understanding of the black experience allows for a better understanding of race relations in Canada. It is apparent that historical consciousness and awareness of the black experience in Canada is limited and Reynolds offers a real contribution to the literature in terms of fresh perspective and material.

⁵⁶ Graham Reynolds, *Viola Desmond's Canada: A history of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5

A final, and especially important consideration to make, is the 2016 publication by Burnley Rocky Jones and James W. St. G. Walker. The book is mostly an autobiography on Jones' life, with Walker filling in the missing pieces after Jones' death in 2013. *Burnley "Rocky" Jones: Revolutionary* offers insight into not only the life of Rocky Jones, but into his broader contribution to the civil rights movement in Canada. Jones' personal history is part of the history of Black Nova Scotians as whole. As Walker and George Elliott Clarke indicate in the forward: "This is more than one man's autobiography or memoir. The personal and community activities of B.A. "Rocky" Jones intersected with the most compelling moments of African Nova Scotian history."⁵⁹ Jones was just at the beginning of a lifetime of civil rights advocacy when Graham Creighton High School became integrated and certainly played a part in the politics of the time.

More recent trends in the historiography of Black Nova Scotians indicate a resurgence of interest in the subject. With topics ranging from black slavery in the Maritimes to Rocky Jones and the civil rights movement, a renewed interest in black history is generating some fresh perspectives. The concept of the African diaspora plays prominently in new interpretations. The broader black experience impacted blacks in Nova Scotia, especially with influence from the United States. North American Blacks are inextricably linked in the greater diaspora through history, geography, and culture. Despite some redundancies in terms of historiography, it appears that Black Nova Scotian history is being revitalized. This resurgence reiterates the importance of studying Graham Creighton High School: not only is Graham Creighton a striking example of integration

⁵⁹ Burnley "Rocky" Jones and James W. St. G. Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones: Revolutionary* (Black Point: Roseway Publishing, 2016), 1.

issues in Nova Scotia, it also serves as a back drop for the bigger picture of the black experience in the region and beyond.

CHAPTER II

Considering Creighton's Context: The Historical Narrative

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of references, our identities, and our aspirations.

—James Baldwin, “White Man’s Guilt,” *Ebony*, 1965.

The historical context around Graham Creighton High School is just as important to consider as the tale of the institution itself. The story is not a simple integration of several communities under the typical black-white narrative. Graham Creighton was different in many aspects and the lengthy history of the area is crucial to consider. The history of the communities in question provides insight into the cultural and socio-economic differences of these places. Considering each community historically details both the similarities and differences of the groups that came to be integrated and allows for a deeper understanding of the nuances at play in the tale of integration.

Consideration to white communities is pertinent, but the black experience is paramount. There are many levels on which to consider the black experience, from the regional to international levels. As Harvey Amani Whitfield eloquently observes: “[T]he experiences of black people in the Maritimes were intimately connected to those of black

people throughout the Atlantic world and beyond.”¹ Whitfield’s statement is poignant in the black experience as it truly highlights the interconnectivity of the African diaspora. On the regional level, space and place are so drastically intertwined with black history from its very beginnings. Colonial practices with the Black Loyalists and Black Refugees show just how drastic this connection is. Black immigrants were given the worst land available. As Whitfield writes:

Yet the mass influx of immigrants and the hierarchal nature of the colonial and imperial government meant that poor whites and Black Loyalists were at the very bottom of the list of those to receive land... Moreover, when Black Loyalists acquired land, their grants were much smaller than those afforded to white settlers. As would be the case with the Black Refugees after the War of 1812, the government also granted the Black Loyalists some of the worst land in the colony.²

Historically speaking, Black Nova Scotians were placed on the outskirts of the predominant white community on subpar land. These colonial practices carried forth into the twentieth century. One such example is found in the case of Africville, with urban gentrification and systemic racism at the root of relocation. Without a doubt, Africville impacted other black communities in Nova Scotia and certainly influenced the politics of the period.

The 1960s must be considered from its social and political movement on several levels, from regional to international. The greater context of the civil rights movement and its rhetoric are essential to examine and a quick snapshot of the United States in the 1960s provides context into the momentum that began south of the border. Graham

¹ Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 7.

² Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press: 2016), 19.

Reynolds notes that most Canadians are not aware of the civil rights movement here in Canada in his most recent work: *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land*. In using Desmond's life as a lens through which to study segregation, Reynolds highlights the ways in which the civil rights story played out in Canada. As Reynold's observes:

There were no "official" Jim Crow laws in Canada; however, a similar *ad hoc* pattern of racial segregation developed that spread unevenly to those regions of the country that had relatively large Black populations, especially in Ontario and Nova Scotia... in Canada, the pattern of racial segregation mimicked the practice of "Jim Crow" segregation in the southern United States.³

Although Canada did not legally enforce segregation, it was a socially enforced construct. The civil rights movement in Canada reflected events south of the border, but less overtly. This is perhaps because the Canadian consciousness is not nearly as aware of civil rights in Canada. Canadian perspectives on events in the United States during the civil rights movements influences the historical consciousness of Canadians. It is difficult to find a work related to civil rights that does not refer to Martin Luther King, for example. Most Canadians are aware of the civil rights movement in the United States, but are not aware of its significance in Canada. Reynolds argues that Canadians are painfully unaware of their own history of the civil rights movement. As he writes:

Most Canadians are familiar with Rosa Parks, the American civil rights icon who refused to give up her seat on a racially segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Viola Desmond's singular act of courage in resisting a similar practice of racial segregation in the town of New Glasgow occurred nine years before Rosa Parks' famous protest, but, until the recent granting of her free pardon, her story was not well known, even in Nova Scotia. The Viola Desmond incident is not an isolated

³ Graham Reynolds, *Viola Desmond's Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2016), 36.

example of our national ignorance regarding racial segregation and the struggle for racial equality in Canada.⁴

As Reynolds explores, the ignorance on the part of Canadians in relation to their own history extends beyond the case of Viola Desmond. This point is especially important in relationship to Graham Creighton—most Canadians are unaware that integration took place in Canada as well. While the United States have garnered most of the attention in terms of integration, it is imperative to consider the waves of those social movements here in Canada. With figures like William Pearly Oliver and Burnley Rocky Jones heading black social movements regionally, there are many examples of the ways in which the civil rights movement manifested here in Nova Scotia.

Finally, perceptions on education must be considered. The history of education in the communities in question is revealing on many levels. Religiously-affiliated learning was the mainstay in most of these communities. Education was very basic. As secondary education became more and more important, the government struggled to keep up with a growing, changing population and its demands. The story of integration at Graham Creighton High School is not simply black and white. There are many factors that contributed to racial tensions at Graham Creighton High School and many of these problems are deeply rooted within history. Unravelling the history around Graham Creighton will provide a greater understanding as the story of integration unfolds.

⁴ Reynolds, *Viola Desmond's Canada*, 1.

First and foremost, it is important to have a clear comprehension of the history of communities that fed through Graham Creighton High School. These include: North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook, Cole Harbour, Eastern Passage, Cow Bay, and Lawrencetown. Graham Creighton High School itself was in Cherry Brook and students from other communities were bussed in. The location of the school is irregular in that white students were bussed to a black community and not vice versa.⁵ A short profile of each community and their respective historical context highlights not only the differences among them, but their similarities as well. The environment and conditions under which these communities integrated are typically Nova Scotian and the story of integration at Graham Creighton is reflective of the region.

It seems apt to begin the community profiles with the histories of Cherry Brook, North Preston and East Preston as the saga of Graham Creighton High School took place centre stage in those communities. While there has not been much in terms of scholarly publication on these communities, Mohamed Abucar's 1988 sociological study: *Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia 1784-1987* offers some insight into the history and social structure of the communities. The 1784 Land Survey shows that Preston Township was originally settled

⁵ This inference is drawn from the United States experience. Bussing was a major controversy in the United States and bussing white children to black communities was not to preferred solution. As Paul Peterson states: "You get a lot of innovative ideas about how to desegregate schools. The most controversial was busing. Busing kids across the metropolitan areas. Sometimes white students into black areas, but mostly black students into white areas. But it was this reverse busing, as it was called, the movement of white students into black communities to go to school, that fueled the backlash against the civil rights movement." Paul Peterson, "Desegregation, Not Integration," Online Video Lecture as part of HarvardX 1368.1x: Saving Schools Mini-Course 1: History and Politics of U.S. Education

by those of English and German background from New England, blacks from the southern states, and French prisoners.⁶ The original township included the Prestons, Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Lake Echo, Porter's Lake and Lake Major. Blacks who settled in the vicinity were primarily Black Loyalists, Maroons, and Refugees.⁷

The placement of blacks in the Preston Township was not by chance. It has been commonly agreed upon by historians that geographic isolation played a huge part in the racism experienced by Nova Scotia Blacks. The colonial experiences of the Black Loyalists and Refugees described by Whitfield above demonstrate the geographic nature of systemic racism.

The conclusions drawn by modern historians are similar to works being written around the time of integration. As Frances Henry examines in her work *The Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia*, the early black settlers were geographically isolated from the predominant white society. Henry argues that the physical location of the Preston Township demonstrates the extensive nature of racism. She presents Nova Scotia as an economically depressed region to illustrate certain dynamics of racism related to poverty. As she writes: "The economy of Nova Scotia, both at present and in the past, is partly a function of a specialized geography which sets certain limitations on its development and growth."⁸ Henry relates this geographic point directly to Black Nova Scotians and their original land grants, a point that is often noted by historians as well.

⁶ Mohamed Abucar, *Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia 1784-1987* (Cherry Brook: Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, 1988), 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ Frances Henry, *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* (Don Mills: Longman Canada, 1973), 18.

She states: “The early Black settlers... were given land grants on non-fertile, rocky areas where their efforts at farming were doomed to failure.”⁹ Geographic considerations often take precedence over other conditions in terms of racist attitudes. The idea of space as socially constructed racism is prevalent in literature concerning Black Nova Scotians. Poverty and the culture surrounding it attributed to racist attitudes. Henry’s deduction suggests a culture of poverty:

As a result of the limited resource base in Nova Scotia and the Black history of marginal access to it as a function of the circumstances surrounding their arrival as slaves and refugees, the impoverished dependant condition of their beginnings in Nova Scotia has persisted. We find today conditions which have not only been perpetuated but have been reinforced over nearly 200 years.¹⁰

While poverty in a depressed economic region certainly contributes to the conditions endured by blacks, it is painfully blatant how systemic racism is in Nova Scotia. It is wholly encompassing, from the physical space that it occupies to its perpetual presence in attitudes and ideas.

To further complicate matters of place, land titles in the area continue to present problems to this day. Titles for land were passed down by verbal agreement (not unlike other Maritime communities). As a community member in Abucar’s study observes: “Black title or actual deeds are virtually non-existent.”¹¹ The Land Registration Act of 1967 required residents to register their land and found that many individuals did not have land title certificates. A 1985 study showed that the situation had not changed. In East Preston, out of 594 lots, only twenty percent had land titles, sixty percent did not

⁹ Henry, *Forgotten Canadians*, 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹ Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 19.

have land title clarification, and eight percent had certificates of title. In North Preston and Cherry Brook, out of 571 lots, twenty eight percent had land title, forty-four percent did not have land title, and sixteen percent had certificates of title.¹² Without title to their land, blacks are again left on the peripheral and without a sense of real ownership despite generations of occupation. A prime example of this irregular landholding can be found in *Untitled: The Legacy of Land in North Preston*. The project, headed by author Lawrence Hill, aims to shed light on the problem of land title in North Preston. This demonstrates the continuing struggle of geographically infused racism of the communities in question.¹³

A snapshot of the white communities provides insight into a struggle that was, at least economically, like the Prestons. It is interesting to note that there has not been much scholarly literature dedicated to any of the communities in question. An examination of Eastern Passage is important as it has a very distinct history, and was also at the centre of controversy in terms of integration.¹⁴ The original land grants for the Eastern Passage area date back to 1752.¹⁵ Although residents did engage in some farming, by the latter half of the nineteenth century fishing was the main industry.¹⁶ Eastern Passage also has a heavy association with construction, its residents having built fortifications, airfields, factories, refineries, and housing developments. Most significantly, Eastern Passage

¹² Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 21.

¹³ See: www.northpresonland.ca for more information.

¹⁴ The “Passage-Preston” saga became the centre of controversy in the case of Cole Harbour District High School in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This relationship will be examined further in the conclusion chapter.

¹⁵ John Boileau, *Images of Our Past: Historic Eastern Passage* (Halifax: Nimbus, 2007), 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

played host to Imperial Oil, a company that shaped the local economy.¹⁷ Eastern Passage has a longstanding military association especially with neighbouring community airbase of Shearwater nearby. Its strategic location meant that the community was at the centre of many war-time operations.¹⁸ This short profile of Eastern Passage, and by extension Cow Bay, highlights several important points. First, most residents of Eastern Passage were long-standing or transient (i.e. refinery workers and military personnel). Long-standing history creates a sense of community patriotism. Secondly, the residents of Eastern Passage historically experienced a flux in available industry—with the boom and bust nature of the fishing and oil industries, Eastern Passage residents endured the geographic poverty of Nova Scotia. Without wealth, the residents of Eastern Passage had little political clout or power. In many respects, Eastern Passage was an afterthought in development, which is evident in the mere fact that the community did not have secondary education of its own. A third point that is important to note is that there is a deep religious history in the community. The two main parishes, St. Peter's Anglican and St. Andrew's Roman Catholic, offer a classic Catholic-Anglican divide.¹⁹ Tight religious ties that affected day-to-day life in Eastern Passage perpetuated into ideas concerning the 'other' and created an historically-ingrained 'us versus them' attitude. Finally, Eastern Passage has long been referred to as 'Land's End' and this analogy makes sense in the context of the geographic isolation. This is not unlike the Prestons and Cherry Brook communities—the residents of Eastern Passage were essentially in a geographic bubble.

¹⁷ Boileau, *Historic Eastern Passage*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

The difference between the communities of Cole Harbour and Lawrencetown in comparison to Eastern Passage can be found in the geography of the region. Cole Harbour and Lawrencetown, traditionally farming communities, had a longstanding relationship with the Preston Township, if only by virtue that there was a road connecting the communities. Trade and interaction with the people of Preston was part of their daily lives. It is important to remember that Graham Creighton was not only an integration of races, but an integration of communities, some of which had more historical contact than others.

In examining the Eastern Shore region in its entirety, Hugh Millward's article, "The Spread of Commuter Development in the Eastern Shore Zone of Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1920-1988" offers incisive insights into the geographic intricacies each community experienced. Millward examines the historic geography of the study areas and highlights several important factors of the region. As he notes: "The evolving pattern of development has been moulded by five sets of variables: access, services, environment, socio-cultural factors, and planning."²⁰ Millward illustrates change over time in development in the Eastern Shore area. Beginning the 1920, he gives a profile of the landscape in question. As he writes:

Most settlement was situated around Chezzetcook Harbour and in the Eastern Passage/Cow Bay area, with smaller concentrations at Lawrencetown, Preston, and Musquodoboit Harbour... In the Chezzetcook area, the Acadian-French population was long-standing... and characterized by high birth-rates and low out-migration; hence the area was overpopulated relative to resource base. The

²⁰ Hugh Millward, "The Spread of Commuter Development in the Eastern Shore Zone of Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1920-1988", *Urban History Review* Volume 29 (October 2000), 30.

more agriculturally viable Cole Harbour area, by contrast, had larger farms and smaller population.²¹

Millward highlights both the similarities and the differences of the communities of the Eastern Shore. The population distribution was most densely concentrated in Chezzetcook and Eastern Passage, with larger farm areas and a smaller population in Cole Harbour. The resource-based landscape was overpopulated in most areas of the Eastern Shore that were actually agriculturally viable. The areas of the Prestons and Cherry Brook were exceptions. Most of the land in these communities was unsuitable for agriculture. Millward reiterates the point that historic geographic racism played into the placement of blacks in these communities. Millward writes:

The only well-settled area inland from the coast, around Preston, had little suitable agricultural land. The anomaly occurs because the Prestons and Cherry Brook were set aside in the 1780s for the settlement of the Black Loyalists on ten-acre hardscrabble lots. Even more than for the Acadians, social isolation had worked against out-migration, and the population in 1917-20 was sizeable, poor, and almost all black or mixed race.²²

The clear geographic isolation of the people of Preston, particularly on unsuitable land, exemplifies the deeply ingrained imperialistic racism that prevailed in all facets of life.

The historic geographic isolation of the entire Eastern Shore region made it difficult for any of the communities to work outside of their area of occupation. Since agriculture was not necessarily a lucrative trade, most people engaged in other resource-based industries, such as fishing and forestry.²³ Indeed, most residents lived and worked within their respective communities. In what Millward describes as a ‘pre-commuter

²¹ See Figure 4 in Maps for a detailed population distribution in Millward, “The Spread of Commuter Development,” 24.

²² Millward, “The Spread of Commuter Development”, 24.

²³ Ibid.

society', the residents of the Eastern Shore spent most of their lives in relative isolation. There were few roads and those that did exist were often in poor condition. For a more detailed glimpse at the road system of the area, refer to Figure 2 in the Appendix of Images. As Millward writes:

The resource-based landscape just described was only poorly linked to the city. A car ferry crossed Halifax harbour, and paved roads ran to Eastern Passage and Westphal, just inside the study area. Beyond that, the main improved (all-weather) road was the bay-head post road (today's Highway 7) ... In addition, there was an improved loop to Lawrencetown and West Chezzetcook (Highway 207), and a spur inland towards Middle Musquodoboit (Highway 357). All other roads were in poor condition, often no more than tracks. The recently opened (1916) Eastern Shore railway provided slow and infrequent passenger service, and was quite impractical for commuting to the city. Almost without exception, people lived and worked in their own communities (some of which were too small or loosely scattered to merit the term *village*). The social nucleus of each community was its church, but most also had a school, post office, and general store.²⁴

Most of these communities were isolated and lacked paved roads. It is no wonder that the communities were close-knit, nor is it surprising that the centre of each community was its church. In the case of the Prestons, the communities were even more closed due to ethnic and racial background. As Millward observes:

In the Chezzetcooks and the Prestons, the "closed" nature of these communities has augmented by solidarity born of long-standing racial and ethnic heritages. In the case of the Prestons, too, we should also recognize the possibility of racial prejudice has inhibited exurban development. We have noted already how development in both periods appeared to leapfrog over the Prestons, to produce an entirely new community at Lake Echo. Associated with, though not necessarily equitable to, prejudice are in-comer concerns about perceived levels of crime and perceived quality of schools.²⁵

The perceived notions of the Prestons are crucial to understand in terms of integration at Graham Creighton. Outside perceptions of the Prestons and Cherry Brook communities

²⁴ Millward, "The Spread of Commuter Development", 24

²⁵ Ibid., 30.

include notions of high crime rates and subpar schooling. This inhibited outside development within those communities themselves. The perceptions also influenced parents sending their children to schools within these communities despite actual school zones, an occurrence that will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter III.

By the time of integration in the 1960s, population growth had exploded in the Eastern Shore Region. A look at Figures 4 and 5 in the image appendix illustrates the rapid population growth between the 1960s and 1988. Millward describes the growth as a transition to a ‘commuter society’. The housing market outside of the city was much more affordable for the average individual, and the impetus of the Macdonald bridge in 1955 meant that working outside of each respective community was possible.²⁶ Millward includes some figures that highlight these developments:

The pace of development increased between 1960-7 and 1988. An additional 11,679 buildings brought the total to 16,149, a growth of 261 per cent (and equivalent to a growth rate of 5.5 per cent per year) ... A comparison of figures... shows the bulk of the increase in just three localities: Cole Harbour-Westphal, Eastern Passage, and Lake Echo... In relative terms, there was also rapid development in the close-in Cow Bay and Upper Lawrencetown areas, mostly along existing road frontages, but also in the initial phases of large “backfill” subdivisions.²⁷

The rapid population growth meant that services had to be provided, including schooling. While each community contained elementary schools, most students in the rural areas had to be sent to city schools to obtain secondary education. With the influx of population, the Cole Harbour and Cherry Brook regions were selected as ‘central’ locations to host secondary schools. The establishment of Graham Creighton High School

²⁶ Millward, “The Spread of Commuter Development”, 25.

²⁷ Ibid., 26-27.

and Sir Robert Borden Junior High School are both examples of the consolidated secondary schooling system for the Eastern Shore Region. These schools will be examined in depth from primary material in Chapter III.

Having considered each community in some detail, attention must be given to the changing nature of space, place, and race in the historical context. Events in the broader black community in Nova Scotia are important to consider as part the complex history of Graham Creighton. The relocation of Africville was disturbing for the residents of black communities all over the province. The black community in Nova Scotia has always been tight knit so the struggle of another community resonated within the Prestons and Cherry Brook communities. A report on the relocation was compiled by Donald H.J. Clairmont and Dennis W. McGill in 1971 sheds light onto the rippling effect of the Africville relocation. In the report, the authors use interviews to highlight the ways in which Black Nova Scotians were affected by Africville:

[The Africville relocation has had an effect] not only on North Preston, but also in other Black communities. They figured that if Africville was gone, people also wondered which community was going next— all the people in North Preston were afraid they would be next. I am quite sure these people would want to stand up and fight for their homes.²⁸

The relocation of Africville sparked an awareness among Black Nova Scotians. Those in North Preston, as mentioned above, struggled with their own issues of land title. The threat of relocation was tangible as the growth of the city of Halifax had reached its limits and was now expanding into Dartmouth. They witnessed first-hand the effects of

²⁸ Donald H. J. Clairmont and Dennis W. Magill, *Africville Relocation Report* (Halifax: Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1971), 367.

government intervention in the case of Africville residents. Abucar's study highlights the changes that occurred in the black community post-Africville. As he writes:

That Africville, although now non-existent, has become something of a rallying symbol for Blacks is illustrated by the remarks of one black 'leader' heavily involved in community organizing about Nova Scotia Blacks. When he enters a new community to organize the residents he discusses the plight of Africville relocatees who lost their community and their land and got little in return.²⁹

Africville truly became an emblem for the black community—a symbol of when racism went too far. The blacks of the Prestons and Cherry Brook empathized with the Africville community and would have been consciously aware of the government involvement.

Another key factor influencing Nova Scotian blacks was the civil rights movement in the United States. While the movement never quite reached the height of influence that it did in the United States, Canada was affected by the rhetoric nonetheless. The conventional history of civil rights in the United States begins with the monumental 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. This landmark decision was followed with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. With activists like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and Eldridge Cleaver, to name a few, the civil rights struggle gained real and tangible momentum in the United States. While change was imminent for many southern states, the north did not experience the same kind of reform. This is in part because racial segregation was enforced *de jure* in the south and *de facto* in the north. The southern United States had to make efforts to accommodate the newfound civil rights movement. The north did not have to make the same efforts, however, as most of the segregation in place was

²⁹ Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 3.

geographically enforced. To this day, racial segregation continues in many of the northern states such as New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Michigan.³⁰ As Thomas J. Surgue examines, the nature of racism in the north was more subtle than that of their southern counterparts. He writes:

Racial inequality took different forms on each side of the Mason-Dixon Line in the twentieth century. Most northern communities did not erect signs to mark separate black and white facilities; only some northern schools were segregated by law; and black voters were not systematically disenfranchised in the North. But in both regions, private behavior, market practices, and public policies created and reinforced racial separation and inequality. Northern blacks lived as second-class citizens, unencumbered by the most blatant of southern-style Jim Crow laws but still trapped in an economic, political, and legal regime that seldom recognized them as equals. In nearly every arena, blacks and whites lived separate, unequal lives.³¹

The same could be said for racial segregation in Nova Scotia. While it may not have been blatantly or even legally enforced, the historical and geographical constraints of blacks in the region allowed for racism to manifest in an indirect manner. Blacks of the Prestons and Cherry Brook were historically separated from the prevailing white society, and this geographic constraint continued to keep blacks in a separate sphere.

The 1960s in Nova Scotia brought forth civil rights movements that reflected movements south of the border. It is essential to engage with some of the regional rhetoric of the time to understand not only the shifting social circumstances, but the shifting social consciousness as well. William Pearly Oliver is a figure that must be considered in the rhetoric of the day. Oliver spent his life working for education. He served the community in many capacities, as a church minister and in the Department of

³⁰ Thomas J. Surgue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House Trade, 2008), xix.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xv.

Education. As Bridglal Pachai observes: “In his search for justice and fair play for the black communities of Nova Scotia, Rev. Oliver was armed with a sound education and a practical philosophy. In his various positions, he was called upon to use this education and philosophy as servicing tools.”³² By 1968, at the height of the civil rights movement, Oliver was ‘a renowned and respected leader of the Black community, now 56 years old with a public service record which extended over 30 years.’³³ The Black Panther Movement began to take hold in Nova Scotia and the militant nature of the group concerned Oliver. A clear issue of divided thinking is apparent when examining Oliver’s position towards the civil rights movement. Oliver believed strongly that a united voice would best serve black people. As he writes:

It is the conviction of the Front that if the Black People are to acquire pride in themselves, dignity as human beings, a sense of self-worth and respect as a race of people, we must be united as a family. It is impossible to bring about any meaningful and effective change for our race unless we all work together to present a Black Consensus, i.e., a United Voice.³⁴

The absence of a united voice would prove problematic for Nova Scotia Blacks. With several factions of thinking, from the NSAACP to the Black United Front, the divided nature of the civil rights movement in Nova Scotia is clear. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the movement did not gain quite the momentum of its counterpart in the United States.

³² Bridglal Pachai, *Dr. William Pearly Oliver and the Search for Black Self-Identity in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Saint Mary’s University International Education Centre, 1979), 28.

³³ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁴ W.P. Oliver, “The Objectives of the Black United Front” *Exodus I*, no. 1, Department of Education, Adult Education Division, Halifax, February 1969 in Colin Thompson, *William Pearly Oliver, Black Educator*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1972, in Pachai *Dr. William Pearly Oliver*, 55.

Reflections gathered from Rocky Jones' autobiography truly highlight the dimensions of social change that took place. Jones' reflections on a 1965 meeting with the Halifax Advisory Committee on Human Rights offers clear insight into the various levels of thinking in the civil rights movement. He comments how his work was received in the Nova Scotia Black community. Jones quotes W.P. Oliver's description of himself and his contemporaries as 'outside agitators.'³⁵ Oliver's view of Jones' work permeated into the community; Jones reflects that people figured the result of his 'agitation' would be an outbreak of violence.³⁶ Considering events in the United States at the time, Jones notes that this concern was not unfounded. As Jones elaborates:

There were so many reports in the newspaper about riots in the States and places burning. We came to Halifax talking some of the same kind of rhetoric, wearing the same kind of clothes, as radicals in the States. The notion was that I was preaching hatred against whites, and there would be a backlash in the Black community. People were afraid for their children. They didn't know what was going to happen.³⁷

³⁵ Burnley "Rocky" Jones and James W. St. G. Walker, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones Revolutionary: An Autobiography* (Halifax: Roseway Publishing, 2016), 92.

³⁶ The idea of 'outside agitators' can be explored on two levels. Rocky Jones was coming from Toronto at the time, and although he was native to Nova Scotia, his ideas were perceived as outside agitations. On another level, this is also telling of the close-knit nature of the black community in Nova Scotia. An excellent example of the unique nature of black Nova Scotians can be found in George Elliott Clarke's term 'indigenous black' Nova Scotians. As he deliberates: "In identifying myself as an "indigenous Black Nova Scotian," I meant no disrespect to the *real* Indigenous people... What I was trying to do—like Borden and Africadian activist Dr. Burnley "Rocky" Jones... was demarcate this small, forgotten band of African (more or less) Americans from other, *newer* Black Canadians because we were, in fact, different, despite our allegiance to the rhetoric of pan-Africanism. Moreover, our difference was *native*. Unlike the newer African Canadians, we could not look back only one generation to some other native land where we were either the majority or could wield significant power. Nor could we appeal to any foreign embassy to intervene with the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia to address our concerns. We were not only renters in cities; we held land in impossible-to-farm districts, which were practically reserves, from which we filed mornings to work as cheap labour in white homes and in white-controlled cities and towns." In George Elliott Clarke, "Indigenous Blacks": An Irreconcilable Identity?" in *Speaking my Truth*, http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=664

³⁷ Jones, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 92.

Jones' reflections poignantly displays the divide in thinking between 'pacifist' and 'radical'. He explains that the traditional leadership in the black community at the time was a 'blame the victim mentality.'³⁸ Jones draws on Gus Wedderburn's *Toronto Star* quote: "Nova Scotia Negroes are apathetic; they have lost their fight."³⁹ This kind of thinking influenced the perception of not only outsiders to the community but also infiltrated blacks' perception of themselves. Blacks, under this circumscription, were catalysts of their own fate. As Jones observes:

It is like the Black people have created the problem for themselves, that we are in this situation because we want to be, and it is our own fault, and we don't have any aspiration to change anything. We live in the slums and substandard housing because we want to live that way.⁴⁰

To Jones, the 'masters of their own misfortunes' attitude highlights the immense need for autonomy in the black community. In his opinion, the community needs to define the problem, find solutions and implement the solutions on their own terms.⁴¹ The rhetoric of self-determination was key to Jones' revolutionary stance. As he states:

We were coming with a philosophy of participatory democracy, of self-determination. We had to connect the internal leadership, and we had to confront the establishment. The prevailing attitude among that "official" leadership was that you have to cooperate with government; government will be your friend and solve your problems.⁴²

Jones' attitude diverged from that of official leadership at the time and reflected a greater shift in social consciousness. Jones aimed to create change from within the community instead of relying on external assistance. Although there was somewhat of a divide in

³⁸ Jones, *Burnley "Rocky" Jones*, 92.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 94.

thinking, Jones maintained friendly relationships with many of the leaders with whom he disagreed, especially W.P. Oliver. As Jones puts it: “I always had respect for him; I grew up with that. He was after all W.P. Oliver.”⁴³

Indeed W.P. Oliver and Rocky Jones would cross paths on numerous occasions. One such occasion was a Teach-In entitled *The Black Man Nova Scotia*. The report of the 1969 St. Francis Xavier University project featured many prominent community leaders at the time. Jones delivered an inspiring and articulate speech on the civil rights movement and activism. The speech drew on many world events at the time, truly placing Nova Scotia amid it all. He argued that problems in places like America, South Africa, or Rhodesia directly affected the broader black population. He implored: “You’ve got to understand that there is nowhere in this world that black people can be where they are not part of that revolutionary struggle... As brother Stokely Carmichael says: “We must show undying love for our people,” because that’s what going to make us.”⁴⁴ Jones’ use of Stokely Carmichael ties his rhetoric into the larger picture of the revolution. The conclusion of Jones’ speech highlights the ways in which Jones’ ideology differed from leadership like Oliver’s: Jones pressed for militancy over non-violence. In his opinion, pacifism only added to the plight of the black man. As Jones fervently concludes:

They have systematically destroyed all of our leaders and they will do it here... we’ve got to do our thing because they’re knocking us off... I defy you to look at America and see what organizations people have been knocked out... [such as] Dr. Martin Luther King... The only thing I want to leave you with is: All power invested in the people, but black power to black people.⁴⁵

⁴³ Jones, *Burnley “Rocky” Jones*, 94.

⁴⁴ Burnley “Rocky” Jones as cited in *Teach-In Report: The Black Man in Nova Scotia* (Antigonish, St. F.X. University, January 1969), 19.

⁴⁵ Jones as cited in *Teach-In Report*, 19.

Jones' rhetoric shows the complex dimensions of the civil rights movement in Nova Scotia. Within the black community itself there were diverging views on approaches to social change. Non-violence versus militant approaches reflected strategies in the United States to achieve equality. Because of the advocacy of both groups a social consciousness was formed.

By the time of integration at Graham Creighton High School, the black community in Nova Scotia was becoming increasingly aware of the social and political change taking place across the globe. This also meant an increasing cognizance of their own situation and efforts towards an equal society were made. In terms of education, this meant integration. Historically, education had not been equal for Black Nova Scotians. Although blacks had settled in the township in the late 18th-century, the communities remained relatively underdeveloped in terms of services and institutions. The exception to this was the church. As a participant in Abucar's study observes: "The only organized society we had right from the beginning was the church. Schooling was provided in an unorganized structural sense; it was not part of a government institution. The government could not interfere... there were no integrated schools."⁴⁶ The church was at the centre of the community and provided basic education to the communities in the absence of a government-regulated school system.

By 1864, following government intervention into public schooling, black communities could establish their own schools, drawn from their own resources. This

⁴⁶ Community member as quoted in Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 11.

meant that the church provided education and was one reason for segregation. Abucar highlights the reasons for perpetuated segregation in Cherry Brook and the Prestons:

The source of segregation at that time can be attributed to a number of factors: (a) religious and ethnic line, (b) geographic isolation, (c) economic disparity, and (d) racial line. In Preston Township during the 1800s, educational segregation was contributed to by three factors: items (a), (b) and (c) above.⁴⁷

Abucar argues that ‘the connection between the church and education laid the foundation of cultural identity of these communities.’⁴⁸ It is fair to say that (d) was also a contributing factor on the historical level, since the township was historically segregated in its beginnings.

The School Act of 1884 prompted stirrings of integration. Robert Hockin, MLA from Pictou, argued that ‘the Nova Scotia whites were trespassing on the liberty of the Nova Scotia Blacks.’⁴⁹ Although he advocated for integrated schools, Hockin’s motion was rebutted by William S. Fielding, MLA from Halifax, who argued that ‘the schools of Halifax would be destroyed if integration were forced upon the white community... There were rowdy children in the white schools who could not be trusted to treat the Negroes kindly.’⁵⁰ In the end, Hockin’s motion was defeated 17 to 15 and separate schools were maintained. This motion was slightly amended in the 1918 Education Act in that it allowed black children to attend schools in their area, which meant that schools remained segregated still. Abucar argues that a gradual shift occurred after World War II as ‘the colonial situation throughout the world was being dismantled.’⁵¹

⁴⁷ Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 45.

⁴⁸ Community member as quoted in *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁹ Robert Hockin as quoted in *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁰ William S. Fielding as quoted in *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

By the 1960s the government began redressing some issues within education, beginning with integration. Abucar highlights this shift in his observations on education. He tells the rather vague tale of separate schools in Nova Scotia. The process of integration was slow and change was gradual. As Abucar writes:

In 1954, the term “different races” was deleted from the Education Act of 1918. Theoretically, separate school systems were abolished in Nova Scotia in 1964. Subsequently, environment school integration (ESI) began in the Preston communities. By 1969, there were integrated black students graduating from the Graham Creighton Senior High, which is located in the community of Cherry Brook.⁵²

While ten years is a significant expanse of time, in all relatively to years of segregation this was very little time and likely felt quite abrupt to the communities involved.

Academic publications from the period of integration offer an insight into the rhetoric of the time. Selina Lani Pratt’s *Black Education in Nova Scotia* highlights the attitudes towards education based on a study she conducted in 1972. An informant from North Preston highlights the general opinion among parents towards education: “Most of them felt education was no good. The only thing that the colored man could do is go into the ministry... and sometimes the people were so poor some of the teachers didn’t get paid.”⁵³ Education beyond the ministry was not necessarily an aspiration for most blacks historically. The 1973 publication *Forgotten Canadians: The Blacks of Nova Scotia* by Frances Henry offers anthropological thinking amid the civil rights movement. Henry suggests that Blacks in Nova Scotia were going through a period of transition in the 1970s which involved restructuring of values, beliefs, and attitudes. She attributes this reform to ‘an increasing awareness, especially on the part of younger Blacks, but

⁵² Abucar, *Struggle for Development*, 48.

⁵³ Selina Lani Pratt, *Black Education in Nova Scotia* (1972), 45.

amongst older members of the community as well, of the importance of the Black Militant movement in the United States and in the urban areas of Canada.⁵⁴ An examination of basic attitudes towards education is included as part of Henry's study. This section is particularly interesting in that captures a stance on education from the period itself. Henry writes:

Our findings indicate that the Black people in Nova Scotia aspire to the same educational standards and share the same positive values about education as does the White middle-class society in which they live. The motivation is there; the task is to provide opportunity for these people.⁵⁵

Henry's observation is interesting to consider in relation to integration. At the time of this publication, integration had been in effect for a little over a decade.

The article "North Preston's Struggle to Obtain Equality in Education" highlights many of the struggles experienced specifically at Graham Creighton High School. The authors of the *BLAC Report* entitle the period 1960-1988 as the 'Era of Integration,' and provide a short history of the school. The school held the promise of a new era—a high school diploma for all—but any hopes of change were dashed. A quote from a former student illustrates the true nature of institutional racism:

When we started visiting other high schools for sports events and seeing their sports equipment, we asked ourselves how we were supposed to compete if the School Board doesn't equip us? And as for the academics, with the exception of a few teachers, there was NO push, NO encouragement.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Henry, *Forgotten Canadians*, 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁶ "North Preston's Struggle to Obtain Equality in Education," *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*, Volume II (Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994), 83.

The portrait that is painted of Graham Creighton here shows the ways in which institutional racism continued through lack of resources, supplies, and quality education. A lack of interest on the part of the School Board carries through the story. As noted above, between 1969-1970 a Black Student Union was formed at Graham Creighton (the first in Nova Scotia and possibly in Canada). The Union called upon fellow students to drop their activities and start working collectively. The Union repeatedly requested a meeting with the School Board to discuss their concerns on the education they were receiving. The School Board instead sent a member of the Preston community to speak with the students to deflect their appeals. The Human Rights Commission, however, set up a meeting with the students to discuss their situation. Furthermore, the students received outreach from black students at Saint Mary's University and Dalhousie University. As the School Board continued to refuse to meet with the Black Student Union, a student boycott was called. Newspapers compared the Union to Black Power Movement in the United States. The School Board then allegedly threatened the Union President with expulsion and placed the student on suspension. The Black Student Union had lost its voice and ceased to exist two years later.⁵⁷

The story of integration at Graham Creighton High School is undoubtedly complex. Racism plays a part in the tensions, a racism that is distinct to Nova Scotia. The discrimination that is present in the province is deeply rooted in history and in place. The 1960s civil rights movements inspired an awareness of the inequality that was being

⁵⁷ "North Preston's Struggle to Obtain Equality in Education," *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity— Empowering Black Learners*, Volume II (Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994), 94.

faced in both the regional and international contexts. In examining education specifically, institutional racism encompasses the black experience. Considering historical and geographic elements in the story of integration are important as they 'set the stage' for the story to unfold.

CHAPTER III

The Institution and Integration

Graham Creighton High School opened in 1962 in Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia and served the population of North Preston, East Preston, and Cherry Brook as a Junior and Senior High School. As Nova Scotia adopted integrational policies, Graham Creighton became a project school for integration, and the communities of Cole Harbour, Lawrencetown and Eastern Passage attended Graham Creighton High School. By sending students from neighbouring white communities to the Cherry Brook school, the Municipal School Board of the County of Halifax was adhering to desegregation policy they had instated in the area. As County Council minutes from February 18, 1971 show, the Municipal School Board had established ‘a policy of school integration’ in the Graham Creighton area.¹ Integration was a frequent topic at both the Council and School Board levels. The Municipal School Board of the County of Halifax was responsible for the management of all the schools in the county region, excluding those managed by Dartmouth and Halifax School Boards. Graham Creighton, and its feeder schools, were all managed by the Municipal School Board. The Board handled myriad of responsibilities from employment contracts to school maintenance. Larger items of concern, such as the construction of new schools, were referred to the County Council with recommendations from the School Board. The Board worked with the Department of Education to ensure it met the educational standards set out by the Province of Nova

¹ Municipality of the County of Halifax, February Council Session, February 16, 1971, 29, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

Scotia at the time. In addition, each school section had its own Board of Trustees, who would refer their concerns to the School Board.

To clearly understand the role of the institution and its many levels of power in the story of Graham Creighton High School, the records of the Municipal School Board, complemented by the records of Halifax County Council, are consulted to get a clear picture of the both the problems faced by these bodies of power, as well as their successes in instituting new programs in the Graham Creighton District of Schools. Many of the records feature undertones of racialized thinking, however, the language is crafted in the typical, passive minute-taking fashion of yesteryear. To critically evaluate the presence of the institution in the function of Graham Creighton, the minutes from 1960-1975 are assessed to show continuity and change over a critical time in the civil rights era. Furthermore, this timeframe allows the final chapter to pick up with the opening of Cole Harbour High in 1979 and to explore the ongoing legacy of the Creighton experience. The Municipal School Board and Council records contain the details of activity at the Graham Creighton High School. There are of course isolated incidents of interest, as well as several themes that are discussed. Certain issues pertaining to the Graham Creighton School District are brought up continually: integration, student transfers, overcrowding, the condition of the Graham Creighton itself, auxiliary program, incentives, and violence / vandalism. These topics will be explored to better understand the difficulties officials faced in the operation of Graham Creighton High School.

Implementing Integration:

Although separate schools were officially abolished in 1954,² it was not until 1964 that real change began to take place.³ The Municipal School Board, in accordance with the Department of Education, began the systematic integration of schools in the county. Minutes from an April 1964 Municipal School Board meeting show that the Board actively adopted the integration policy instated by the Deputy Minister of Education. At a meeting in April 1964, the Board read a letter from Dr. Moffatt, the Deputy Minister of Education, concerning integration in four school sections in the county: Cherry Brook, Upper Hammonds Plains and Lucasville. The letter outlines that the Minister of Education has secured funding, in principle, beyond the regular funding granted by the Foundation Program. As the record reads:

The Government has agreed that this grant will be on a regular Provincial proportion paid toward the capital costs plus one-half of the Municipal proportion. In Halifax County, for example, the grant would be the regular 43% plus one half of 57%. This grant would only be available for the construction of classrooms that would be required to effect [*sic*] the integration in the first instance and would not be made toward the provision of extra school facilities such as Industrial Arts and

² Separate schools were never legally enforced in Nova Scotia, although the 1918 *Education Act* ensured that they could continue to be established. As Robin Winks notes: “The government could continue to establish separate school for... colors, but if no Negro school existed, admission to the publish school was guaranteed... Between 1918 and 1954, when the racial reference was dropped from the statute, the Negro schools continued to fare badly, and the most blind of school inspectors could not have pretended that separate education was equal education.” Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1971), 379. Wink’s references the 1954 *Education Act* as the point at which the racial reference was dropped from the statute, citing ‘passim’ at the end of his reference. This seems apt, as the allusions to separate schooling are found throughout the 1918 *Education Act*, but there is no direct reference to race in the 1954 *Education Act*.

³ “The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia,” *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*, Volume II (Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994), 25.

Home Economics or for the construction of additional rooms to look after an increasing school population after the original integration has taken place.⁴ The Board was not impressed with the proposal of the Deputy Minister, specifically for financial reasons. Mr. Marriott states that he was under the impression that the Government would be prepared to fully cover the costs of integration, given that ‘the Government feels that something should be done to integrate these areas in order to give better opportunities both educationally and socially.’⁵ Mr. Marriott asserts that the Government should cover the costs of integration, since the schools in the area were ‘carrying out a good program.’ As the record reads:

Mr. Marriott... does not feel that the Board should jump at this proposal too hastily because, as he pointed out, the Government feels that there is possibly more of a social problem than an educational problem, and, therefore, the Municipal School Board cannot be expected to solve this particular problem integrating at the expense of all the ratepayers in Halifax County. He further pointed out that the Government’s proposal is based on the cost of \$12,500 a room but it is costing the Municipality between \$18,000 and \$20,000 to build a classroom. He feels that this may not have been considered at the time that they made this proposal. He suggested that a letter be written to Dr. Moffatt pointing out that another informal meeting with the people concerned should be had to further discuss the financial arrangement in more detail.⁶

The passage above shows the tensions involved in integrating, especially the unwillingness of the School Board to fund the initiative with the money from the ratepayers of Halifax. The idea of ‘a social problem’ rather ‘than an educational problem’ is also important to highlight. By stating that there is a social problem, the Board shifts the responsibility from the education system by making it a social welfare problem. As the *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*,

⁴ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, April 29, 1964, 1612-1613, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Volume II notes, the main reason that integration took so long to reach Nova Scotian schools was the reluctance of politicians and policy makers. To accentuate the nature of this adversity to change, the report cites a 1968 instance where ‘a Black child was refused burial in a St. Croix graveyard upon a 1907 by-law which read “*Not any Negro not any Indian shall be buried in St. Croix cemetery.*”’⁷ The adherence to antiquated laws as late as 1968 shows the slow-moving nature of social change in Nova Scotia.

In June 1964, negotiations were still taking place to integrate schools in the county area. Again, most the dialogue focusses on the funding aspect of the integration process. As noted in the passage above, the Foundation Program was the initial funding provided to integrate black students into neighbouring communities. The June meeting illustrates the lengthy negotiations required to integrate schools in the county area. As the record states:

A letter was read from the Deputy Minister of Education concerning the integrating of school in the predominantly negro school sections with the schools in the neighbouring section. He pointed out that the Minister has agreed that the Department will pay the Provincial proportion and one half of the Municipal proportion of the total actual cost of erecting and equipping [*sic*] new classrooms required for the initial integration of schools in the negro sections with schools in the neighbouring sections.

The Deputy Minister pointed out that they will share only in the types of costs that are already provided for in the Foundation Program Regulations; for example, buildings, furnishing and classroom equipment. They will not share except in the regular way in additional facilities such as Industrial Arts and Domestic Science which are not now provided for in the negro section.⁸

⁷ “The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia,” *BLAC Report* Volume II, 26.

⁸ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, June 3, 1964, 1634-1635, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

The Board agreed to the integration in principle. The biggest issue with integration, as with most bureaucratic decisions, was funding. It was not March 1965, almost a year after preliminary negotiations, that the Deputy Minister of Education agreed to pay for 100 percent of the costs of integrating in the County Schools. The record states:

Mr. Marriott brought up the question of the meeting that he had with the Deputy Minister of Education concerning the tying in of the colored sections with the neighbouring sections, and he pointed out that the Deputy [*sic*] Minister is prepared to assist the Municipal School Board in building sufficient rooms on to the neighbouring school section school to the extent of 100 per cent of the cost.⁹

The first integrated high school class would enter Graham Creighton in September 1965. Graham Creighton was the first integrated high school in Nova Scotia, with its first integrated class graduating in 1969.¹⁰

Once the initial integration took place, it was not necessarily smooth sailing. The Municipal School Board met frequently with Dr. W. P. Oliver of the Department of Education to discuss matters of integration and the educational experience of Black Nova Scotians. A lengthy excerpt from February 1969, the same year the first integrated high school class would graduate, highlights the problems being faced by black students. In this instance, Oliver and Mr. Marvin Schiff, Coordinator of the Human Rights Commission, meet with the Board to discuss the construction of an integrated senior elementary in Cole Harbour to serve the Preston population. Oliver cites the monumental 1966 work by James Samuel Coleman, entitled "Equality in Educational Opportunities" (more commonly known as the Coleman Report) as he shares his ideas about self-

⁹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 25, 1965, 1582, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

¹⁰ "The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia," *BLAC Report*, Volume II, 25.

determination in the integration experience. As the minutes reflect: “The report indicated that the attitude of the student towards integrating himself was a stronger stimulation than recruitment of well qualified teachers. The pupil’s feeling that he has some control over his own destiny is more important than all school factors together.”¹¹ Oliver highlights his concerns about the Preston area in particular, noting that ‘they are two or three years retarded academically with a small number going through high school.’¹² He argues that an integrated senior elementary would mean ‘meaningful contact with society’ for a possible 400 students at the elementary level.¹³ The record highlights:

[Dr. Oliver] went on to say that if the school is not constructed it would mean that the school population of some 800 to 1000 students would be confined to the North and East Preston areas. They will be isolated for the first six grades, with two or three years of academic retardation, and will be in their late teens before they have any contact with society.¹⁴

Oliver then reverberates the Coleman rhetoric of self-determination as he is questioned by the Board as to the impact of the Black United Front. As the record states:

Commissioner Hudson stated that it seems to be the impression among some of the County Councillors that there is no need for further integration because of the formation of the Black United Front. Dr. Oliver pointed out that the purpose of the Black United Front is to enable the black people to come together and help themselves without the influence of someone else, but that is not a racist movement.¹⁵

The example above is significant for two reasons. First, it highlights the idea of self-determination in the Nova Scotian context. Oliver cites The Coleman Report, an

¹¹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 12, 1969, 2953-2954, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

extremely influential publication during the Civil Rights Movement demonstrating the far-reaching influence of the United States in the context of Black Nova Scotians. Self-determination is a key concept in the Coleman Report and the quote about ‘control over his own destiny’ is taken directly from the text.¹⁶ Self-determination and education were both major concerns of the Black United Front as evidenced in their publication of GRASP (Growth, Readiness, Advancement, Self-determination, People) Newspaper.¹⁷ The newspaper noted several issues in the black educational experience, including ‘the funnelling of Black students into the general program’, ‘the lack of Black history within the school curriculum’, and the general lack of confidence exhibited by black students.¹⁸ The Black United Front took steps to bring equality to education in the province and presented a brief in 1971 explicitly linking low educational attainment to institutionalized racism in the province.¹⁹ The fact that Oliver had to emphasize that the Black United Front was ‘not a racist movement’ in the 1969 meeting truly illustrates the ignorance on the part of the institution on the issue of civil rights. The second point of significance is Oliver’s argument that the Cole Harbour School would allow the children of Preston to ‘be brought into meaningful contact with society’ as the integration process continued. He notes that the Trustees in the area would prefer the option of a senior elementary as opposed to the alternative proposed by the Capital Building Committee, which was to add

¹⁶ James S. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 23.

¹⁷ For more information on the GRASP publication, see the Lynn Jones African-Canadian Diaspora Heritage Collection at the Saint Mary’s University Archives. Included are original GRASP publications as well as an unpublished history of the newspaper by Julie Sobowale.

¹⁸ “The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia,” *BLAC Report* Volume II, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

rooms onto existing facilities. This was likely due to the condition of the schools in the areas—Lake Loon School would close in 1968 and Partridge River School in 1978.²⁰ Students from the Preston areas eventually attending schools in neighbouring communities. The *BLAC Report* argues that this was a one-sided integration: “Instead of improving the conditions of the Black schools and/or bussing White children into Black communities, integration was interpreted one way – that of bussing Black students into White schools.”²¹ While officials were trying to continue the civil rights movement by expediting the integration process, the result was that black students ended up being transported to a white community. After Graham Creighton ceased to be a high school, black students were bussed into neighbouring white communities for at least their high school education.

Dr. Oliver’s recommendations in the February 1969 meeting were met with more discussion of budgetary considerations. The argument is made by Oliver and Schiff that the concern to the situation of integration ‘must be approached from the understanding of social costs.’²² Schiff is quoted as stating: “The cost of not producing people who are capable of exercising their full abilities can, in the near future, be measured in terms of dollars and cents.”²³ Still, the Commissioners and Councillors deliberated on the costs of implementing an integrated program and griped that 90% of the County budget for the 1969 fiscal year was already committed. The idea of adding additional rooms to existing

²⁰ “The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia,” *BLAC Report* Volume II, 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 12, 1969, 2954, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

²³ *Ibid.*

facilities was once again recommended, although Schiff made the astute observation that ‘the concept of adding to existing facilities is rather a fallacious one as far as economic reality is concerned. This would only mean that the problem would be postponed for one or possibly two years.’²⁴ The Board decided that the construction of the school be postponed until the Board and Council could negotiate the costs.²⁵

Less than a week after the Municipal School Board’s meeting with Dr. Oliver, the County Council dealt with its own series of integration issues. The February 1969 Council Session shows that the Council had been charged with discrimination. Minutes from what must have been a lively debate show that Mr. Perry, representing the Municipal School Board, has released to the press that he asked the School Board to reconsider a proposed school in the County (one at Beechville). Councillor Tonks questions Mr. Perry about statements Perry made that integration was no longer of importance to the people of Preston. Perry declares that the entire situation arose from hearsay. In his defense, Mr. Perry cites Graham Creighton High School as a success story for the model of integration and to show his support for it. As the minutes state:

In reply to Councillor Tonks, Mr. Perry said that he did not make a recommendation to Dr. Oliver, that it had been suggested that the matter of integration was not as important to the people of the district as they had been lead to believe so that Dr. Oliver was brought in by the Municipal School Board to clarify this point. He said that this whole problem arose from hearsay.

In reply to Councillor Tonks, Mr. Perry said that the integration at the Graham Creighton High School had been very successful because there is an increasingly large number of students going to that high school than ever before.

²⁴ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 12, 1969, 2954, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

²⁵ Ibid.

Councillor Tonks said that accusing the Council of discrimination against the people in Preston then is purely conjecture.²⁶

Of course, enrollment numbers at a school are no measure for the success of integration, but Perry cites Graham Creighton nonetheless. In response to the accusations of discrimination from Preston, Councillor Johnson of the area states that the people had not complained of discrimination but are interested in integrated schools. It appears that Perry was caught in a press release gone wrong. The Council, wishing to remain politically correct, warn Perry to follow the direction of the Council or he will be replaced. Perry was not replaced and remains a consistent figure in the integration debate. Two years after discrimination accusation, Graham Creighton is mentioned in the integration context. Mr. Perry again defends the success of integration at Graham Creighton. As the minutes show:

Mr. Perry said that it should be considered also, the fact that the Municipal School Board had established a policy of school integration in the area.

Councillor Tonks felt that judging from visits to the Graham Creighton High School this had not been very successful because there were two (2) student lounges and white children were in one and colored children in the other.

Mr. Perry said that in the Graham Creighton High School it can be noted that there is a separation of students with different backgrounds and interest the same as in other schools; that the students tend to group themselves that way, there are group of white children and groups within the group of black children and he felt that the attack on failure of integration was unjust.²⁷

It is difficult to tell what Perry's true thoughts were about integration, but it is apparent that he judged its success based on the physical integration of students rather the social

²⁶ Municipality of the County of Halifax, February Council Session, February 18, 1969, 6, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

²⁷ Municipality of the County of Halifax, February Council Session, February 16, 1971, 29, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

intermingling. It is also difficult to follow Mr. Perry's thoughts on this matter as there were two Mr. Perry's in the Municipal School system: a Mr. K. L. Perry and a Mr. K. W. Perry. The two are often only referred to as 'Mr. Perry' and it is impossible to know which man the minutes refer to. In this case, the reference is to the Superintendent of Schools, Mr. K. W. Perry. Nonetheless, the abovementioned examples indicate the hesitation of both the Council and the Municipal School Board in implementing integration. Integration was a slow process in the Graham Creighton District, one that began in 1964 and lasted almost a decade. This meant new territory for many students, both black and white.

Student Transfers:

Space and place play largely into the story of Graham Creighton. The geography of the school district was often contested, reminiscent of the constant rezoning in the Preston area. Hugh Millward observes in his publication, "Peri-Urban Residential Development in the Halifax Region 1960-2000: Magnets, Constraints, and Planning Policies," that development was constrained in 'closed' communities like those in the Preston area.²⁸ The nature of these communities meant that outside perceptions influenced internal development. As Millward writes: "Both pride and prejudice play their parts in deterring development, along with real and perceived issues such as crime and the quality of schooling."²⁹ Perceived notions of the Preston and Cherry Brook areas,

²⁸ Hugh Millward, "Peri-Urban Residential Development in the Halifax Region 1960-2000: Magnets, Constraints, and Planning Policies," in *The Canadian Geographer*, volume 46 no. 1 (2002), 43.

²⁹ Millward, "Peri-Urban Residential Development," 43.

or more aptly prejudiced notions, contributed to tensions between the integrated communities. As a result, some parents petitioned to have their children transferred to other schools in the County. Transfers were a common occurrence in the Graham Creighton and were a trend in the district, especially in relation to the East Preston and Porter's Lake dividing line. For example, in 1960, a Mr. Vesteege, a white man, of East Preston appealed to the Board to have his five-year-old son sent to the school at Porter's Lake instead of the Partridge River School. The Commissioners Hall and Redmond moved 'that since [Mr. Vesteege] resides in the Partridge River School Section, that his son must attend the school there.'³⁰ However, when a Mrs. Borgal, a white woman, requested her daughter be transferred from the East Preston School to the Porter's Lake School in 1962, the outcome was different. After some investigation, the Board decided to approve Mrs. Borgal's request. As the record states:

Mrs. Archibald asked how the situation was coming along with regards to the Borgal child being permitted to attend the school at Porter's Lake.

Mr. Marriott pointed out that he had checked into this situation and had found that there were situations where there are children attending the Porter's Lake School who should be going to the East Preston School and [*sic*] vice versa. He said also that he was in contact with Mr. Gerald Tynes, the Supervising Principal of East Preston, who agreed that it would be all right for the Borgal child to attend the Porter's Lake School.

It was moved by Commissioner Archibald and seconded by Commissioner Connor that the Borgal child be permitted to attend the school at Porter's Lake since this has been approved by Mr. Tynes of East Preston School.³¹

³⁰ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 23, 1960, 423, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

³¹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 7, 1962, 1052, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

It is interesting that in this case, the Board moved to transfer the Borgal child to the Porter's Lake School upon the recommendation of the Principal of East Preston. The Vesteege and Borgal cases are not isolated, and the Board makes note that there were students attending the Porter's Lake School who should have been going to East Preston and vice versa. The case of students attending a school in a different district was not uncommon in the Graham Creighton area. For example, in 1966, the Trustees of William Ross School appealed for the case of a boy living on Lake Loon Road. The transfer was approved in this case and the language of this minute is a bit more blatant than the previous instances, with Lake Loon Road as cited as 'undesirable territory.' As the record states:

A request was received from the Trustees of William Ross School on behalf of the Bundy child living on the Lake Loon Road to be permitted to attend the William Ross School. A doctor's certificate accompanied by the letter stating that the mother was in poor health and that her mental state is such that the fact the child must go through undesirable territory by himself upsets her nervous state.

It was moved by Commissioner Scott and seconded by Commissioner Snow that this request be approved for the reasons stated in the accompanying letter.³²

Another request was received at the same meeting from a Mr. Ralph Sparks, a black man, on Cherry Brook Road. He requested that his daughter, Florenda, be permitted to attend the William Ross School in Westphal. The Board approved the transfer 'given the circumstances,' although the reason itself is not cited.³³ The Board appears to be ambivalent in their criteria for allowing transfers from school districts. This uncertainty becomes clear as the matter is discussed at length in the 1966 meeting. The meeting

³² Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, September 27, 1966, 2171, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

³³ Ibid.

addressed the issues of censuses for ratepayers when not all students were attending the schools in their prescribed zone. The Board recognizes that this is a matter of race, and although it is against regulations it occurs nonetheless. As the minutes state:

The Chairman pointed out that the matter of the white children living in the Salmon River Bridge area going to William Ross has been going on for some time and he said the Board really did not have an answer to this problem but since this has been going on there could be difficulties encountered when the people are asked to send their children to East Preston.

Both the Board of Trustees and the Municipal School Board agreed that this has become sort of a tradition although, according to the Regulations, it should not be permitted...

The same difficulty exists on the Bell Road side as there were white children living in the East Preston School Section attending the school at Porter's Lake and there were colored children living in the Porter's Lake School Section attending the school in East Preston.³⁴

The example above illustrates the difficulties that the Municipal School Board faced in approving transfers to and from the East Preston School. It is interesting to note that the Board refers directly to a racial issue in this meeting, pointing out that white and colored children were attending schools in the Porter's Lake and East Preston sections, respectively. The Chairman notes that 'there could be difficulties encountered when the people are asked to send their children to East Preston' since this white and black precedent had been established. The Preston area was contested in terms of School Districts and these examples highlight the struggle of integrational policies.

All the examples above deal with schools in Graham Creighton area but not with Graham Creighton itself. Due to the large nature of the district that Graham Creighton served, it makes sense that students did not transfer as readily due to proximity. There

³⁴ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, May 31, 1967, 2352-2353, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

were fewer options for high schools as well, accounting for fewer transfers. Two examples of transfers are found in the records: one for a Gordon Wiswell, white, to be transferred to Graham Creighton, and one for a David Goldsworthy, white, to be transferred from Graham Creighton. The first case comes from the Trustees at West Lawrencetown requesting a transfer for Wiswell, a grade VII student, for behavioural problems. The Board approved to transfer Wiswell to Graham Creighton High School.³⁵ In the second case a request was received from Mrs. Gladys Goldsworthy asking to have her son transferred from Graham Creighton to Eastern Shore District High School. In this instance, the Board denied the request because ‘in their opinion, the reasons were not sufficient to warrant the transfer.’³⁶ In all the cases above, it is illustrated that contention existed on the borders of the Preston School District. While some cases are more explicitly racial than others, an issue was present and for the most part remained unresolved.

Overcrowding:

Integration was a social project primarily, but also served as a response to the needs of neighbouring communities. The quick and widespread development of the peri-urban area of the Halifax County is explored Millward’s 2002 article “Peri-Urban Residential Development in the Halifax Region” he explores the explosive growth within the commuter belt of Halifax and partially attributes the development to low land prices

³⁵ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, September 27, 1966, 2171-2172, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

³⁶ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, September 18, 1968, 2655, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

and minimal developmental controls.³⁷ Millward notes the major development plans in the area, remarking that most ‘suburban extensions to Halifax and Dartmouth between 1945 and the early 1960s occurred in piecemeal fashion, with little or no planning control.’³⁸ As the Halifax grew, the MacDonald and MacKay bridges were built, prompting development east of Dartmouth and in Cole Harbour.³⁹ The Halifax Region Housing Survey, conducted between 1960-1963, was the first attempt at regional planning and had lasting influence. As Millward writes: “With provincial assistance, Halifax County municipality was encouraged to develop sewage treatment plants to service these [areas]... [with] one at Eastern Passage to served Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage.”⁴⁰ The introduction of water and sewer combined with low land prices attributed to the rapid development in the area.⁴¹

The influx of population resulted in overcrowding that the Municipal School Board had to make efforts to accommodate. The policy of integration aided in overcrowding issue as it provided a justification for transporting students out of isolated areas.⁴² Of the communities in the Graham Creighton District, Cole Harbour and Eastern Passage saw the most growth, with Eastern Passage experiencing more growing pains than the community of Cole Harbour. This is in part due to the lack of infrastructure in Eastern Passage. As Cole Harbour grew, so did the services available in the community, while Eastern Passage remained an afterthought. Millward points out that the model for

³⁷ Millward, “Peri-Urban Residential Development,” 34.

³⁸ Ibid., 36.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Millward, “Peri-Urban Residential Development,” 36-39.

⁴¹ For a visual as to how the population grew over time, refer to the appendix Figures 3-5.

⁴² Municipal School Board Reports to Council, Activities and Decisions, May 20, 1969.

development was that of a small town, with water and sewer and a high school and a target population of four to ten thousand.⁴³ The lack of services available in Eastern Passage was noted by Council in February 1971, when Councillor Tonks asked how many other ‘communities in Nova Scotia with a population of six thousand (6000) and six (6) elementary schools had neither a junior or a senior high school.’⁴⁴ Mr. Perry’s reply again pulls on the integration policy to defend the position of the Municipal School Board in not providing Eastern Passage with a junior or senior high school at this time.

Eastern Passage presented a unique set of issues to the Municipal School Board. The community did not have a senior high school, and its residents were bussed to other communities (the bussing locations changed over time) for junior and senior high school, prior to the construction of Eastern Passage Junior High in 1974. The Municipal School Board discussed the issue of Eastern Passage at a meeting in 1960. As the record states:

The next item was the students attending the Town and County Schools... It was generally agreed that the Administrative Staff of both School boards would have to work out the cost of attendance for these students attending both the Town and County Schools. It was pointed out by the Municipal School Board that we are planning on building another high school to accommodate the student from the area out beyond Woodlawn but were a bit concerned about the students in the South East Passage as to where they could attend the high school. Mr. Marriott felt that there were around 120 children coming from the Eastern Passage Cow Bay area that are presently attending the Prince Andrew High School. The Dartmouth board pointed out that some arrangements could be made between the two Boards regarding the erection of new schools in order to accommodate the County children. The arrangement could be worked out with regards to assistance in building and maintenance costs, teachers salaries, etc.⁴⁵

⁴³ Millward, “Peri-Urban Residential Development,” 44.

⁴⁴ Municipality of the County of Halifax, February Council Session, February 16, 1971, 29, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁴⁵ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, November 15, 1960, 656, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

In order to obtain a high school education, students from Eastern Passage and Cow Bay were attending Prince Andrew High School. In 1961, the Trustees at Eastern Passage Cow Bay requested the erection of a high school for their area. The Board responded to the request and said they were ‘definitely considering high school facilities to take care of the high school students presently attending the Prince Andrew High School’.⁴⁶ An inquiry was made in 1961 to the Texaco company regarding their development plans for the area in an attempt to plan for growth, although the areas were already overcrowded at this time.⁴⁷

The petition to erect a high school became a defining feature of the Eastern Passage community. Over the period in question, the Trustees petitioned on numerous occasions for both a junior and high school. The Trustees of Eastern Passage petitioned again in March 1966 for the erection of a junior high and high school facility for their community. The record states:

A request was received from the Trustees of Eastern Passage making an application for a junior high school in their area or consideration of a combined junior and senior high school. They gave rough estimates of enrollments and felt that there would be eight full classes at the Junior High School Level and because of the possibility of the Catholic church closing the parochial school they feel that the Junior High School should be ready for use by September 1967. It was agreed that this matter should be referred to Mr. Marriott and the School Inspector to investigate.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 8, 1961, 741, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁴⁷ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, November 22, 1961, 975, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁴⁸ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 2, 1966, 2028, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

The Trustees of Eastern Passage would not get their request for a combined junior and senior high school. In fact, they would not get a school at all. In December 1966, the Board decided to erect a junior high school in Cole Harbour to serve the communities of Eastern Passage, Westphal, Shearwater, Lawrencetown, Preston, and New Road. The recommendation was for a 16-room school with a future expansion to 24 rooms when required. The location of the school in Cole Harbour was to give the same service to all areas in the district.⁴⁹ The Trustees of Eastern Passage met with the Board in March of 1967 to discuss their concerns about their children being bussed outside of the community. The details of the meeting provide insight into the beginnings of what would become an ongoing battle for Eastern Passage to obtain their own high school. The Trustees in Eastern Passage argued that the school should be built in their community, as they had the largest population of children attending the school. The Board, however, argues that Cole Harbour is the most sensible area of the school. As the minutes state:

Mr. Perry pointed out that he and the Inspector had looked over various sites on the eastern side of the harbour and had concluded that Cole Harbour was the most sensible area as this school will take in children from the Eastern Passage, Cole Harbour, Westphal, New Road and West Lawrencetown areas. He said that it was necessary to build the school to house children who are presently in Graham Creighton High School as this school is becoming overcrowded; and it was more economically sound to build the school in a Central location where all of the children would have an equal distance to travel in order to get to the school. Mr. Perry further pointed out that educationally and socially speaking it would be wise, he felt, to build... in a central area like Cole Harbour. It would serve the entire area and offer a comprehensive, general, academic and commercial program.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, December 7, 1966, 2227, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵⁰ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 15, 1967, 2300, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

The Board again uses the context of integration and equal access to schooling programs to rationalize the placement of a junior high school in Cole Harbour to serve the needs of the surrounding communities. Although the Trustees of Eastern Passage argue that they would like to keep their children home until at least grade XI, the Board argues that integration is the most sensible decision in this case and that it will provide a comprehensive program for all students.⁵¹

The construction of Cole Harbour Junior High was meant to alleviate some of the overcrowding felt from the spur of development. The original plan was for a 16-classroom school with a future eight room expansion, but that plan was quickly upgraded to a 22 room school upon initial construction.⁵² Although many appeals for reconsideration as to the location of construction were received by the Board, the Board argued that the central location of Cole Harbour would most effectively serve all communities. One such example is shown in an April 1968 meeting. As the record states:

Mr. Perry explained the reason for requesting that the school be placed in Cole Harbour, pointing out that although there are a greater number of children that would be attending this school from Eastern Passage, the near future will show that it will be necessary to start removing some of the lower grades from the Graham Creighton High School and placing them in this Jr. High, as well as closing out some of the junior high school grades in the Preston areas and West Lawrencetown. He said it was the past Board's thinking to centralize this Jr. High School so there would not be the problem of some of the students having to travel the total distance in order to attend this school, and if the school was built in Eastern Passage then it would certainly mean that another school would have to be constructed in the Graham Creighton area to look after the junior high school grades there.⁵³

⁵¹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 15, 1967, 2300, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵² Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, April 10, 1968, 2533, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵³ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, April 17, 1968, 2537, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

Cole Harbour Junior High School, later renamed Sir Robert Borden, served the Cole Harbour, Lawrencetown, Eastern Passage, East Preston, and New Road as a junior high school.⁵⁴ The question of a high school for Eastern Passage was brought up in a May 1971 meeting. A letter was read from the Board of Trustees at Eastern Passage requesting to withhold the addition to Graham Creighton High School. They requested a junior-senior high school be constructed instead. The Board remained firm on its decision to add facilities to Graham Creighton instead of erecting a new facility in Eastern Passage.⁵⁵ The subject was brought up again in October 1971, this time, by the Ratepayers Association of Eastern Passage and Councilor Tonks from the area. The meeting was to request the erection of a junior-senior high. The Board again explained that the addition to Graham Creighton was meant to alleviate overcrowding and provide more programs to a greater number of students.⁵⁶ The approval for the construction of a junior high was given in May 1973.⁵⁷ Eastern Passage Junior High School opened its doors for the 1974-1975 school year,⁵⁸ but the community would continue to utilize high school facilities in other communities (Graham Creighton and later Cole Harbour District High School in 1979) up to the present day. The construction of the Eastern Passage High School, which is

⁵⁴ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, October 21, 1970, 3370, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵⁵ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, May 19, 1971, 3531, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵⁶ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, October 6, 1971, 3615, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵⁷ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, May 30, 1973, 3878. Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁵⁸ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 13, 1974, 4006, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

occurring at the time of this publication, will be examined in further detail in the conclusion.

In September 1974, the first proposal is seen for the construction of a high school in Cole Harbour. The high school was a response to the growing needs of the Cole Harbour area and would serve the communities of Westphal, North Preston, East Preston, and Eastern Passage. It was recommended that Graham Creighton be retained as a junior and senior high school.⁵⁹ Essentially, this was the preliminary plan for the construction of Cole Harbour District High School.

The Condition of Graham Creighton

Graham Creighton itself was a frequent topic of the Municipal School Board. Predominantly, the entries concern maintenance as the school was in constant need of repairs due to faulty craftsmanship. The subject of the need of communities that the school served was also recurrent topic. In some instances, the Board met at the school to discuss matters pertaining to its operation. One such meeting in April 1963 (within Graham Creighton's first year of operation) highlights some of the deficiencies of the building. The fire alarm system was not operating, and the air ventilation system has not functioning properly. The roof was leaking, the steps in the foyer were cracked, and the paint under the canopy was peeling. Furthermore, the Industrial Arts Department was not set up and therefore the children were not getting use out of the machinery.⁶⁰ While it is

⁵⁹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, September 11, 1974, 4055, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁶⁰ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, April 3, 1963, 1384, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

often the case of newly opened schools to experience some issues in terms of resources or material, the case of Graham Creighton highlights a somewhat deficient learning environment. At a meeting in January 1966, Mr. Reid Harrison, the Principal of Graham Creighton at the time, noted the following issues: the school was short of window drapes; the windows in the gymnasium leaked; and the heat was inconsistent. He also made a request for an electric gestetner as the school only had a hand-operated one to serve the population.⁶¹

Harrison's requests were not limited maintenance issues. He outlined to the Board the problems he experienced at Graham Creighton High School in terms of educational achievement. Principal Harrison indicates the need for a guidance counsellor with social work experience, as well as some different programs to assist the population of 'culturally deprived children.' The record states:

It is his opinion there are culturally deprived children who may not receive the academic training that is necessary for them to have in order to make their way in the world. The achievement tests that have been carried out on these children indicate that they are below the actual Grade level that they are in and that it is in his opinion that the majority of the students in the Graham Creighton High School are definitely not University material.⁶²

Harrison requested that extra help classes be set up for the culturally deprived students, as well as consideration be made for a guidance counsellor. He suggests that the counsellor have social work training, in order to know 'how to deal with some of these situations.'

Harrison also requests a music teacher and additional industrial arts teachers in order to

⁶¹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, January 12, 1966, 1982-1983, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁶² Ibid.

provide the students with a quality education.⁶³ Harrison advocated for general needs for the school as well as some special programs to assist children who had not necessarily had the academic training needed to move on to secondary education. Writing off the entire student body of Graham Creighton's 'definitely not university material' seems harsh, but Harrison seems well-intentioned in securing some additional programming and support for the student body. The board agreed to purchase drapes and an electric gestetner. The Board also employed the services of the contracting company Tremco to fix the leak in the gymnasium windows, which the Tremco attributed to poor flashings and fascia.⁶⁴ His request for a guidance counsellor was also met, as indicated by a letter read at a December 1966 meeting. However, there was not adequate space for the Counsellor to work, and Harrison again brought up the education programs being offered. The record states:

A letter was read from the Supervising Principal of Graham Creighton High School pointing out that there is a definite need for adequate office space for the Guidance Counsellor. Mr. Harrison pointed out that adequate facilities are necessary if they are to take advantage of the various aspects of the comprehensive school program. He feels fortunate that his school was chosen as one of the experimental schools participating in the modified Grade VII program; and in addition, they are making careful plans to introduce the General Course in Grade X next year. He is also asking consideration to introduce the Commercial Program in the school next year. The staff definitely feels that, taking into account the population they serve, a broad and diversified program is necessary.⁶⁵

⁶³ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, January 12, 1966, 1982-1983, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁶⁴ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, January 19, 1966, 1989, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁶⁵ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, December 7, 1966, 2229, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

The topic of the guidance counsellor not having a designated space comes up in the oral interviews. The need for general courses was also reminiscent of the previous assertion that the students Graham Creighton were not university material. One student featured in the *BLAC Report* aptly states: “And as for the academics, with the exception of a few teachers, there was NO push, NO Encouragement.”⁶⁶

The Auxiliary Program:

Auxiliary education became a frequent topic of the Board. The auxiliary program was meant for students who required remedial training and who could not succeed at the regular academic level. The *BLAC Report* notes that the Board established the auxiliary program ‘instead of providing extra resources to assist these students with their education.’⁶⁷ The report brings forth the experience of one student in relation to the auxiliary program. The student recalls:

The teachers took smart, I mean SMART kids, out of the academic classes and placed them in the auxiliary classes. They were told they would get through high school faster and easier and that they would get a job quicker. I knew something was wrong because education is not easy. The teachers tried to get me to join the auxiliary class and even wrote a letter to my parents asking them to sign me up. But I read the letter and signed for them – I stayed where I was. The auxiliary class shattered students.⁶⁸

The auxiliary program was not a positive experience for most, and this topic is highlighted in the oral history interviews in the following chapter. As far as the Board was concerned, they wanted to get students through high school as quickly as possible.

⁶⁶ “Case Studies: North Preston,” in the *BLAC Report*, Volume II, 83.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

They hired a School Psychologist to assess the number of auxiliary programs that would be required. In the Eastern Shore area. Dr. Istar Young was hired and carried out a survey of the academic achievement in the Eastern Shore areas. The January 1966 record states:

Dr. Young presented a report of her survey on the New Road-Lake Loon-East Preston area, including some of the children at the Grade 7 level who are presently attending the Graham Creighton High School. After generally discussing the report, the question was asked of Dr. Young, as to whether there should be classes set up in other areas... the area of... Eastern Passage... were discussed and the board asked Dr. Young to start carrying out surveys in some of these areas to determine the need for auxiliary classes. This should be done as soon as possible in order to obtain the services of an auxiliary teacher if the need is there.⁶⁹

Dr. Young eventually returned to the Board in June 1966 with her findings. She suggested that the Eastern Passage area required an auxiliary program.⁷⁰

The auxiliary program was not exclusive to the high school level. Principal Harrison appears on the record again, advocating for an auxiliary class for a class of grade sevens. The language of ‘culturally deprived’ is used once again, to describe these students. As the record states:

A letter was read from Mr. Reid Harrison, Supervising Principal of the Graham Creighton High School, requesting permission to set up a special program to one class of Grade 7’s who, he feels, falls into the category of culturally deprived children. These pupils, almost entirely taught by one teacher, would receive remedial English, including reading, remedio [*sic*] mathematics, social studies, science, health, and physical education, and industrial arts or home economics. An attempt would be made through special trips to expose the students to activities that normal children experience simply “growing up”. After some discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Mosher, seconded by Commissioner Scott, that this request be approved for the coming school term.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, January 12, 1966, 1983, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁷⁰ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, June 15, 1966, 2107, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁷¹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 2, 1966, 1998, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

The auxiliary approach was the standard approach by the Board when it came to the Black Community. A February 1968 meeting shows that the Board elected to place many students in the New Road and East Preston schools in auxiliary classes due to a number of overage students. As the record states:

Mr. Karl Perry mentioned to the Board the educational difficulties that the Board is experiencing at New Road and East Preston. In carrying out a survey of the number of pupils in classes and age groups of these pupils, it was found that there are large numbers of these pupils that are overage. This is partly due to their mental ability, environmental situation, and the difficulty of obtaining licensed teachers. The thought that has been discussed is to recommend a good teaching team to go into the areas to organize classes, such as special reading classes, auxiliary classes, longer class hours in order to give the boys and girls an opportunity to do additional work, and also their homework. Mr. Perry said he felt quite sure the Provincial Government would share in the setting up of this programme and that he will prepare a brief to the Minister of Education requesting assistance to set this programme up.⁷²

The Board agreed to set the program up. The passage above highlights many of the issues that the Board faced in providing education for students in the Preston area. It was difficult to obtain licensed teachers who would work in the communities. The Board would approach this issue with a special fund, discussed next. Furthermore, it was the suggestion that remedial classes in order to move the overage pupils along. Auxiliary education became the standard for the area.

Integration with Incentive:

A notable subject of the Board's minutes are special programs specifically for the black community. There was, noticeably, the Black Incentive fund that was established in

⁷² Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 7, 1968, 2485, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

1965 by the Human Rights Commission. The *BLAC Report* conducted a case study of the Black Incentive Fund. The study cites that the fund was originally created to alleviate some of the issues facing black students like financial pressure, embarrassment, and social pressure, and would provide incentive to obtain a high school diploma.⁷³ The program was highly controversial and in many ways misinterpreted. As the *BLAC Report* observes:

The Fund's establishment was recognition on the part of a few politicians at the provincial level of the inequities in education faced by Black Nova Scotians. The philosophy underlying the fund however was never communicated in a concerted or clear manner to the general population of the province. Instead of announcing the package aimed at providing compensation to Black Nova Scotians for the over 150 years of discrimination within the public school system, a news release was distributed which was widely interpreted as a program to *pay Black students to stay in school*.⁷⁴

The fund was interpreted by white communities as black students getting paid to go to school and received backlash over the years.⁷⁵ The fund continued under many different parameters and was still in effect as late as the 1990s when the *BLAC Report* was published.

The Municipal School Board entertained many requests for special projects for the black community. One such example is found in a July 1966 meeting, where Dr. W. P. Oliver asks for the Board's permission to use a classroom to establish pre-school nurseries. As the minutes read:

The Committee had held several meetings with the Trustees and other interested people in the Communities and they were in complete agreement with the setting up of pre-school nurseries for approximately eighteen (18) four-year-old children, to initiate the program in the Cherrybrook area. This is a head-start program that

⁷³ "Black Incentive Fund," in *BLAC Report*, Volume II, 101.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume II, 106.

has become popular in recent years and it is limited to four year olds, and the objective being to give them such experience that will prepare them to enter the normal classroom program. The classes will be limited to a one-half day session per day for five (5) days per week.⁷⁶

The minutes detail that the program would require from the Board a classroom to use.

The minister of Education was to grant a sum of \$3,600 to hire a teacher and to purchase supplies. The Board approved this request in principle, but the subject of a pre-primary program was still being discussed in 1969. A report was submitted to the Minister of Education regarding the educational concerns in the Preston area in April 1968. The Minister of Education, Mr. G. J. Doucet, provided the Board with a response, and funding, in January 1969. The entry states:

The Minister pointed out that the Department is pleased to assist in financing the project in two ways: (1) a special salary grant of \$1000 for each approved member of the teaching staffs in the North Preston and East Preston schools. (2) the Department will refund to the Board the total cost, up to \$12.00 per pupil enrolled in the schools on September 30th, 1969, approved additional equipment and supplies to assist the staff to improve the educational program.⁷⁷

The equipment could include audiovisual equipment, books, records, tape recorders, and tapes, tests, and special materials for the remedial programs. The Minister also requested that the Board consider authorizing school busses for field trips to 'broaden the experience of the pupils.' He also mentions the pre-school program but notes that space was not available at the time. Doucet also mentioned a partnership with the Department

⁷⁶ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, July 13, 1966, 2128, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁷⁷ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, January 29, 1969, 2945-2946, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

of Health so students would be able to ‘profit to the maximum extent from their instruction.’⁷⁸

The Minister continued to support the program reduced rate in following years, with an extra \$500 per teacher employed, plus \$5 per pupil enrolled the first year and an extra \$250 per teacher employed and an extra \$2.50 per pupil the second year.⁷⁹ Not all appeals for special assistance were approved, however. One example is found in March 4, 1970, when Principal Winston Hendsbee of William Ross-Humber Park School requested an Alpha-One Reading Kit. The record states:

Mr. Hendsbee pointed out that for the past year and one-half, they have worked with students from the Lake Loon – Cherry Brook area, and have brought them back to a reasonable grade level with other students in the same class. While they have seen some accomplishments during this time, many of these students are reading at a grade level to grades below the majority of the other students in the same class.

The kit was left of the school by the company representative and the teachers were most enthused with this reading and spelling program which emphasizes word mastery through phonics. The local home & school Association are prepared to donate \$75 towards the purchase of this, and the teaching staff are also prepared to raise \$75. This leaves a balance of \$120 which they are requesting the board to approve.⁸⁰

The Board did not approve the Alpha-One kit. It is interesting that they decided to instate a teaching initiative in the form of salary incentive, but would not provide extra funding for a reading kit, although it is unclear as to why the motion was defeated. Again, the Board tended to favour the auxiliary approach,

⁷⁸ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, January 29, 1969, 2945-2946, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁷⁹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, May 26, 1971, 3540, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁸⁰ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, March 4, 1970, 3221, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

Violence & Vandalism

A final but frequent topic in the Minutes of the School Board concern violence and vandalism at Graham Creighton specifically. One such example is found in November 1969. A Mr. Ronald G. MacNeil, teacher at Graham Creighton, appealed to the Board concerning vandalism of his vehicle. MacNeil requests that he (and other teachers) at Graham Creighton receive the bonus that other teachers in Preston were receiving at the time. MacNeil cites that his vehicle had been vandalized. His tires had been slashed, which was not a new occurrence for teachers at the school. One teacher had his convertible cover slashed, radio antennae broken, and rocks thrown at his vehicle. The record details MacNeil's reparation requests:

Mr. MacNeil has asked for some financial assistance as a bonus incentive for teachers teaching at the school, the same as teachers teaching in the Preston areas are receiving. Failing any form of financial compensation, it is strongly urged that some form of adequate lighting be installed in front of the building as the present lighting is certainly insufficient, and this may partially discourage such acts of vandalism against innocent people.⁸¹

MacNeil's plea for financial assistance did not come to fruition. The Board did look into the possibility of more lighting for the area, but the Maintenance Superintendent Mr. Wild found that no additional lighting was necessary.⁸²

Issues at Graham Creighton (and other high schools in the district) were brought forth at a February 1975 meeting. The Board met with principals from three high schools

⁸¹ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, November 12, 1969, 3142-3143, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁸² A brief comment on the lighting in the parking lot: "Mr. Wild said that there are presently four floodlights on the school, and a battery of fluorescent lamps on front of the canopy, also a street light opposite the parking area on the street. In his opinion, no additional lighting is necessary." Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, November 26, 1969, 3148, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

to discuss the drug problems being experienced at their school. The high schools served relatively rural populations and were experiencing similar difficulties with drug-related incidents. The schools represented were Eastern Shore District High School (Mr. Tom McGlone), Sir John A. MacDonald (Mr. James Aucoin) and Graham Creighton High School (Mr. Terry Tingley). The record states:

The Principals gave an excellent report on the drug problem that is at their respective schools and outlined how they are dealing with the problem. They all agreed that even though there is [*sic*] some drugs at the school, a lot of good things are happening as far as the operation of the school was concern and that there are a great number of students who are not using drugs. The Principals also presented various views on the expulsion of students who are caught using drugs; and it was their feeling that a number of students are involved in the drugs because of peer pressure. They are also concerned about unauthorized people being on school property at various time during the day and they feel some of these people are the ones that are bringing the drugs to the schools.⁸³

The principals and the Board alike agreed that a course should be offered at the Senior elementary level on drug education. The major issue of unauthorized people on school property came to a head in December 1975, when principals reported on camera with the School Board in relation to incidents and threats towards them and their families. The record states:

The each, in turn, cited incidents that have occurred at their school over the past while, and how they had to deal with each situation. There are instances when some of these people are under the influence of alcohol, who are there for the purpose of trafficking and others are there for the purpose of disruption. They further pointed out that this was a result of their concerns and reporting the incidents to the R.C.M.P. where people have been charged, their lives have been threatened and their families have even been intimidated.⁸⁴

⁸³ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, February 14, 1975, 3016 Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

⁸⁴ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, December 17, 1975, 5136-5137, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

The Board noted that the continual presence of the R.C.M.P. is ‘an expensive problem’ but necessary because the principals were unable to deal with the problems they were facing. They remark that the Education Act ‘does not allow a stiff enough penalty on those who are charged’ with disruption of the school environment. The issue was likely dealt with at later meetings but drugs remained a problem at the school.⁸⁵The drug issue is brought up in the next chapter, where one interview participant cites a drug raid every week. The issue of drugs in the school and unauthorized people on school property brings out the types of problems that certain schools and communities were facing. The issue of violence and police involvement is an appropriate ending for the end of the Creighton era. Although the school remained open as a high school until Cole Harbour’s opening in 1979, the 1975 drug incident marks a change in the media through which the school Board was represented. This is the first instance where the Board met in-camera to discuss an issue, and the highly publicized nature of Cole Harbour High School was fueled by media reaction.

The Minutes of the Municipal School Board highlight some interesting incidents within the Graham Creighton School District that illustrate the complexities of operating an integrated school in that area. The integration policy itself was implemented to provide equal access to education for the communities in question, although it ultimately served the budgetary purposes of the Board while adhering to the Department of Education policy. The condition of Graham Creighton shows a school that was underfunded which is noted frequently in the following chapter of oral accounts. The use of the auxiliary

⁸⁵ Minutes, Municipal School Board of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, December 17, 1975, 5136-5137, Halifax Municipal Archives, Nova Scotia.

programs was preferred over additional funding. Although there was a well-intentioned education incentive, it was met with a legacy of contempt. Finally, the violence experienced on the ground at Graham Creighton, although only briefly highlighted here, shows that tensions often overflowed. The institution followed its policy of integration without considering the needs of the communities that were integrated. The result was underachievement from all communities and ultimately the students suffered.

CHAPTER IV

Reflections on Racism: The Oral Account

Oral history allows another voice to enter the narrative, the unwritten side of the story. As Paul Thompson writes in his canonical *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* “The scope of historical writing itself is enlarged and enriched; and at the same time its social message changes. History becomes, to put it simply, more democratic.”¹ The aim of this chapter is to tell the untold story of Graham Creighton, through the words of those who experienced it first-hand. A total of nine interviews were collected, most in April 2016, from former students and teachers at the Graham Creighton High School. Each of these interviews will be featured and analyzed as an individual profile. There is some diversity in the communities of origin of the students, including both male and female participants from Westphal, Lawrencetown, Colby Village, Eastern Passage, and Cherry Brook. Three teachers were interviewed: one male and two females. The attendance and employment dates of the interviewees spans from 1966-1980. All names are omitted for confidentiality.² The profiles are presented in the order the interviews were given, as the interview process inevitably develops over time, and the relative flow of each interview is followed. For more information on the oral history process, please refer to Appendix A.

¹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History, Third Edition*, 9.

² All interviews were conducted under the Saint Mary’s University Research Ethics Board File #16-190.

Male Student, Colby Village, 1975-1980

The profile of Participant 1 is a white male from Colby Village, and he attended Graham Creighton High School from 1975-1979. Originally from England, the participant's family moved to Nova Scotia in November 1974, where he began studies at Sir Robert Borden Junior High. He notes that he experienced culture shock because of the differences of schooling in the United Kingdom. He reflects:

I came from an environment where the relationship was quite strict in England... we all wore ties... When I came to Canada in grade nine the teachers were wearing jeans!... The teachers were good, much friendlier than in the U.K... I had teachers from India, I had black teachers, I had white teachers... Chinese.³

The more relaxed environment of Canadian schools made this participant's experience a positive one. He was actively involved in sports and was involved with track & field, badminton, soccer, volleyball. The participant reflects fondly on his time at Graham Creighton, stating that he did not have peer or social issues.

As a student, Participant 1 fared well academically. He took academic classes, or 'university prep courses', and reflects that 'most people in the classes were white, with the exception of a few.'⁴ He notes that the courses were 'way too restrictive' and that there were not many options that deviated from the standard courses offered at the high school level. Although the courses he took were said to be university prep courses, he received little encouragement from teachers or guidance counsellors to attend university, and recalls that that was more of a family decision. After Creighton, he eventually found his way into IT and through the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology, but Graham

³ Participant 1, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 13, 2016.

⁴ Ibid.

Creighton did not influence his career choice. As he recalls: “We didn’t have a computer science program or anything took me down that path.”⁵

A theme that comes up in many student interviews is lack of transportation to and from the school. Many of the students at Graham Creighton were bus students and it since Graham Creighton was located quite a distance away from the other communities, it was difficult to engage in activities outside of school hours. Participant 1 took the bus to school and it was about a twenty-minute ride. In commenting about his social circle, he notes that transportation was a major issue. As he states:

There wasn’t a lot of interaction other than in school, I mean how were you supposed to travel around? We had to hitchhike down the Highway #7 for crying out loud, like if we missed the bus or something... I had a couple of friends in Lawrencetown... I didn’t socialize with anyone from Eastern Passage although I knew them from school.⁶

Many of the students of Graham Creighton were used to hitchhiking if they missed the bus. It was a common occurrence to see students along the #7 Highway. Lack of transportation meant that many students were restricted to their respective communities. Participant 1 recalls an instance when his friends from Preston came to visit him at his home: “Here’s two black guys that I had befriended and they’re showing up in Colby Village. It was a strange scenario, and they had hitchhiked in from Preston!”⁷ It was a memorable instance to have his black friends from Preston visit him at his home in Colby Village, something most of the villagers were not accustomed to at the time. He notes that his parents were fine with the integrated high school, although there was some

⁵ Participant 1, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 13, 2016.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

influence from locals when they first arrived. Locals warned the family of racial tensions in the area. As he remembers:

Some of the things we were told, or warned, not to be in certain places, even in Downtown Halifax... I think some of the comments we got were racist... if you're in a rough area and you're white you're going to get warned. Culturally we were taught to be fearful of it, and as a result... For example, you're new to Nova Scotia, you go for a drive... would you ever drive through Preston? No. Would you ever go in that area? No. Would you go down to the Eastern Shore? Yeah. But would you turn left to go to Preston? You just wouldn't.⁸

It is interesting to note that while Participant 1 was not originally from Nova Scotia, many of the inherited values from the predominant white community were still communicated to the family.

Although his family was initially concerned, Participant 1 had a relatively good personal experience at the school, which helped to alleviate concerns. Participant 1 does note that racial tension was noticeable but not a part of his life. He remembers the cafeteria being noticeably segregated. However, he insists that while there were extremes on either side, the majority of students fell in the middle of tensions.⁹

Female Student, Westphal, 1972-1975

Participant 2 is a white female from the Westphal area. She first attended Sir Robert Borden Junior High and then Graham Creighton High School from 1972-1975. She fell in the Eastern Passage social circle, and commented about the way the Eastern Passage students were perceived in the high school setting. She says: "It was a group, Eastern Passage was a collective, they stuck together, they might fight amongst each

⁸ Participant 1, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 13, 2016.

⁹ Ibid.

other or what not but they always stuck together... it always kind of felt protected.”¹⁰ She notes several times throughout the interview that the fact she needed to feel protected was an indication that there was a problem at the school. Reflecting back, she remembers there being more black students at the school than are present in the yearbook. She comments: “It was not the perception I had... I really thought it was a 50/50 split.”¹¹ In reality, a lot of students came to Graham Creighton from neighbouring white communities, which were growing rapidly. She reflected on her yearbooks during the interview and noted that the split was actually a lot more uneven. Participant 2 noted that there were a lot of older students mixed into the crowd as well, and attributed this to the incentive for black students to stay in school. “We had a 19 year-old in grade 11,” she recalls.

In terms of Graham Creighton High School itself, Participant 2 noted that there was not much in the way of resources or funding. In comparing Graham Creighton to the other high schools in the city, she states: “The school didn’t seem to have the money for any of the extras they had in town. Dartmouth High and Prince Andrew had more money and had typing, and business and office [courses]. I don’t think it hurt us anyway.”¹² The lack of funding to the school is noted by other students as well as the *BLAC Report*. Another theme of the Creighton experience was lack of guidance counsellor support. In recalling a couple of motor-vehicle related student deaths that occurred in her Grade 11, she notes that the guidance presence was lacking, commenting: “I don’t know if they

¹⁰ Participant 2, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 17, 2016.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

couldn't get a classroom?"¹³ This is interesting to note because of Principal Harrison's 1966 appeal for a guidance counsellor office, and years later they still did not have a permanent location.

Participant 2 had a car, so she was lucky in the sense that she could transport herself to and from school. Her social life was based in Eastern Passage, and the car enabled her to travel there as well. She notes that she smoked, and that the smoking sections were segregated. She comments that at the time, this 'seemed like a natural segregation.'¹⁴ Her best friend had a tumultuous experience. She was well-liked by the males of the Preston area, but not liked by the females. Participant 2 reflects: "There were some girls from those areas that were pretty rugged, there were some people from here that were pretty rugged too... having those two groups come together could be very dynamic."¹⁵ She feels that she remained under the radar in terms of most conflict, but does remember bearing witness to many experiences that became more heated when race was a factor. The territorial nature of the communities extended beyond just black and white, however, as she notes: "It was all very territorial... it's okay to fight in your own family but not with anyone else."¹⁶

In speaking of integration specifically, Participant 2 notes that having friends from other races was frowned upon in some homes, including her own. When asked if her parents were concerned about her attending an integrated school, she responded that it was not necessarily the concern about being at an integrated school, so much as it was

¹³ Participant 2, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 17, 2016.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

that she was not to make friends. She cites one example receiving a phone call at her home, and recalls: “A boy called the house with the dialect... that was probably the most trouble I ever got into... You just wouldn’t [associate with blacks] in my family anyway, and I wouldn’t say that I was alone.”¹⁷ Reflecting on all of her experiences today, however, she wonders how it must have felt for a black student to be thrown into such an uneven environment.

Female Student, Lawrencetown, 1974-1977

Participant 3 is a white female who resided in Lawrencetown and attended Graham Creighton from 1974-1977. One of the first items brought up in the interview was her memories of the winter carnivals. She says: “For everything the school wasn’t, we had these amazing winter carnivals.”¹⁸ In her recollection, she says that the carnivals brought everyone together and that ‘barriers were broken.’¹⁹ The silly nature of some of the activities, plus the spirit of the basketball tournaments, brought the school together, at least for one week out of the school year.

Aside from her rosy reflections of winter carnival, Participant 3 offered some perspective on what it meant to be a student at Graham Creighton. “At first there was a bit of an embarrassment factor,” she says, “you know, I go to Creighton.”²⁰ However, she recalls a day that the teachers gave half a day off and the students cleaned the school yard. This incited school pride among the students involved. She states:

¹⁷ Participant 3, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 18, 2016.

¹⁸ Ibid,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

A couple of teachers gave us half a day off and we cleaned the school. And we cleaned the school quite intentionally, because no one else was going to clean the school, and the School Board wasn't going to clean the school yard. We literally took down the flag pole and painted it, and cleaned all the garbage up, we cleaned up the field, we trimmed trees because there was not a lot given to that school, but there was a real sense of pride contributing for the ones that were.²¹

The cleaning of the school showed that, despite lack of funding and services provided to the school, the students still persevered and beautified what they had. It is interesting that Participant 3 also notes that there was a core group of middle class students, of all colours, that, in her words, 'just got along.'²²

Participant 3 was originally from New Glasgow and came from a large family. When she moved to Lawrencetown, her life suddenly depended on the bus. She notes that the opportunity to do anything after school was severely limited because of transportation. Hitchhiking was a mainstay among students of Graham Creighton, and Participant 3 recalls hitchhiking whenever she missed the bus.²³

In terms of community relations, Participant 3 offers insight into the tensions present between all communities, not just black and white, that many students reflect on. She states:

For me, it was not a black and a white issue, but it was what community you were from. The so-called 'boys from Eastern Passage' could be just as tough, mean, and foul as could the boys from North Preston. I'm not saying it was never about colour, that's not true, it most certainly was, and systemic racism was absolutely rampant everywhere, but it really more about behaviour.²⁴

She notes that fights were not about where you were from, but the language that would come out once conflict was instigated. Participant 3 also notes that racial bias was felt by

²¹ Participant 3, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 18, 2016.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

the white students at the school. “If people were going to tell you they faced a racial bias, it was a reverse racial bias,” she says. “There were times that you felt equally shamed because you were a white student.”²⁵ She recalls that systemic racism was the most cumbersome of all racism present at the school. As she states: “Graham Creighton was absolutely forgotten. It was seen as a large, biracial group... because we were all rural, we weren’t townies, we were just forgotten. We had nothing compared to anybody else. It was systemic racism like you wouldn’t believe. And we all knew it.”²⁶ She comments on the fact that there were a large number of East Indian teachers at the school, and that ‘they suffered a lot from racial bias from everyone.’²⁷ The international teachers had lower status than the other teachers, and Graham Creighton was at the bottom as well. Participant 3 notes that students tended to be more disruptive in their classes than in teachers of white origins.

In reflecting on her memories of the school, she highlights that racism was a stain on the experience. She states: “There were some days you were at school and you were just scared. It was scary walking down the hallway and it was intimidating.” Participant 3 also recalls the drug issues mentioned in the previous chapter, recalling that they had regular drug raids that were ‘so consistent they were like clockwork.’²⁸ She also mentions that she managed to get through the experience with a tough attitude. As she reflects:

If you talk to any survivor of trauma, it’s amazing how your system learns to live within it. I’m not trying to equate Graham Creighton to something massive like a war or anything like that, but it doesn’t matter what it is. You’re living in that

²⁵ Participant 3, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 18, 2016.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

environment. I think I became an angrier person. I learned to curse like you wouldn't believe there, and for me survival was be tough.²⁹

Participant 3 notes that while she was in regular classes, it was definitely more difficult for those who were in the auxiliary program.

The interview then turned to her experiences at Sir Robert Borden Junior High School. She recalls a lot of older students were present, stating: "I had to walk into Sir Robert Borden... they were paying kids to stay in school, you had a walk through these two lineups of guys that were considerably older than junior high age... it absolutely terrified me." Coming from New Glasgow originally, and from a biracial school there, she notes that the experience was different. She says:

There was racism in New Glasgow too. The part of the experience that was different, because it was a town school, but also because New Glasgow is a very specifically divided town. There was nobody but rich white people... I remember before I left New Glasgow, I had a friend who started dating a black guy from New Glasgow... all the guys called him Snow White... it might have become a term of endearment after a while but it wasn't. It was very much defining your place.³⁰

She attributes the difference in New Glasgow to amalgamation much earlier on. It was certainly still a racialized environment, but a very different experience than at Graham Creighton.

Participant 3 also shares feelings of sadness towards the experience of many of the students at Graham Creighton, black students in particular. She says: "The part that used to break my heart is that there were a group that were labelled by the system, I remember many of us thinking that they don't have a hope in hell and nobody is going to help them. It was rampant, you'd watch kids struggle, and the system was just—it was

²⁹ Participant 3, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 18, 2016.

³⁰ Ibid.

Creighton.”³¹ She compared the situation to a fictitious integration story in New York to make her point. She says:

We were written off. It was just a place to have a school... If you look at the bigger picture, what they essentially did, look at New York for example. It’s like they said: Brooklyn, Bronx, Harlem, and Manhattan are all going to go to school together, have fun! That’s what they did. And then they walked away and didn’t care. It wasn’t just a colour thing; it was a culture thing.³²

She notes that officials gave little thought to the respective cultures of the communities, the black community and how this reflected on racism at the time. Participant 3’s reflections show that systemic racism was integrated so deeply into the system that it was not even recognized. She poignantly comments on systemic racism: “The sad part of it is that it is racist, but it’s so systemic that you don’t even think about it... it’s all economics, it’s this, it’s that, but it is racism.”³³

Female Student, Cherry Brook, 1966-1972

Participant 4 is a black female from the Cherry Brook area who attended both junior and senior high school at Graham Creighton. It is imperative to note that her perspective is especially important, as the only black participant. The black community is extremely tight-knit and it is incredibly difficult to enter it as an outsider, so it was a privilege to be permitted to share her recollections in the interview and in this thesis. Participant 4 spent six years at Graham Creighton as both a junior high and high school student. It was her first time integrating with white communities. As she reflects:

It was my first time attending a school that was integrated. I went to a segregated school in my community. I was a little bit nervous going into a big school that

³¹ Participant 3, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 18, 2016.

³² Ibid.

³³ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

was a junior and senior high. I had other friends that went from my community so it wasn't as overwhelming as it could have been. I was very fortunate. My parents exposed me to other cultures at an early age so it wasn't as big of a shock for me as it might have been for other people in the community.³⁴

Participant 4 had plenty of exposure to other cultures. Her father was a contractor and every year for Christmas the entire family, including her grandparents, were invited to a Chinese client's home for dinner. She notes that many of her counterparts experienced much more cultural shock than she did, simply because they came from segregated schools and had not been exposed to any other cultures. The participant notes that she had teachers from numerous different backgrounds, including African, Indian, and European, but not anyone of African Nova Scotian descent directly. Although there were some teachers, she remarks that it stood out to her that she was not taught by anyone from her own culture.³⁵ Participant 4 notes that while most people were unaware, integration was a pilot project of the Department of Education, influenced by movements in the United States.³⁶

Participant 4 recalls that her counterparts were influenced by the movements in the United States. She states that there was a group of black students that were part of the movement. As she recollects:

During that time, around 1960s, the civil rights movement, there was a group of African Nova Scotian students, they were more aware of the culture and the historical reference than I maybe was myself... They were more aware of that separation. They protested. They were coming to school with the afros, I was coming to school with the straightened hair, not knowing and understanding that, it was radical... they did a sit in... They wanted to learn their own history, because that wasn't there, and they also wanted more people of colour on student council,

³⁴ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

more representation on committees... They had it planned, and I went home and told my parents, and they said 'well you're staying home that day.'³⁷

Participant 4's parents were advocates for her education and did not want her involved in the politics, or what she referred to as radical thinking, of the day. She remembers distinctly an East Indian teacher that increased her awareness of race and racism and also exposed her to new thinking. As she states:

I had one teacher, Modern World Problems teacher, he was East Indian, and he was an advocate for race and really helped all of us understand more about the culture, and about modern world problems... he got into a lot of those issues... a lot of the African Nova Scotian students, other students too, really gravitated towards him, because he could talk about those things even after school, and issues, and things that that group of students embraced, the 60s, the civil rights movement, Malcolm X, I was more a Dr. King fan, you know Malcolm X was more radical, but I learned to understand more of that as I got older. I understand the importance of it now.³⁸

Participant 4 remained in the middle ground and was not a radical, but says she now recognizes the significance of the change in thinking. While race was a hot topic, she says that not all problems were based on race; rather, some were typical examples of high school drama.

Participant 4 makes an insightful comment about the communities of Eastern Passage and North Preston, the two communities that often come up in conversations regarding racial tensions. She asserts that the communities of Eastern Passage and North Preston are more alike than people realize:

The communities of Eastern Passage and North Preston are so close knit. They are more alike than the other communities... if something happens to one of their own, they're all there... They are so alike and I don't know if anyone over time has tapped into that to understand it. They were communities that were disenfranchised were labelled by the surrounding communities.³⁹

³⁷ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Participant 4's observation of the similarities of Eastern Passage and North Preston demonstrate not only the unique cultural make-up of these communities, but also the fact that these communities also suffered similar hardships. A bit more recognition of what makes the communities similar, rather than what divides them, is a step toward a more nuanced understanding of race relations.

Participant 4 was able to use her father's car to commute when necessary, and remarks that: "I had no fear going into a white community."⁴⁰ She remembers that her best friend from Lawrencetown was allowed to visit her house, but not vice versa: "I had a friend, to this day... it was ironic because she was allowed to go to my house but I was never allowed to go to her house... her dad would run her into the black community but I couldn't go there."⁴¹ Her friend's father would not allowed her to visit the home, although he never prevented their friendship. Years later, at a social function, her friend's father approached her with an apology. She recounts the experience: "I never allowed you to come to our home... I was just worried about what the neighbours would say if you came into the house and saw you. That was so wrong. I had forgotten... the good thing is he never prevented us from being friends."⁴² An apology years later does show a notable shift in the social consciousness, but again is reflective of the 'polite' racism that is exercised in the province of Nova Scotia.

A defining factor of this interviewee's experience was the support her parents provided. She was an only child, and both her parents had not had the opportunity have

⁴⁰ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

an education. She reflects: “My dad had elementary, and my mom had grade 6 but she was brilliant because she could read anything I could read... for both, it was the value of education because they didn’t have that.”⁴³ Participant 4 fared well in school and always wanted to become a teacher. She was a successful student, as well as the only black cheerleader on the team at the time.⁴⁴ It came as a shock to her when her guidance counsellor told her she could not to go university. She brought the news to her parents, who told her she was being foolish. However, this was extremely disheartening. A few months later she was approached by a teacher who inquired as to her university applications. When she informed the teacher that she was not going to university because of the guidance counsellor’s advice, the teacher told her not to worry. The next day, he had university applications to all three university in Halifax (Saint Mary’s University, Dalhousie University, Mount Saint Vincent University), and a student loan application for her. She reflects gratefully for the teacher that advocated for her, and several other black students who had been given similar advice from the guidance counsellor. Participant 4 saw the guidance counsellor, years later, after she had become a teacher. When asked by the individual: “What are you doing here?” she replied, “I became a teacher. I’m here in spite of you.”⁴⁵ At long last, she advocated for herself. This story is a shining example of the deeply ingrained racism in Nova Scotia.

Graham Creighton was notoriously a poor school, as were most of the County schools at the time. Participant 4 recalls that in elementary school, they used books from city schools that were old, torn, and had pages missing. She would do her homework, and

⁴³ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

⁴⁴ Participant 4 notes there were others before her, but she was the only one in her year.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

then her father would run the book to someone else in the community so they could do their homework. She remarks that she was lucky to get an education at all. She notes that teachers were transient and that made it difficult for black students to obtain a quality education: “If you taught in black school, you received extra funds. Some teachers would come and get that money for that month and then they would leave. A couple of my cousins might’ve had seven teachers in a year, and some of them failed.”⁴⁶ Because of the poor quality of education, students were streamed and ultimately labelled. She notes that ‘once you’re labelled, you’ll adapt to the label.’⁴⁷ Both black and white students were streamed into auxiliary classes and this affected their performance and social behaviour in the school.

For the most part, Participant 4’s experience at Graham Creighton was positive. She remembers going to school dances and participating in Winter Carnival. She comments on how the experience of winter carnival changed over her years at the school. She says:

I remember winter carnival ... one year they had a winter carnival dance... I always went to everything... and I went and there was a white band playing so very few students of African descent would go. They’d go to all the events though... so the school tried, and the next year they had a black band. Vice versa. We had the African Nova Scotia students come... very few from Eastern Passage, Cole Harbour, Lawrencetown... so the school said we’ll have two bands now, one will play one set, and one would play the other.... The last year they got it right. They had the two bands, one song, one band, the next song, the next band, it was like ‘you’re going to stay!’ I admired them because they worked on it. It seems really trivial but it wasn’t... I would stay. There was stigma there... a lot of times my black friends, people from the community would say ‘you want to be white.’⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

It is sometimes the small actions on sensitivity, the actions that reflect a cognizance of the cultures at hand, that slowly make the difference toward social change. Participant 6 ties Graham Creighton into the present-day experience. She states:

But it's Nova Scotia which ties into the Graham Creighton's of the world. Our province, we've come a long way but we have a long way to go. I admire the work you're doing because people do not realize the racism that is underlying and now it's... I call it a 'new racism'... years ago if someone wanted to call you a name you knew right away. But now, it's a new game... I used to see it at my work... I don't know if it's deliberate or non-deliberate, they may treat you in certain way but they don't want to... because of the old stereotype 'this is your place, this is where you should be,' that's still there, it's ingrained in our history of Nova Scotia. And we're labelled as the most racist province in Canada because historically we haven't identified in the province, for everyone, some of the discriminatory practices that have gone on. We're quick to talk about the United States but we had a lot of those things here, it's just it was hidden or not as identified.⁴⁹

Participant 4's poignant reflections leave the reader with something to consider. Actions are truly everything in overcoming ingrained stereotypes, especially in the Nova Scotian context. The problem has clearly been identified at this point, but it takes a conscious effort to overcome systemic racism.

Female Teacher, 1970-1979

Participant 5 is a white female teacher who taught at Graham Creighton from 1970-1979, and then for one year at Cole Harbour District High School upon its opening. She taught physical education and French. She spent a lot of time with students as a coach, and recalls memories of the sporting days fondly: "We won the provincial volleyball championship three times in a row even though we were from the poorest school in the province. I remember the first time we won it and we managed to scrape

⁴⁹ Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

together some white t-shirts with red letters on them and we licked them.”⁵⁰ She notes that there was a lot of talent at Graham Creighton, both musical and athletic. They did several exchanges and trips with the sports students, such as an exchange to Lumsden, Saskatchewan for the volleyball players. A lot of students from North and East Preston went and it was their first time venturing outside of the province. Participant 5 recalls: “If you respected the kids, the kids respected you.”⁵¹

By contrast, Participant 5 did not have a good experience in her one year at Cole Harbour High. She says that a ‘top-heavy approach to education was begging to settle in quite rigidly at Cole Harbour.’⁵² After she left Cole Harbour, she began an Education Administration program (although her ultimate career destination was law) and wrote a major paper on populating schools by demographic. Her observation is as follows:

They made a big mistake isolating North Preston from East Preston and Cherry Brook. North Preston is a physically isolated community. You go to North Preston because you’re going to North Preston. You can drive through East Preston and Cherry Brook, it’s more blended. North Preston is out there on its own and it’s culturally unique. It’s a pretty neat place and some people have some wrong ideas about it. They made a terrible mistake when they separated North Preston from the East Preston and Cherry Brook student body. Because East Preston and Cherry Brook were such a moderating influence.⁵³

It is her opinion that by keeping the black communities together, a better sense of belonging rather than isolation would be established. She also argues that the racism surrounding the Cole Harbour situation is almost specific to North Preston itself. She says:

⁵⁰ Participant 5, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 20, 2016.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

A lot of the racism is almost anti-North Preston as opposed to anti-black, I mean anti-black is there too there's no question it's everywhere in Nova Scotia unfortunately, sometimes it's hiding under the covers, but it's there. I think a lot of people are just prejudiced against North Preston. They don't know North Preston, they've never been to North Preston. They're a wonderful community.⁵⁴

A lack of understanding or ignorance toward the community of North Preston contributes to the racial tensions observed at Cole Harbour High School. This remark is rather poignant when placed alongside her thoughts on the Passage-Preston situation.

There were small parcels of students that wouldn't mix. This is just my opinion, but my impression was that the Eastern Passage students were the rough edge, and the North Preston were the rough edge, if you were looking for a rough edge. When they created Cole Harbour, what did they do? They took the roughest edge and put it with the other roughest edge and they put them together. When they were all together under one roof, there were no big issue.⁵⁵

In her opinion, the racial tensions stemmed more from the isolation of Eastern Passage and North Preston in a single school without the neighbouring communities to act as a buffer. She states that it was a conscious decision on the part of the School Board to separate the communities, and a conscious decision to place the school in Cole Harbour.⁵⁶ It does seem peculiar that North Preston remains isolated from the East Preston and Cherry Brook school systems to the present day. A true integration would blend all the communities as opposed to isolating North Preston more than it already is.

The interview concluded with more discussion on Participant 5's time at Graham Creighton. She notes that Principal Terry Tingley and Vice Principal Brad Barton were phenomenal which was brought up in almost every single interview. Under the auspices of Terry Tingley, the teachers at Graham Creighton offered who students extra help in

⁵⁴ Participant 5, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 20, 2016.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

practical areas of life, such a typing or buying a bus ticket. A lot of these students ended up in regular academic classes because of the skills and confidence they gained with the support of teachers and administration.⁵⁷

Female Student, Lawrencetown, 1969-1970; 1971-1973

Participant 6 is a white female who lived in Lawrencetown and attended Graham Creighton for grade 8, Sir Robert Borden for grade 9, and Graham Creighton again for high school. She had a negative experience during her time at Sir Robert Borden which affected her through her high school experience. She recalls: “I felt like I didn’t get much of an education because I drifted through.”⁵⁸ Participant 6 experienced trauma in her grade 9 year when she was raped by a stranger. She states:

I was raped when I was 14, when I was in grade 9 at Sir Robert Borden. I didn’t tell anyone, not even my friends. I was in art class and it was just eating at me and I started crying and the art teacher took me to the guidance counsellor. He basically told me it was probably my fault and that was the end of it. It was honest to God the end of it.⁵⁹

Following the rape, she received no support or help, and was scared to tell anyone after the negative experience she had with the guidance counsellor at the school. She said it made her experiences at Graham Creighton that much worse.

Reflecting back on her experiences at Graham Creighton, Participant 6 felt disconnected from the experience due to post traumatic stress. Reflecting on the tensions at the school, she notes that the black-white issue did not make her experience any easier. She reflects: “Definitely a black-white issue and as I get older I realize... I always like to

⁵⁷ Participant 5, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 20, 2016.

⁵⁸ Participant 6, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 20, 2016.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

think I'm not prejudiced but then I look at how I was brought up and just the language that was used in my home and what you learn growing up."⁶⁰ Those inherited values were deeply ingrained from the home environment. She recalls her parent's racial references:

The language my parents used, going to school with the darkies, coon, I can't say the N word was used a lot... I remember when I was a kid the threat was at Christmas time that I was going to get a black baby doll... and if you were bad, and this was very common, you were going to go the Home for Colored Children.⁶¹

The language and racial slurs that Participant 6 heard in the home reflect the inherited racism that perpetuates in Nova Scotia. She remembers being afraid to go to school, and that she had to keep an eye on her belongings. It was not uncommon for items like purses, coats, and shoes to be slashed. She had her projects spit on and recalls that she was generally afraid: "I don't think the blacks liked us any more than we liked them. We were afraid of them. We could go into stairwells to go upstairs and be grabbed and be now what is considered sexually assaulted."⁶² She recalls that in class, however, black students were quite friendly to her individually. The lack of understanding between students of different cultures is demonstrated in Participant 6's experience, highlighting the subtleties of inherited racism in Nova Scotia.

Female, Teacher, 1975-1979

Participant 7's profile is a white female Home Economics teacher who taught at Graham Creighton High School from 1975-1979, and at Sir Robert Borden when it first opened in 1969. She mentions that Sir Robert Borden was the first black-white junior

⁶⁰ Participant 6, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 20, 2016.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

high school in the province. There were seasoned teachers as well as those starting their careers, and the participant shares the philosophy for the first year of operation. The teachers wanted ‘a positive experience for students coming in from the black communities and the white communities.’⁶³ They offered a range of classes, they would not stream students into classes, and they were encouraged to include black history in their material in a time where there was very little written on the topic. They wanted to ‘promote respect amongst all students and to foster a feeling of equality.’⁶⁴ Since streaming was not an issue, the students banded together to help each other complete projects and assignments. They offered remedial reading, writing and arithmetic to black and white communities alike. The teachers want to encourage the kids to catch up so they could continue to high school studies.⁶⁵

She describes her experience of teaching at Sir Robert Borden as wonderful. The teachers tried to bring meaningful education and life experiences, and Participant 7 recalls having to explain how a toilet and refrigerator worked to some of the rural students. She chuckles and recalls that she would find sugar and salt in the fridge sometimes after class.⁶⁶ At the same time, she volunteered at Mulgrave Park to demonstrate to former Africville residents the workings of a modern, electric kitchen.⁶⁷

Participant 7 also had to provide some of the first sexual education for the students in these schools. She recalls that in her third week of teaching, a 14-year-old girl was brought into the teacher’s lounge to rest. Another female teacher recognized that she

⁶³ Participant 7, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 26, 2016.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

was going into labour and they sent her to the hospital. It was her second child.⁶⁸ This instance stood out to Participant 7 and she took on sexual education with stride. She taught about birth control and even sent five students, three black, two white, to a conference run by Planned Parenthood in Halifax. The students prepared a presentation on what they had learned in the program and were well received by the crowd.⁶⁹

Participant 7 reflects on her time at Cole Harbour before she moved to Ontario. Cole Harbour was an entirely different experience. She recalls: “The building wasn’t as warm and friendly, they put these little tiny narrow windows in... It’s built like a jail. Even the way the school was laid out led to friction. There was more tension at Cole Harbour High.”⁷⁰ She notes that culture was changing itself, and that Cole Harbour was more city-like than Graham Creighton had been. She recalls that she did get punched in the back at Cole Harbour High, although the individual was not a student. There were other instances of violence towards teachers, such as one teacher being pushed down the stairs, and tires being slashed. She does not remember that that ever happening at Creighton.⁷¹ She also notes that drugs became more of a problem at Cole Harbour and that the changing nature of media allowed for the situation to fester.

Male, Teacher, 1969-1979

The final Participant Profile is a white male teacher who taught at the school from 1969-1979. He was twenty-one years old when he started teaching at Graham Creighton.

⁶⁸ Participant 7, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 26, 2016.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Participant 8 recalls that he arrived at Graham Creighton during the beginning of change.

He says:

I came at the beginning of change. There was the Black United Front... we also had the visitation of the Black Panthers from Chicago... they came to the school... they went down to the Vice Principal's office if they could make a message, they announced that they wanted all the black students in the school to the auditorium. they were proselytizing, they were talking about the obvious notion of discrimination historically in the United States which of course extended to Canada and in particular Nova Scotia. So it resonated with a lot of faculty as well... the Black Panthers imposed their own kind of narrative on our school. There was a terrible dichotomy of logic—if you were white, you were in fact, not just part of the problem historically, but you had to be *ipso facto* a racist of some description.⁷²

It is interesting that Participant 8 draws on both the Black United Front and the Black Panthers. Both influential groups in the black community, their rhetoric was highly influential at Graham Creighton. Participant 8 experienced some difficulty as a teacher at the school but for the most part had a positive experience. He was actively involved with the student body and participated in several sports and clubs. Participant 8 was the boxing coach, and experienced a racial bias. He states:

I was a boxer. Most of the boxers were black. They were told they shouldn't be training with a white trainer and that it was a form of exploitation going on... other social clubs were exposed to the same rhetoric. Although we understood it historically, when you're attacked personally, it becomes very difficult.⁷³

When asked how the students ultimately reacted to having a white trainer, the participant said that he gave them a choice. He says: "I gave them a choice. If you don't stand up and have the courage to renounce the fact that their coach was not a racist even by their definition, then I'm not interested in training you."⁷⁴ Unfortunately, this meant he only

⁷² Participant 8, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, May 2, 2017.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

ended up training one black student, as the majority left. This example stands out as it highlights the influence of political rhetoric on the students at the time.

Participant 8 looks back fondly on his memories of the school and still meets with many of his students today. It is clear that some teachers had a lasting impact on their students, and that in turn, the school had a lasting impact on its teachers.

The interviews above represent the ideas and opinions of eight individuals who were interviewed for this thesis. Although more diversity in participants would have been preferred, this is a project that the author may expand upon in the future. Still, there are conclusions that can be drawn from the text. All the students, in reflection, comment on the institutional and systemic racism in Nova Scotia. Several participants highlight that this racism is unique to Nova Scotia. There is evidence of the lasting impact of Graham Creighton in the example of Participant 5, who also taught at Cole Harbour High. It is interesting to note that many of the white participants recognize the inequalities today and can reflect upon them, indicating that a shift in consciousness is slowly taking place. The teachers at the school all enjoyed teaching at the location, although this was not the case for every teacher. In many instances, issues at the school were typical to issues at any high school. Reflections on racism at Graham Creighton offers insight into the lasting impact of the integrated high school.

CONCLUSION

A Legacy of Conflict

What do we make of the experience of Graham Creighton High School? The story unfolds not only as a tale of integration, but as a tale with classist undertones, a stark rural-urban divide, and ultimate perseverance and pride on the part of the student population. In examining the situation through power structures, an inherent racial bias existed within the institution. The unique brand of racism that exists in Nova Scotia is weaved throughout the historical narrative. Graham Creighton is a striking example of how integration played out in the Canadian, specifically Nova Scotian, context and the specific struggles that this region faced in its implementation.

The legacy of Graham Creighton is played out in the case of Cole Harbour High. Worthy of a study on its own, I will provide a short history of race relations at Cole Harbour District High School and delve briefly into the media attention it received. This exploration is necessary to retain for the conclusion of this thesis for two reasons. First, many of the children of Graham Creighton alumni would have attended Cole Harbour High for their high school education. This allows for an exploration of the perpetuation of inherited ideas over time. Second, I want to bring the experience of Graham Creighton into the present. In many ways, it still is present in the lives of those who remember it. By telling the story of Graham Creighton, I hope to initiate a dialogue a dialogue about the perpetuation of racism in our society today, a stance consistent with the critical race theory that informed this thesis .

Cole Harbour High School, later renamed Cole Harbour District High School when the School Board amalgamated, opened in 1979. It served the communities of Cole Harbour, North Preston, Eastern Passage, and Lawrencetown. A distinguishing factor of Cole Harbour High is that it was at the centre of national news twice for race riots and brawls broke out. Media coverage of the January 1989 racial brawl was extensive. Some examples from *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* highlight the issue at hand. An article entitled “Racial skirmishing closes high school” in the *Globe and Mail* provides details of the incident. It reads: “A racially mixed high school at nearby Cole Harbour will be closed today and half of Friday so tempers can cool off after two days of confrontations between black and white youths.”¹ The incident, which was supposedly initiated by a snowball thrown at a black student by a white student, truly demonstrates the snowball effect. The problem erupted after years of racial tensions between the communities. Initially, officials tried to deny that there was an issue. The principal stated that it had been years since there was a race issue at the school, and the Minister of Health (whose riding was in Cole Harbour) was quoted as saying: “There’s no problem with racism in the educational system. It simply doesn’t exist.”² A January 14, 1989 article cites that ‘the snowball was irrelevant,’ and notes the distinctive demographics of the school: some black, some white, some middle-class, some working class. The article asserts: “Racial tensions have been building for some time. Many of the students have little in common; unfamiliarity, perhaps coupled with attitudes brought from home, has

¹ Canadian Press, “Racial skirmishing closes high school,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 12, 1989, A4.

² “North Preston’s Struggle to Obtain Equality in Education,” *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*, Volume 2, (Halifax: Black Learners Advisory Committee, 1994), 94.

bred contempt.”³ A total of 18 charges were laid in the brawl.⁴ This event caused considerable backlash. A second major incident occurred in October 2, 1997. An October 3, 1997 *Toronto Star* article cites ‘3 students, teacher got to hospital after blacks, whites fight.’⁵ The school remained shut for days after the incident.⁶ One article articulates the history of the incident:

Students at the school say there is a sharp divisions between black students from the impoverished North Preston area and students from wealthier suburbs near the former city of Dartmouth and that this has been at the heart of some violence at the school last year and in 1989.⁷

The School reopened October 11, 1989, after being closed since October 2. The students in the school remarked on the somber nature of the school, the heavy surveillance, and the change in schedule to avoid further confrontation.⁸

Examples of the impact of racism after these events are found in the reports collected by each of the groups in the publication *Improving the Success of African Nova Scotian Students: Findings of the Research Pilot Project*. Historic racism is identified as a huge issue, and inherited ideas prevail. One parent states: “When you deal with racism all of your life and then have to deal with the school to get a better opportunity for your child because of racial insensitivity or ignorance, you are made to feel defeated.”⁹

Administrators identified the issue of practices that are inherently racist, stating: “Some

³ “Tensions in Dartmouth,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1989, D6.

⁴ Canadian Press, “Race fight charges are laid,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 14, 1989, A5.

⁵ “Racial Brawl Closes School,” *The Toronto Star*, October 3, 1997, A35.

⁶ “N.S. School stays shut in race brawl aftermath,” *The Toronto Star*, October 4, 1997, A3.

⁷ Kevin Cox, “Halifax board adopts plan to end racism,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1997, A2.

⁸ “Security guards welcome students back to school,” *The Toronto Star*, October 11, 1997, A8.

⁹ Halifax Regional School Board, *Improving the Success of African Nova Scotian Students: Findings of the Research Pilot Project* (December 4, 2003), 15.

practices and procedures actually compound racial inequalities.”¹⁰ Racism at Cole Harbour High is inherent both in the historical and institutional contexts. The case of Cole Harbour High is worthy of exploration on its own but is crucial to consider in the Graham Creighton context.

What do we learn from the Graham Creighton experience? Chapter I shows that historiography of blacks in the region has been somewhat stagnated for years, but is more recently receiving some fresh perspectives. The historiography links the Nova Scotian experience to the greater African Diaspora and highlights the importance of exploring new areas like the Graham Creighton experience. Chapter II highlights the historical injustices towards blacks and provides an analysis of the neighbouring white communities. By comparing and contrasting the history, geography, and economics of the region, the chapter shows that Graham Creighton must be considered from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Chapter III traces the involvement of the Board in Graham Creighton’s affairs and illustrates the intricacies of institutional racism. Although sometimes subtle, the Boards budgetary considerations often reflect a sense of paternalism. Furthermore, the focus on auxiliary versus academic training accentuated the perception that the students at the school were not university material. Finally, Chapter IV offers an oral account of the experience that not only ties their experiences into the historical record, but provides valuable insights of its own. Where the Board may have been hesitant to recognize a racial problem, the former students and teachers define the

¹⁰ HRSB, *Pilot Project*, 15.

experience in their own words. We find that the Graham Creighton experience was influenced by a myriad of factors, all encompassed by the specific racism of Nova Scotia.

My thesis, in the broader sense, tackles some stubborn systemic issues that arise from the integration process. First, I address the limits of the liberal reform. Reminiscent of the failure of the liberal-welfare state at Africville, the case of Graham Creighton illustrates the inadequacies of the liberal-welfare model. To echo an observation made in Chapter I: “Although the political rhetoric was centred around integration, the main focus of the liberal-welfare state was not to eliminate racial prejudice entirely; rather, it was to physically begin the integration process into society by providing for concrete needs.” By attempting to address years of inequality through the provision of integrated education, political bodies of power provided for the material needs of marginalized groups. The failure to adequately address the actual problem— systemic racism—would prove to have far reaching consequences. Events at Cole Harbour District High School show that while providing temporary solutions may have benefitted in the short-term, the long-term the prejudice of the past prevails. Another important aspect concerns the politics of school consolidation. In the case of Graham Creighton High School, consolidation was a way to save money. School Board officials declared many of the smaller elementary schools in the more isolated areas as surplus¹¹ as they continued a process of consolidation that eventually led to the creation of Sir Robert Borden Junior High and ultimately Cole Harbour District High School. The consolidation process was fueled by the rhetoric of integration and its benefit to students, especially those in isolated

¹¹ Closures of schools occurred in Cow Bay, Eastern Passage, East Preston, and North Preston.

geographic enclaves, but it served to simultaneously simplify the responsibilities of the School Board.

The idea of isolated geography is explored throughout the project and brings attention to a key issue affecting black communities to the present day. Ideas of space and place are prevalent in the historiography of Black Nova Scotians and it is generally agreed upon that isolation has affected growth and development in their communities. In the case of Graham Creighton, race and space are certainly intertwined, but there is another factor to consider. I bring attention to the isolation of both black and white communities and argue that both class and socio-economics influenced the education that these communities ultimately received. The oral evidence shows that much remains to be explored in terms of the relationships between these communities specifically. For example, Participant 4 observes that Eastern Passage and North Preston are surprisingly similar because they ‘were disenfranchised and labelled by other communities.’ At Graham Creighton, Eastern Passage and North Preston both faced similar struggles in terms of being streamed into auxiliary programs and faced a lack of encouragement to achieve. Graham Creighton’s classist undertones demonstrate yet another facet of discrimination in Nova Scotia, which leads to the penultimate observation of this thesis: Nova Scotia possesses a certain type of prejudice, one that is deeply entrenched with its history and is inherited through ideas passed down from generation to generation. As this thesis shows, overt examples of racism are difficult to find, but subtle and systemic examples are in abundance. This speaks to the nature of the racism in Nova Scotia. It is almost ‘polite’ in a sense, as Participant 4 observes in Chapter IV:

I call it a 'new racism'... years ago if someone wanted to call you a name you knew right away. But now, it's a new game... they may treat you in certain way but they don't want to... because of the old stereotype 'this is your place, this is where you should be,' that's still there, it's ingrained in our history of Nova Scotia. And we're labelled as the most racist province in Canada because historically we haven't identified in the province, for everyone, some of the discriminatory practices that have gone on. We're quick to talk about the United States but we had a lot of those things here, it's just it was hidden or not as identified.¹²

Participant 4 eloquently describes racist practices in Nova Scotia as subtler than they were in the past, but maintains that racism is just as rampant as it ever was. While the racism that is present is perhaps not as blatant of that in the United States, its effects are just as harmful.

Racist attitudes were historically present in Nova Scotia and continue to be perpetuated today. It begs the question: "We know racism is there, but what do we do with it?" In using Graham Creighton, and by extension Cole Harbour High, as case studies to the larger questions of integration and race relations, many insights are gained. Race is a factor in tensions between communities at these schools but is not the only reason. The situation is far more complex and encompasses colonial attitudes. Race is a consideration in the makeup of Nova Scotia society and is systemic. It is not necessarily blatant "Jim Crow" style racism, but has a subtlety of its own. Just because it is subtle, however, does not mean it is not racist. While this racism is slowly unravelling in the area, it will take more time and more work to eradicate the deeply ingrained prejudice. Graham Creighton represents the current state of race relations in the province. We could learn a lot from experiences at Graham Creighton if we properly apply what we know to

¹² Participant 4, Interview, Stefanie R. Slaunwhite, SMU REB File #16-190, April 19, 2016.

our current educational system. This brings me to my conclusion: History is doomed to repeat itself unless we understand it. As George Santyana famously said: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” We must first recognize and remember the past, come to an understanding of it, and then move forward, using the past to inform our present actions.

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**CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
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Your approval period is March 31, 2016 to March 31, 2017; renewable.

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APPENDIX A

Oral History

Methodology

This is a thesis primarily rooted in the historical method. The oral history section complements the analysis found. Oral history is an excellent tool to explore the untold story in history, as well as to construct a narrative where historical documents are lacking. As Paul Thompson argues his canonical work, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History, Third Edition*, oral history allows for a more robust story to be told. He writes:

Since the nature of most existing records is to reflect the standpoint of authority, it is not surprising that the judgment of history has more often than not vindicated the wisdom of the powers that be. Oral history by contrast makes a much fairer trial possible: witnesses can now also be called from the under-classes, the unprivileged, and the defeated. It provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past, a challenge to the established account. In doing so, oral history has a radical implication for the social message of history as a whole.¹

Oral history therefore is a crucial addition to this project on integration: it allows the undocumented tale to be told. Thompson's model for oral history was followed in the process of creating questions for participants and in selecting oral evidence for the final chapter. A basic set of open-ended questions concerning the interviewees experiences at Graham Creighton were asked.² Sometimes it can be difficult to truly pinpoint a precise

¹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Third ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

² Questions included, but were not limited to:

- What events in your time at Graham Creighton High School stand out to you?
- What was day-to-day life like at Graham Creighton High School?
- What were the teachers, guidance counsellors, and principals like at Graham Creighton High School?
- What were relations like between members of different communities?

question to ask in an oral history interview. After all, each interview tells its own story.

Therefore, the participant had the freedom to direct the conversation in a way that reflects his or her own experiences. I therefore chose to follow the chronological order of the interviews in the final chapter as my interviewing inevitably was influenced by those that had preceded it as I learned more about the lived experience of Graham Creighton.

I transcribed the interviews and then selected stories of interest for analysis. I completed this chapter last so I could make links to the existing literature around the topic. I consulted various publications that utilized oral history and drew on Alan Wieder's *Race and Education: Narrative Essays, Oral Histories, and Documentary Photography* for inspiration. The author interviewed those affected by integration in 1960 of two New Orleans elementary schools, both in the Ninth Ward, a lower and lower-middle-class district. These interviews, along with the historical analysis included are an excellent presentation of oral evidence. Wieder presents two interviews with former teachers in these schools: one left due to the pressures of integration and one stayed. He provides both primary and secondary analysis flawlessly and weaves the tales of the interviewees in with the historical narrative of the time. Following Wieder's example, I let the interviews develop organically while following a basic structure to achieve a balanced inquiry. I drew on the knowledge I had acquired from both primary and secondary sources to find instances that complemented what I already knew. I also highlighted instances that more explicitly illustrated some of my final conclusions than the more subtle examples drawn from the literatures.

-
- What did your family think of Graham Creighton High School?
 - What did you do after Graham Creighton?

A Note on Confidentiality

Originally, I wanted to identify participants by name with the option to remain confidential. However, after many requests for confidential interviews, I decided that all interviewees would be identified as participants in the final thesis. This ensures confidentiality but not anonymity because the information collected is directly identifying. Participants were made aware of this in the informed consent process. Identifying factors include, but are not limited to: community of origin, year of attendance, ethnicity and gender. All data will be securely destroyed after 2 years of the thesis completion.

APPENDIX B

Images



Figure 1: Photograph, Graham Creighton High School, yearbook photo, 1967.

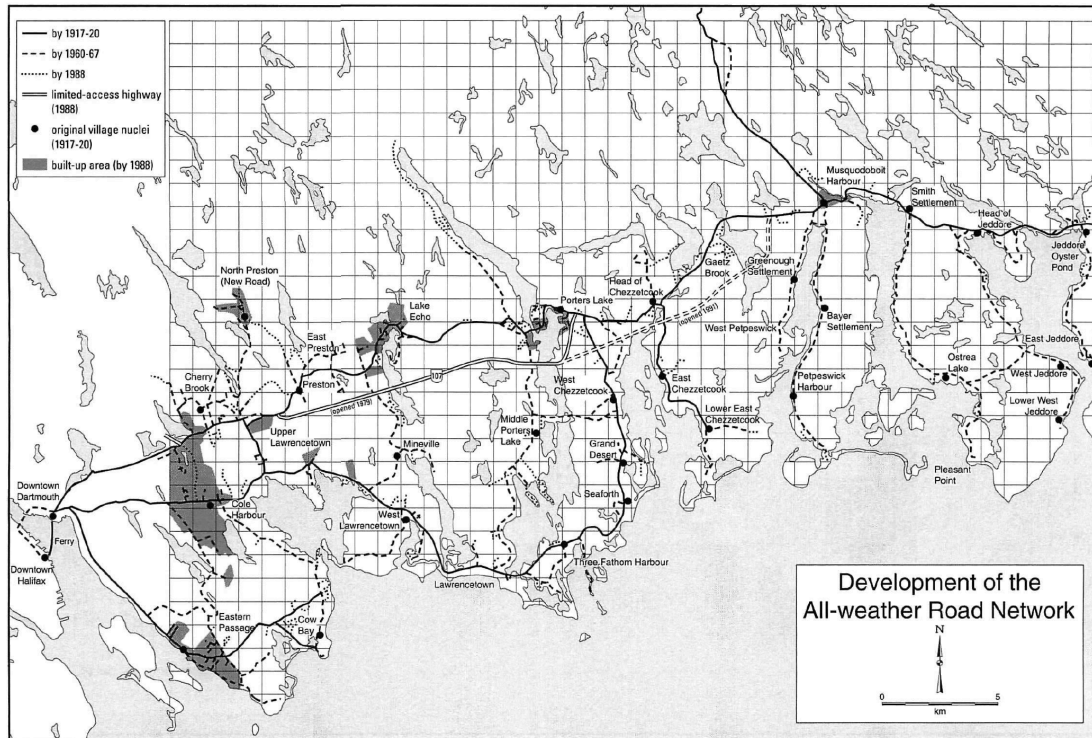


Figure 2: Map, Development of the all-weather road network, 1920 to 1988, showing locations of original village nuclei (1920) and extent of built-up area in 1988.

In Hugh Millward, "The Spread of Commuter Development in the Eastern Shore Zone of Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1920-1988", *Urban History Review* Volume 29 (October 2000), 26.

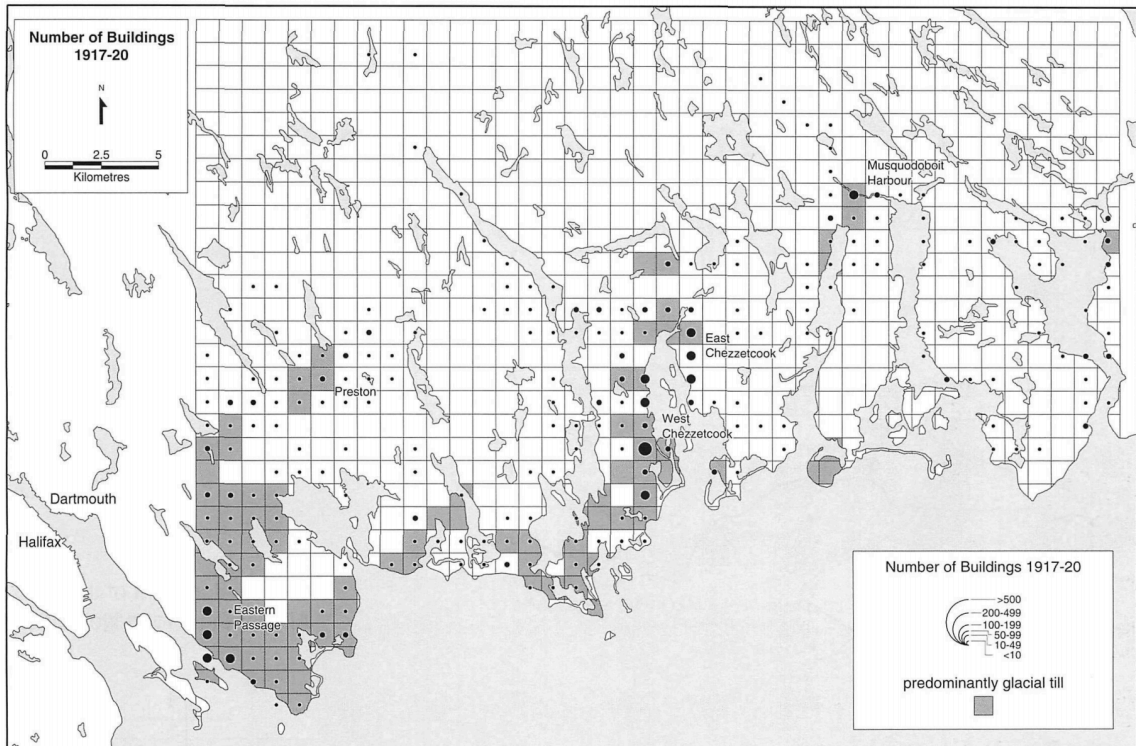


Figure 3: Map, 1917-20 building count, by square-kilometre quadrats

In Millward, "The Spread of Commuter Development", 25.

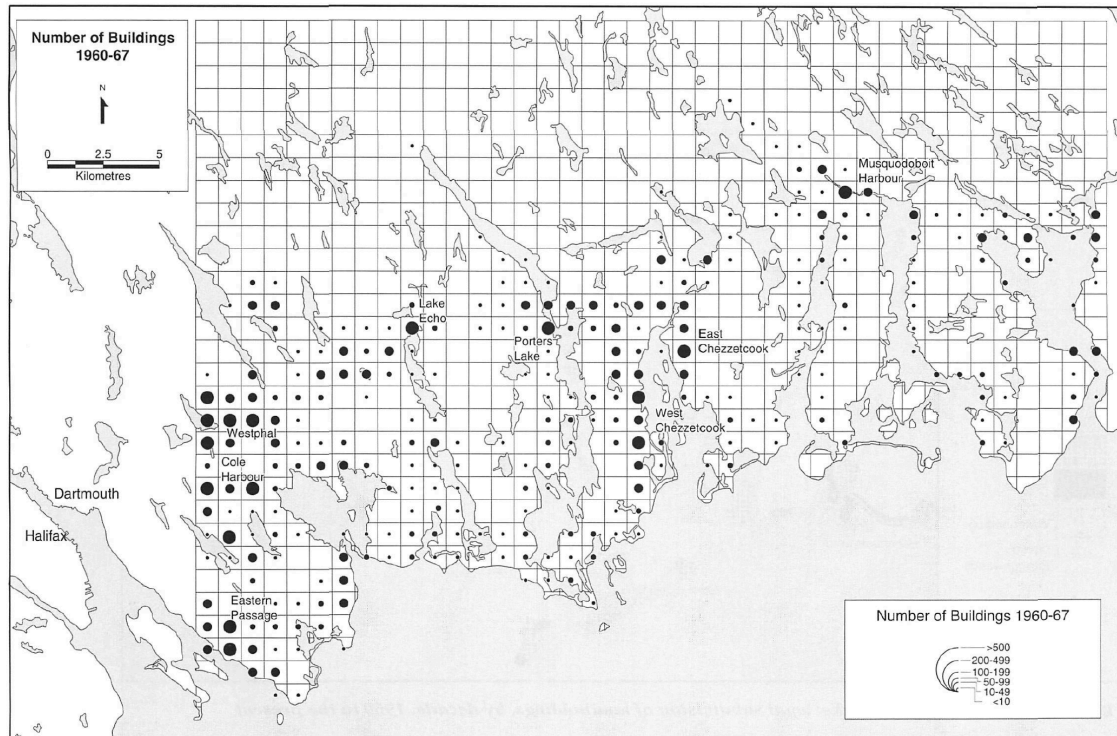


Figure 4: Map, 1960-7 building count, by square-kilometre quadrats

In Millward, "The Spread of Commuter Development", 27.

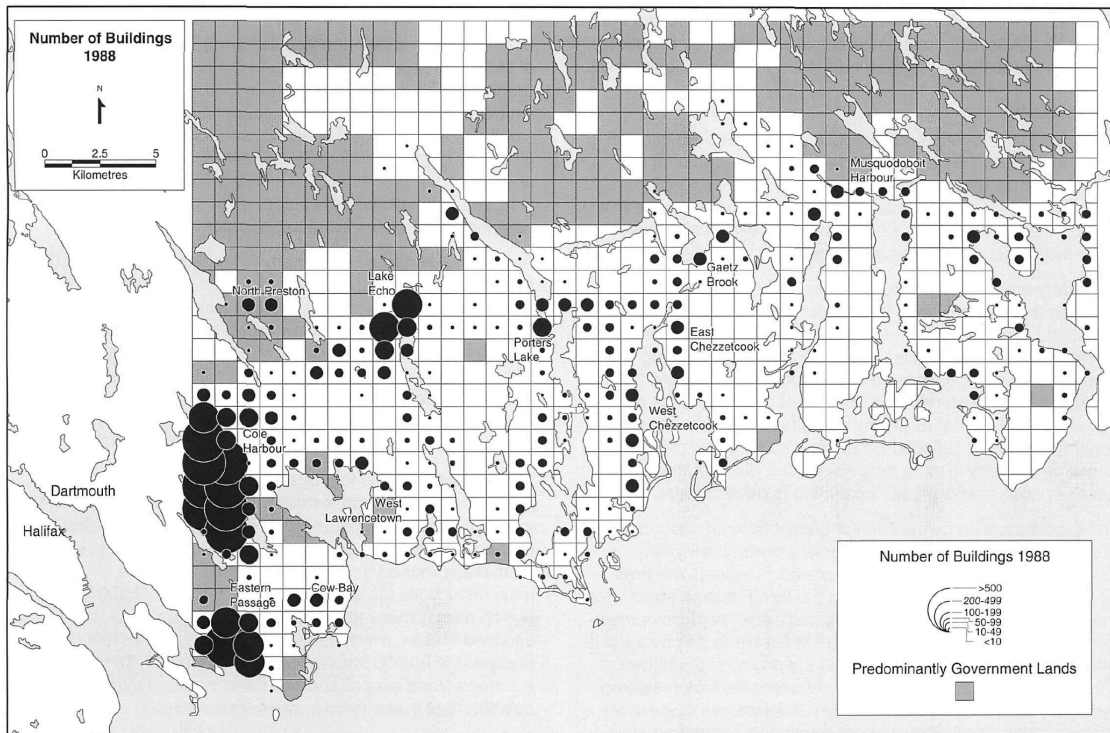


Figure 5: Map, 1988 building count, by square-kilometre quadrats

In Millward, "The Spread of Commuter Development", 29.