

Niran Foster - John Dobson Award Recipient 2022

I am honoured to be this year's recipient of the John Dobson Award, which honours the work of John Dobson, a member of the Department of Adult Education faculty who died in 1980 in Mexico while doing research. After ten years of working in science and agriculture, including five years in Canada and five years in Jamaica, I was excited to enroll in the Master of Adult Education program at St. Francis Xavier University, where I am currently in my final year. This journey has been important in aiding my personal and professional learning.

In 2011, I worked with adults in Jamaica as an Agricultural Extension Officer, which involve the processing and the delivery of technology information and agriculture programs from the government to farmers. In 2016, I volunteered as a youth leader in Truro, NS, and in 2019, I volunteered to work with the African Nova Scotian community to help adults in the community develop a community garden learning program. I am a Certified Professional Agrologist with the Nova Scotia Institute of Agrologists. As an agricultural research technician at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Agriculture, part of my role is to establish liaisons with farmers in Atlantic Canada to help develop the best environmental agriculture practices while maintaining food production.

In my master's research, *Extension Learning and Adult Education in Jamaican Agriculture: A Qualitative Case Study*, I examined agricultural extension learning among small scale farmers in Jamaica. The research explored the perspectives of farmers who participated in extension learning and who have either indirectly or directly experienced the challenges associated with small-scale farming in Jamaica. For example, low literacy among small-scale farmers, marketing, the presence of cooperative groups, limited extension learning programs and gender equity. Adult illiteracy continues to be a leading concern in Jamaica, and among farmers from low-income families.

Therefore, I examine and question the role of agricultural extension learning programs in Jamaica which involves the sharing of information and technologies with farmers, the state of Jamaica's agriculture, and the educational attainment of adults. Specifically, I was curious to know more about the connections between literacy and agricultural production and success, as well as problems arising from other accumulative factors such as neoliberalism, colonialism, and climate change. My research provides evidence that there is a literacy gap, as well as other barriers including low engagement with extension learning, the failure agricultural cooperative groups, gender equity barrier, and the lack of critical and culturally relevant adult education. I think a major significance of my research is to evoke consciousness among small-scale farmers in Jamaica.

This research has ignited my interest to contribute to the theoretical literature in adult education internationally, work with and support researcher doing international research, and focus on solving critical issues globally and providing recommendations to support social change, for example study domestic workers globally.

Angela Johnson – Marie Gillen Awardee Co-Recipient 2022

I am an African Nova Scotian woman who has roots in this province that go back 400 years. My father was in the Canadian Armed Forces, and I grew up on Army bases. My formative teen years were spent in Germany. Although I was often the only Black 'kid' in my school, which had its own challenges, the benefit was I learned how to exist in and adapt to different worlds and people. Living abroad opened my eyes to the world, nurtured my curiosity, and gave me an appreciation for different cultures and people.

School was where my curiosity and appreciation for others grew. I was quite the 'chatter-box' and in grade 3, rather than stifle this my teacher leveraged my talkative nature and inquisitiveness by suggesting I do an interview for a class assignment. I was given permission to ask questions! And, I learned interviewing could be a profession.

Professionally and personally, I have been a communicator and educator since my early 20s. I studied radio and television arts and worked at CBC Television in Toronto and Halifax, for more than two decades, freelanced for a variety of specialty television networks, and taught at the University of King's College in the Journalism program. Currently I am a director of communication with the Nova Scotia Government.

As an African-descended woman and Black Nova Scotian, my focus, where and when possible, has always been the development and advancement of women from marginalized communities. Throughout my career, I have created and implemented programming for young women interested in the field of journalism and have volunteered and held leadership positions on boards and organizations that uplift the Black community and support the development and advancement of racialized and marginalized women and girls. When deciding to further my education, rather than choose the ubiquitous Master of Business, Public Administration, Journalism or Public Relations programs, related to my profession, I chose the Master of Adult Education in Women's Leadership and Community Development. It has given me the opportunity to gain this credential but also expand my knowledge in an area that is also my passion.

My master's research explored the journey to leadership positions of six Black women in Nova Scotia, examining family and community expectations; systemic challenges, including education, racism, and discrimination; along with coping strategies, including mentoring and peer support: and how these have influenced their professional advancement in the province.

As we are currently living during a time of heightened awareness of racism and its systemic nature, this timely project was an opportunity to expand the understanding of Black women's leadership in Nova Scotia. Through the study, I found a legacy of mistrust, miseducation, and 'band-aid' program development implemented to correct wrongs, right systems, and support advancement, but when assessed over time, seem designed to perpetuate the status quo.

There is still a long way to go to have significant representation in leadership that reflects Nova Scotia's society. Workshops, mentoring programs and peer networks are possible; I look forward to continued engagement with the study's participants and other Black women to address these systemic challenges in a systematic way to support Black women's advancement to leadership.

Shauna Scott – Marie Gillen Award Co-Recipient 2022

My name is Shauna Scott, and I am enrolled in the Master of Adult Education – Women's Leadership and Community Development. I am a Senior Program Coordinator with the Atlantic Association of Community Business Development Corporations (AACBDC) and offer education and training to the staff and volunteer board members of the Atlantic-wide network. The Master's program offered through St.FX University is helping me understand how and why adults learn, and the importance of both formal and informal learning opportunities. Having knowledge of adult learning principles helps us tailor learning design to incorporate the learner's eagerness, the need for learners to connect with experience, and the motivation learners have to improve themselves.

The Master's program is also helping me understand more about women's leadership and community development. I have been involved in community development and women's leadership for the past 29 years through my employment with the AACBDC as well as through my volunteer work with various non-profit community organizations and I find both topics fascinating but very complex to understand. Why does community development work well in some communities and not others? What is the role of all levels of government in community development? Are different levels of government displacing their responsibilities onto volunteers? What is the role of gender in leadership? Is leadership a learned skill? What tools do women need to support their leadership? These are some of the questions that I ponder.

I also have been involved in delivering a Women in Business Initiative to women business owners across the Atlantic provinces, including access to financing components for the 41 Community Business Development Corporations who in turn provided business loans and support to women entrepreneurs. Over the course of 9 years, close to 700 women-owned businesses were supported and loan losses were far below expectations.

The literature reviewed in this program, and the informal mentorship opportunities I have had with several fascinating women involved in this program have provided me with the background on leadership and leadership styles, and I use this knowledge to reflect on my own experiences. One of the most important aspects I have learned is that leadership can take many forms and that it means different things to different people. My original image of a leader was based on my experiences where the white, older male was considered the leader; a stereotypical image.

The research I am doing focuses on women's leadership within a rural-based non-profit organization. My research is a case study that examines the experiences and perceptions of leadership based on women volunteers who are board members of a rural-based organization. I examine women's views on leadership and how they see the benefit of their work for the organization. I explore barriers and challenges that deter these volunteers from attaining leadership positions and the support that helps them step into leadership roles. This study may lead to a greater understanding of rural non-profit organizations, gender, and volunteerism, and may strengthen rural-based communities deeply in need of volunteers.