

**Toronto
Metropolitan
University**

**Faculty
of Arts**



2020-2022

First Term Report

**Advisor to the Dean of the
Faculty of Arts on Blackness &
Black Diasporic Education**

Artwork by Anna Jane McIntyre
annajmcintyre.com



Artwork by Anna Jane McIntyre | annajmcintyre.com

A Message from the Advisor to the Dean of Arts on Blackness & Black Diasporic Education

In September of 2020, I was appointed as the inaugural Advisor to the Dean of Arts on Blackness and Black Diasporic Education. It has been both a rewarding and challenging first term. I would be remiss in not acknowledging that we continue to live and work in perilous times. The lingering aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to wreak havoc on families and communities, disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. Although we are continually expected to function as “business as usual”, we know that this is an impossibility for many people. I am grateful for the many researchers, activists, and communities who are bringing visibility, in different realms, to important issues that are often underfunded, dismissed and invisibilized in dominant spaces.

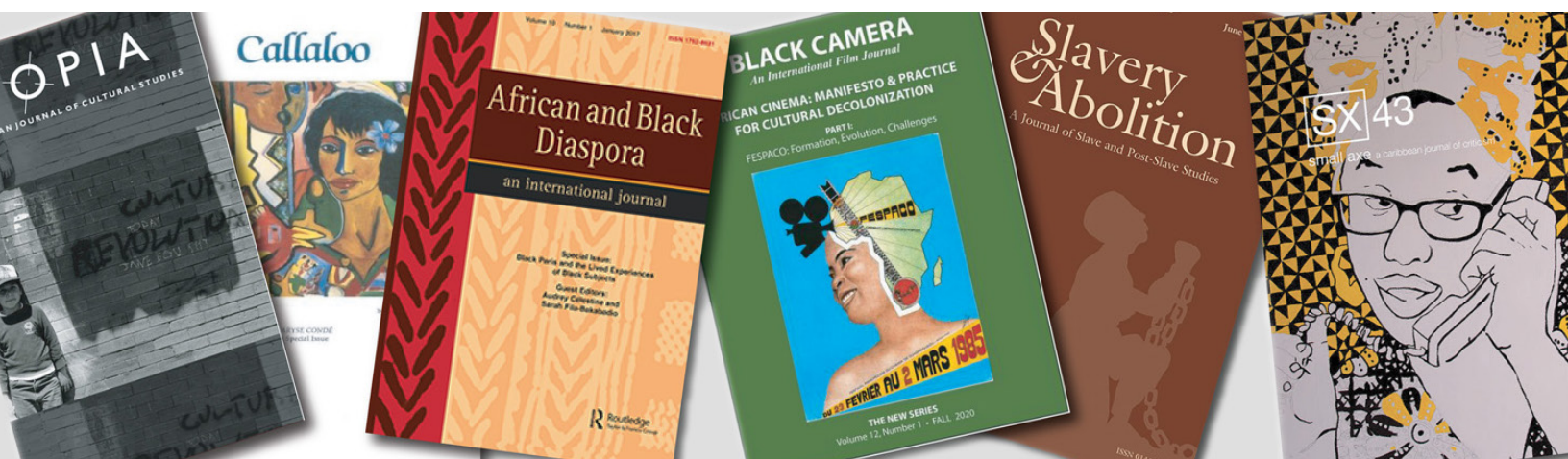
The role of advisor has taught me a great deal about the limitations and possibilities within universities. Over the past two years, I have worked closely with interested

departments to address the underrepresentation of Black faculty, and gaps in curriculum. I have helped to promote Black scholarship and support co-curricular programming for Black students in Arts.

In this report, I share the many initiatives and milestones Arts has brought forth in the building of Black Studies/Black Scholarship and in the support of Black faculty and students. I wish to thank the Dean, Dr. Pam Sugiman, for entrusting me with this important role and the many faculty and staff who have collaborated and supported my efforts and this work. To Black students, you continue to inspire and challenge me.

With gratitude,

Mélanie Knight



Pushing disciplinary boundaries

I believe that hiring faculty who challenge the status quo and bring with them different knowledges and lived experiences is crucial to anti-oppression work and the decolonization of post-secondary education. During my first term as Advisor, the Faculty of Arts has hired eight new Black faculty members, all of whom are engaged in critical and innovative Black scholarship. I would like to thank the many supportive faculty members who have helped me in this process, and also Dr. Hayden King for his guidance and advice. Please join me in welcoming these brilliant scholars to Toronto Met U.

CRIMINOLOGY**Stephanie Latty****Assistant Professor**

Stephanie's areas of expertise include Black feminisms, critical race theory, anti-Blackness, carcerality, gendered violence, and abolition. Her current research examines the media and legal discourses surrounding Black women and girls who have experienced strip-searching and other forms of state violence in Canada.

Kanika Samuels-Wortley**Assistant Professor**

Kanika's research explores the intersection of race, racism and the criminal justice system. Her scholarship employs a mixed-methods critical race approach to better understand how racial bias and discrimination impact Black and Indigenous peoples' experience and perceptions of law enforcement in Canada.

ENGLISH**Darcy Ballantyne****Assistant Professor**

Darcy teaches and researches in the areas of Black studies, Black Canadian literatures and cultures, city writing, Black memoir and critical mixed race theory. Darcy has published articles in *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, *MaComère: The Journal of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars*, *A/B Auto/Biography Studies*, and *The Walrus Magazine*.

Jumoke Verissimo**Acting Professor**

Jumoke is a poet, novelist, and writer. She has authored two poetry collections (*I am memory and The Birth of Illusion*), a novel (*A Small Silence*, 2022), a co-edited collection of poems on police brutality in Nigeria (*Sòròsókè*), and a children's book (*Aduke and the Moon's Hidden Secret*).

GEOGRAPHY**Emmanuel Kyeremeh****Assistant Professor**

Emmanuel is a social and urban geographer. His research focuses on the role of personal network in the integration process of immigrants, specifically African immigrants in Canada. He also examines critical reflections of integration outcomes among immigrants.

HISTORY**Patrice Allen****Acting Professor**

Patrice's research and teaching interests include the histories of African diasporas, Black social movements, women and gender, and Black radical thought. Her current research examines the transnational activism of Black women within the Universal Negro Improvement Association [UNIA], founded by Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood Garvey in the 1910s.

SOCIOLOGY**Rai Reece****Assistant Professor**

Rai is an interdisciplinary scholar-activist. Her work examines how carceral processes in Canada are organized and maintained by historical and contemporary narratives and practices of colonial violence specific to anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. More broadly, her work explores the intersection of punishment and misogynoir as legally and socially enacted via governance and white settler capitalism.

Sam Tecle**Assistant Professor**

Sam's work focuses on the analysis of diverse experiences, trajectories and expressions of Blackness, grounded in particular histories of racialization, colonialism, community formation and resistance. His forthcoming work *Black Grammars: On Difference and Belonging* explores the experiences and perspectives relating to blackness and Black identification of East African Diasporas across the UK, Canada and the US.

Addressing issues of anti-Black racism & anti-Indigenous racism



Discussions

- Held discussions with Dr. Remi Warner, Director of Human Rights Services, OVPECI, to discuss the anti-Black racism experienced by Black students and faculty at TMU and how to begin conversations around accountability.
- Met and worked closely with Tanya Rumble, Director of Development in Arts, to discuss donor support of Black scholarship and Black students. These discussions are ongoing.
- Ongoing discussions around funding for Black and Indigenous Predoctoral, Postdoctoral Fellowships (along with Dr. Hayden King)
- Met with Dr. Art Blake, Director of Dimensions Pilot program, to discuss the rise of hate faced by Arts' racialized faculty members (held in 2021).
- Met with Dr. Wendy Freeman, former Director of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. Advocated for the implementation of a University-wide learning and teaching grant focused on Black Studies and anti-Black racism. Follow-up is needed.

Panels

“Addressing Anti-Black & Anti-Indigenous Racism in the Faculty of Arts”

Panel discussion with Dr. Hayden King, Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi, & Dr. Anna Corrigan-Flaminio

“Intersections of Injustice: Anti-Black racism and Islamophobia”

Panel Discussion with Imran Ali, Hodan A. Mohamed, and Fatmata Bangura. Organized by the Muslim Community Network, OVPECI.

“National Forum on Anti-Asian racism”

Panel discussion with Dr. Eve Haque, Dr. Laura Kwak, Dr. Hayden King & Binish Ahmed

Initiatives

- Organized anti-Black racism training for Arts staff. The training was held in 2021.
- Worked with Kevin Manuel to develop classroom resources that address anti-Black racism, which will be added to the Black Studies Library guide.

Demonstrating & supporting the depth of Black Canadian scholarship

Advising

- Provided support to Black faculty by reviewing Tri-Council grants, project proposals, and a Canada Research Chair proposal on Black and Indigenous labour and history.
- Provided guidance to Arts Dimensions Chair Dr. Hyacinth Simpson with the organization of a session on how to better support SRC for Black faculty and Black graduate students.
- Connected Black faculty with CELT office teaching grants.

Secured Funding

Created Black Studies research grant in Arts which has funded Black researchers, such as:

2020-21

Dr. Lahoma Thomas

“The Quotidian Experience of anti-Black racism”

2020-21

Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi

“School to Success Pipeline Project”

Black Studies Library Guide

The Black Studies Guide was developed in collaboration with subject librarian Kevin Manuel and graduate student Sara Esayas. The Guide provides researchers with information on historical, social, economic, political, and cultural histories of Black people of African descent in Canada, as well as their present-day experiences. The guide includes books, databases, journals, archives, statistics, periodicals and films/documentaries.

IN THE GUIDE

Black Canadian History

Community and Feminist organizing

Immigration and Labour

Anti-Black racism

Globality and the Black Diaspora

Queering Blackness

Black Resistance

Black Power and Literature

**“ I am complex.
I am a lot of
things. I am at the
intersection of
many identities,
many histories.”**

Dr. Ndeye Ba

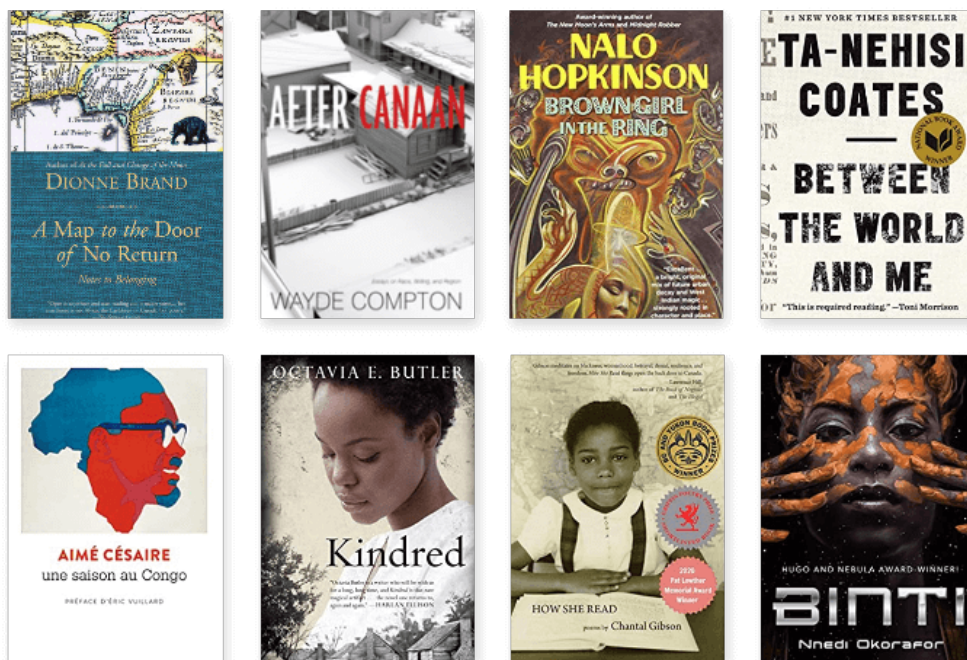
Assistant Professor, Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures

Talking Black Studies

In February 2022, The Creative School and The Faculty of Arts, in collaboration with The Catalyst, hosted the 3rd Annual Black History Month celebration. The first event in this co-collaboration, “Talking Black Studies”, was a virtual fireside chat featuring Black faculty and allies at Toronto Met U.

[Watch highlights from the event](#)

A Discipline in and of itself— Black Studies at TMU



In collaboration with Drs. Anne-Marie Lee-Loy (English, Faculty of Arts) and Cheryl Thompson (School of Performance, The Creative School), we created an interdisciplinary Black Studies minor that launched in September 2022

With courses from 16 departments and schools within the Faculty of Arts, The Creative School, the Ted Rogers School of Management and the Faculty of Community Services, the Black Studies minor at TMU is one of few in Canada. The creation of this minor is timely and essential for building community and countering the alienation felt by Black students. I wish to thank the many people in Arts and throughout the University for bringing the minor to fruition. A heartfelt thank you to Anne-Marie and Cheryl whose dedication and collaboration made this possible. A special thank you to Dr. Kathleen Kellett (former Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies), Rahma Hilowle (student liaison administrator), and Yumi Numata (Director of Operations at Yellowhead Institute) for their tremendous work and support.

I continue to promote the Black Studies minor, consulting with departments and encouraging the inclusion of new courses.

Media coverage

[New Black Studies Courses to look out for Next Fall](#)

The EyeOpener

[The only one \(story by Perry King\)](#)

SportsNet

[Black Studies Minor Coming to Ryerson](#)

Breakfast Television

[Black Studies minor launching next fall](#)

Ryerson Today

[Wave of Black studies programs at Canadian universities a long time coming, scholars say](#)

CBC News

[Ryerson's Black Studies Minor is a Major Win For Black Students](#)

ByBlacks

[New Black Studies minor coming to Ryerson](#)

On the Record

New Black-focused courses

ENG 142 — Black Arts, Black Power

Black textual and cultural productions reveal the material conditions of Black experience. Students are introduced to Black Studies by exploring cultural production throughout the Black diaspora in its historical and social contexts

ENG 647 — Afrofuturism: The Future is Black

Students explore Afrofuturism's vast cultural expanse -- from comet-seared New York to a Toronto populated by Caribbean ghosts and gods; from a fugitive alien in Harlem to a prince in Wakanda; from the sounds of Sun Ra to the music videos of Janelle Monae -- and consider the possibilities and limitations of the genre.

SOC 576 — Colonialism and Anti-Blackness

There is an emergent body of scholarship bringing into conversation Indigenous and Black studies to interrogate how settler colonialism intersects with anti-Black racism give rise to white settler societies at the expense of Indigenous and Black life.

CRM 250 — Criminalizing Blackness

This course examines how the criminalization of Blackness operates through criminal justice and other institutions.

ENG 620 — Literatures of the Caribbean

In this course, students enhance critical thinking by considering how various art forms have responded to these upheavals, and to Caribbean resistance and reclamation.

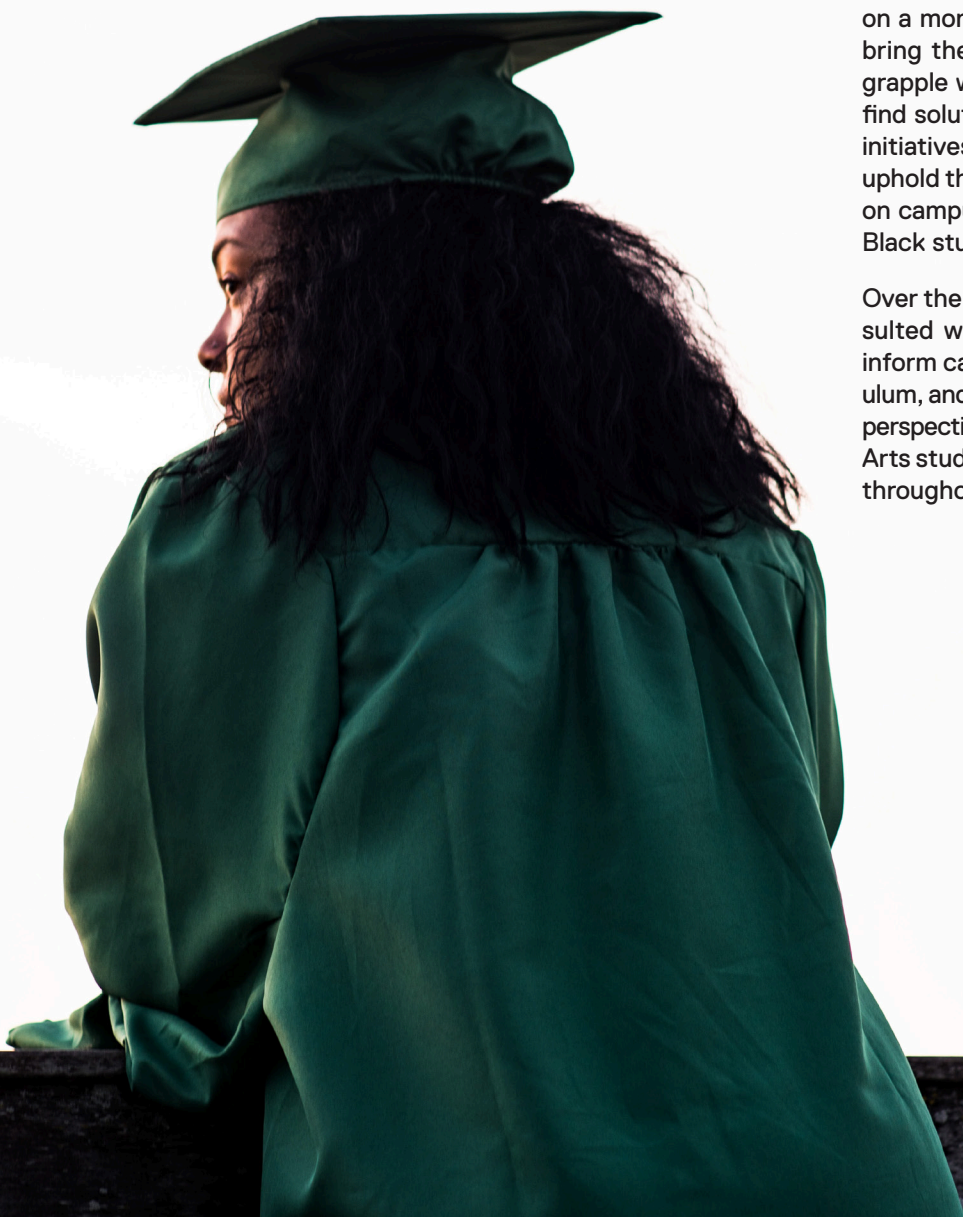
I implemented a Faculty of Arts teaching grant for Black Studies, which has led to the funding and successful creation and redevelopment of a number of Black-focused courses included in the Black Studies minor.

Facilitating access

Supporting Black-identified students in Arts

Students in the Faculty of Arts face unique career pathway challenges. The Arts' Black Student Advisory, created in 2020, continues to meet on a monthly basis. Members of the Advisory bring their unique experiences to the space, grapple with issues impacting Black students, find solutions, and create and implement new initiatives. No matter the project, they always uphold the importance of the Black experience on campus and stay committed to supporting Black students.

Over the past two years, the Advisory has consulted with various stakeholders and helped inform career and co-op opportunities, curriculum, and support services by ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of Black-identified Arts students are considered and incorporated throughout.



Hearing from the Advisory

“I have been a part of the advisory committee for about a year and a half and it has been a truly rewarding experience. I got the opportunity to hear and discuss experiences from a diverse group of black students. We explored topics like Black professor representation, Black studies courses, pre-colonial African history, access and availability of financial support, access to Co-Op programs, network establishment and more.”

— Abdulmajid Bello

“Participating in the Black Student Advisory was an enlightening and encouraging experience for me. For much of my undergraduate degree, I felt isolated from other Black students. Not only did being a part of the advisory give me the opportunity to connect with other Black students, it also allowed me to give feedback about how Black Studies could develop at TMU. I felt like the things we shared would have a real impact on the curriculum and would help future Black students at the university. The Advisory is an amazing opportunity for students and I hope it keeps going.”

— Akosua Adasi

“My involvement in the Arts’ Black student advisory has been an amazing opportunity for me to voice my concerns regarding diversity and inclusion within the university. As an international student, it can be very intimidating to reach out to faculty members and access resources on campus. I am extremely thankful that Dr. Mélanie Knight provided a familiar and comfortable space for us to share our experiences as Black-identified students. The creation of the Black Student Network and the launch of the Black Studies minor were undoubtedly the most impactful outcome of our work.”

— Cindy Diallo

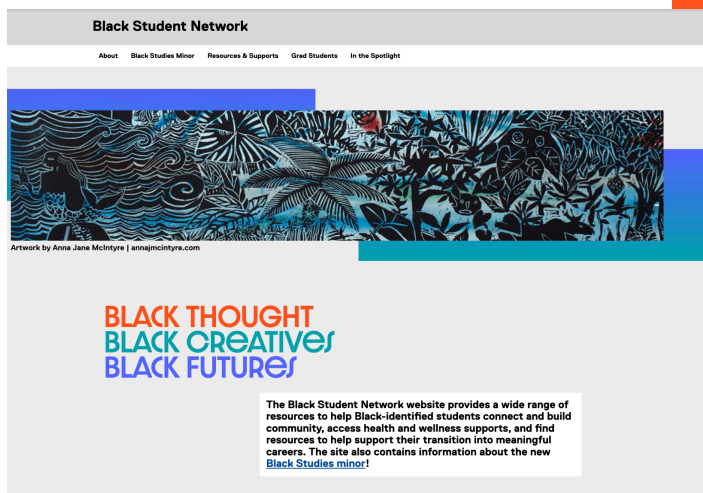


“The Black Student Advisory has allowed us to foster community in a time where people have been separate and disconnected. I am very proud of the work that we have been apart of, which has helped to effect change for the Black arts students at TMU. As someone who came to Toronto with the hopes of being part of a community with other Black people, I’m very grateful for this group. Dr. Knight has been a great guide and mentor for this group and I look forward to achieving the Black Studies minor, a new opportunity that we contributed to.”

— Alicia Pinnock

“Being a part of the Black Student Advisory Committee has been nothing short of amazing! It allowed me to meet and work with other black-identified students within the Faculty of Arts, taught me the importance of networking and reassured me that the experiences I had as a Black identified student were valid and shared by other students like me. I think that having diverse Black experiences allows Black-identified students to see themselves in more professional settings. If not for the Black Student Advisory Committee, I would’ve never believed that my own words and experiences would encourage meaningful change within the Faculty of Arts.”

— Siobhan Alexis



Other areas of student support

The Black Student Network

The Black Student Network website provides a wide range of resources to help Black-identified students connect and build community, access health and wellness supports, and find resources to help support their transition into meaningful careers.

Meeting with the Dean

The Advisory met with Dean, Dr. Pam Sugiman to discuss progress and important initiatives that would further support Black Students in Arts. Along with Dean Sugiman, the Advisory felt that the creation and hire of a Black Student Success Facilitator in Arts would be essential to guide and further support curricular and co-curricular initiatives for Black students. We continue conversations with the Dean.

ABR Training

The Advisory felt it essential to provide anti-Black racism training to Faculty of Arts staff. To help inform the ABR training, the Advisory outlined the varied experiences and needs of Black-identified students, as well as the issues that were most impactful to Black students on campus and should, therefore, be prioritized when developing initiatives or providing academic advising.

This feedback was relayed to an ABR consultant and helped with the creation of anti-Black racism training for staff (held in 2021).

Advising on Career & Coop Services

Along with the Advisory committee, we have advocated for more access and understanding of co-op and employment opportunities for Black-identified students in Arts. We met with Sunny Chan (Co-op Program Specialist, Arts) to discuss ways to better promote co-op to Black students in Arts and also ensure access to equity-minded employers. We also consulted with Laura MacKinnon (Career Education Specialist — Arts) and others about the Race Forward program and other opportunities. Throughout the year, we also sought the support of Bianca Marryshow, a Sociology alum who provided guidance on how to help Black-identified students transition to full-time careers. Bianca has been instrumental in helping the advisory understand the gaps that currently exist for Arts students and ways to improve.

Mentorship

I supported advisory member MacKenna Whitley's participation in the panel discussion (organized by Saagajiwe and led by Black and Indigenous students) on the removal of the statue and the renaming of the University.

I have also attended a number of Black student events, including a Black success event organized by SASSH and Black student graduations!

Black Student Success Facilitator

In fall 2022, Siobhan Stewart was hired as Black Student Success Facilitator — a new position to support Black-identified students in the Faculty of Arts. Siobhan will provide co-curricular support and create student engagement programming.