

The power of ideas

At Dalhousie University in the early 1970s,

I met Irvine Carvery when we were studying the sociology of communities. As in many classes during those society-changing days, the free expression of ideas was encouraged and fostered. Debates were exhilarating, with no one left out of the discussions. Irvine never missed a class.

In 1985 I ran into Irvine again, and he shared with me a new project he was involved with—a project based on a dream that was to become his lifelong passion. It was the Africville Genealogy Society (AGS), and the idea was to establish a memorial in the North End of Halifax where the former Africville community had been located.

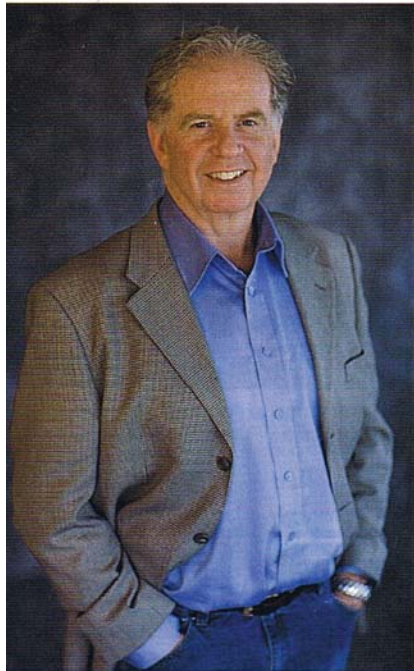
Freed slaves and other people of African descent had settled in the northern part of the Halifax peninsula, and for many generations families lived next to the waters of the Narrows and Bedford Basin. In the early 1960s, the City of Halifax relocated those residents to other parts of the city and razed the community to build a new bridge and an interchange.

A major focus of the Society for the past 25 years has been the idea of resurrecting the Seaview United Baptist Church, which had been at the heart of the community, and an interpretive centre. These legacy structures would allow the history, culture, and spirit of Africville to live on and forever take its rightful place in the city.

For a man in his late 50s, 25 years is a lot of life to give. Still, Irvine Carvery was never alone in the creation and pursuit of ideas about how Africville could be commemorated for future generations of Nova Scotians. Countless others have contributed mightily to create this legacy.

In February of this year, the federal government announced that startup funds were available for the newly established Africville Trust. As well, the Halifax Regional Municipality has provided land and financing for the design and construction of the church and interpretive centre on the original site. (The mayor also extended an apology for the city's former actions.)

Ideas and people who believe in them are a powerful force. Perhaps the most powerful force in the universe. 🌍



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Gilfoy'.

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