

# Digital Oral Histories for Reconciliation: The Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children History Education Initiative (DOHR)



Image Credit: Paul Gegys

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**Department:** Social Development Studies (Renison College), Communication Arts

**Position:** Associate Professors

**Project Partners:** Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children Restorative Inquiry, Victims of Institutional Childhood Exploitation Society (VOICES), African Canadian Services Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education, Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education, Halifax Regional Centre for Education, Renison University College, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grants, Oculus, among other community/education stakeholders

DOHR is a community-driven project that supports the work of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children (NSHCC) Restorative Inquiry. The NSHCC opened in 1921 as a welfare institution for African Nova Scotian children. Residents suffered the effects of institutional racism over the course of its almost 80 years. Our team, comprised of educators, historians, legal experts, game designers, and theatre artists is working with former residents of the Home to develop curriculum for Grade 11 Canadian history students. The curriculum includes a VR experience based on a representation of the historical Home and 12 oral histories from three former residents. The purpose of the VR experience is to assess if and how virtual storytelling develops students' historical consciousness and fosters a relational understanding across difference. DOHR is guided by the Restorative Inquiry's approach reflected by the African symbol of Sankofa, which means that it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind in moving towards a better future.

Questions that DOHR asks about VR design include:

- > How can we centre former residents' voices in the VR experience?
- > How can we ensure that we cause no further harm in our VR renderings of stories about past harms?
- > How can we retain complexity in the VR representation of individual, community, and systemic causes of past harms?
- > How can we use VR to empower young people to be agents of restorative justice?

**VR Development Credits:**

**Storytellers and Community Researchers:** Gerald Morrison, Tony Smith, Tracey Dorrington-Skinner

**Creative Director:** Jennifer Roberts-Smith

**Creative Producers:** Jennifer Llewellyn and Kristina Llewellyn

**Narrative Experience Design, Story Advice, Titles:** Robert Plowman

**Digital Scenography, Video and Lighting Design:** Paul Gegys

**Scenography and Costume Design, Portraits:** William Chesney

**Sound Design:** Colin Labadie

**Technical Oversight:** Lennart Nacke

**Technical Design, 3D Modelling, Texturing:** Arda Kizilkay

**Technical Advice:** Greg Puzniak

**Programming:** Gerd Schmidt

**3D Modelling, Architectural Reconstruction:** Shawn DeSouza-Coelho

**3D Modelling, Texturing:** Maria Aufheimer

**Lighting Assistance:** Jessica Bertrand

**Play Testing:** Gerald Voorhees

**Administrative Assistance:** Kai Butterfield

With research and advisory support from the DOHR Research Team: [www.dohr.ca](http://www.dohr.ca).

[games.uwaterloo.ca](http://games.uwaterloo.ca)



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