

INTERVIEW WITH TARA LEE REDDICK



Tara Lee Reddick graduated from St. Francis Xavier University in 2021 with a degree in Sociology and completed the Bachelor of Education program in 2024. She currently serves as the African Nova Scotian Success Teacher at St. Andrew Junior School in Antigonish. A dedicated mother of four, Tara is also a community leader, artist, actor, and producer, deeply committed to uplifting and empowering her community through both education and the arts.

Can you share a bit about your journey through the Bachelor of Sociology program at StFX and what inspired you to later go on pursue teaching, particularly in social studies and English?

I became a mother at a fairly young age. I was busy, so that’s why I started off taking part-time courses. After having more children and working various jobs, I decided to put it into high gear and go to school full-time. It was my professors, Dr. Norine Verberg, Dr. Rachel Hurst, and Dr. Katie Aubrecht, who really inspired me to keep going with university. They were interested in what I was writing and really loved hearing my perspective as a Black woman. They were open and shared their own journeys to becoming professors here. It's a real journey; professors are real people, and they exemplify what it means to be living sociology. Dr. Verberg inspired me to do my honours. Unfortunately, I couldn’t do that at the time, so I ended up majoring in Sociology and minoring in English. Because of them, though, I would like to do a Master’s in Sociology in the very near future. In the meantime, I’ve decided to use my experience working with youth to gain a Bachelor of Education degree. I’m now a secondary teacher here in Antigonish. I’m a lifelong learner, and sociology is certainly something that is alive and changing, always something to investigate!

During your time at StFX, you served as the Black Student Advisor. What did that role mean to you personally, and how do you feel it impacted the student community?

I really enjoyed being the Black Student Advisor at StFX. I feel that my office offered a mix of fun events, educational opportunities, and wellness initiatives. I pushed for the Black Student Mentors, and I’m happy to see that it’s still going strong! The African Nova Scotian voice is important, and I brought that. We have a strong community here in Nova Scotia, and it’s important to open the doors of StFX wider to those who have been marginalized. I love seeing the growth, programs, and opportunities that have emerged during my time as Black Student Advisor and beyond. I like to feel that I made a difference, establishing relationships with staff, professors, students, and administration, and I did it in a collective way. I was there for the students.

You’ve been involved in so many community organizations and initiatives, both during and after your time at StFX. What motivates you to take on these leadership roles, and how do they complement your work in education?

“I am because you are!”

Seeing the smiles and the difference that programs make in community members' lives is my motivation. I am, because you are! Women in my community inspire me—people such as my mother, Lorraine Reddick; educator Jennifer Desmond; Dr. Wendy Mackey; Wyanne Sandler; Lucille Harper; and the late Patricia Skinner. I have to keep going. I’m doing this for my family, for the greater good, and for the generation coming up after me. Am I doing this in a perfect way? No! Do I get tired? Yes!

What advice would you give to students at StFX today, especially those who are looking to get involved in leadership or advocacy roles on campus?

Get involved. Take a step. There’s only so much time to go around and being busy can be hard sometimes. But you’d be surprised, after taking that first step, others step up too, and it all comes together. Being part of something that can change the lives of others is incredibly rewarding. Think about what you're passionate about. Think about the changes you'd like to see in your own life and in your community. Look around at the associations or committees that are already in place, and ask yourself: What can I contribute? I’m sure they’d be glad to have you.

How has your experience at StFX shaped your approach to teaching and mentoring students today as an African Nova Scotian Success teacher at SRCE.

I love the social aspect of my job. I enjoy hearing the voices and experiences of students, because that can spark change, and having different perspectives is so important. StFX was an awesome place to get an education and to work. I would love to find myself back there someday. Wellness, diversity, inclusion, and equity were key parts of both my university education and my work experience. Now, I get to use the skills and experiences I gained at StFX in my work as a teacher

Looking ahead, what are your hopes for the future of education and community development in Antigonish and Guysborough, particularly for students and families of African descent?

My hope is that students develop a love for learning. I see a great number of students who don’t see a purpose in going to school. I hope that African Nova Scotian students begin to see the relevance of their education, and that they will have teachers and mentors who inspire them. Times are changing, and students and families are asking more questions when it comes to their education. I would love to see more people from our local African Nova Scotian communities attending StFX and also participating in the Coady Education Programs that are available.

Interview by Isabelle Drohan