

editorial



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Positive steps

IN ITS CONTINUING efforts to combat the effects of racism on educational opportunities, Dalhousie University has appointed Halifax lawyer Davies Bagambiire as its new director of a program designed to encourage more blacks and Micmacs to enter the legal profession.

Mr. Bagambiire, a native of Uganda who has practised law in metro for 12 years, will also become an associate professor at the university, specializing in immigration law.

The Indigenous Blacks and Micmacs Program, a program developed in 1989 in an effort to make law school more accessible to applicants from those minority groups, attracted six students last year. Ten more have enrolled for classes beginning in September.

As the new director, Mr. Bagambiire's job will be to encourage further growth and a higher profile for the program. It is a most challenging prospect, and one which the lawyer has indicated he is willing to tackle head on.

"I think at the time when the Marshall inquiry has very clearly catalogued the races, it's only fitting that Dalhousie, as a national institution, respond by . . . creating this program and . . . by appointing a Micmac or black like myself to head it," he said in an interview.

And, indeed, Dalhousie does deserve praise for attempting to eliminate barriers which have historically prevented blacks and

natives from pursuing higher forms of education.

In September, 1989, the university first detailed specific problems in a task force report entitled Access for Black and Native People. A. Wayne MacKay, chairman of the university task force, said the group discovered overwhelming and conclusive evidence of racial inequality.

In its report, the task force rightly concluded that the black and Micmac communities were "tired of studies and recommendations that collect dust" and that they wanted — more importantly, deserved — immediate action to destroy educational roadblocks.

Black United Front executive director Rev. Ogueri Ohanaka said last week he feared Mr. Bagambiire's appointment to Dalhousie was just another "token appointment".

The facts would indicate otherwise. Dalhousie has undertaken serious study of its shortcomings in meeting the needs of blacks and natives in Nova Scotia. Its administrators have acted quickly to implement task force recommendations aimed at rectifying those shortcomings.

The challenge for Mr. Bagambiire will be to assure that these constructive efforts do not flag and that Dalhousie University continue to forge ahead in the battle against racial inequality in Nova Scotia.