



DR. GERALDINE MARJORIE BROWNING

Honorary Graduate Acadia University 2014



Nurse, educator, public administrator, community leader and humanitarian, Browning has charted a personal and professional course of civic leadership and lifelong learning. She has been profoundly dedicated to the growth and welfare of her community, applying her knowledge and compassion to, as she puts it, “doing what needed doing” and “helping wherever she could.” ... she is a trailblazer – the first African Nova Scotian woman to hold many of the positions she has held.

Browning was born in Windsor, Nova Scotia, and moved to her father’s community of East Preston when she was a child. She attended Queen Elizabeth High School, where her aptitude tests suggested she would be a

good social worker. But she grew up in an era when it was acceptable to deny Blacks schooling, employment and service. After being told the colour of her skin meant she would not be able to find work in social work or in her second choice, nursing, Browning answered an ad for a teacher at Three Mile Plains, where she worked for a year before going on to the Nova Scotia Hospital to be trained as a certified nursing assistant. This was the 1950s, and Browning was the first Black trainee for this position. Her studies completed, she found work at the Ready Memorial Hospital in Montreal as the first trained ward clerk in Canada, and in 1955 she left this position and came home to be married. In the years since, she has dedicated herself to her church, family and community.



Browning is an experienced facilitator who has conducted extensive workshops and forums concerning violence against women, family and domestic violence, child welfare, race relations, and Black history, community and economic development. She has paid countless visits to Acadia University classrooms as a guest speaker on the topics about which she is passionate.



[She has served] as President of the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association (VANSDA), of which she is a founding member. She has been active in and provided leadership on several boards and committees, including the African United Baptist Association of Nova Scotia and its Women’s Institute; the Black Cultural Society of Nova Scotia; Literacy Nova Scotia; Kings County Family and Children’s Services, Kentville; the Eastern Valley Baptist Association; the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board; and the Gibson Woods United Baptist Church.



Geraldine receives Order of Nova Scotia

Browning has resided in the historic Black community of Gibson Woods for over 40 years. In 1972, shortly after settling into the community, she called the women together and organized the first Ladies’ Auxiliary for the area under the African United Baptist Association, with the assistance of Pearleen Oliver. Later, she helped organize the Gibson Woods and District Community Club. She was also instrumental in pulling the members of the community together, with members of the AUBA to reorganize and reopen the Gibson Woods United Baptist Church, which had been closed for 10 years.

Excerpt of Presentation by Dr. Claudine Bonner, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Acadia University, 2014

Photos at top: Geraldine (R) with sisters; Geraldine with grandchildren; Geraldine featured as Acadia University Honorary Degree recipient