

ONWARD

THE ONYX INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

TOGETHER WE ASPIRE TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE



Winston Churchill once said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts." This principle of perseverance is the cornerstone of everything we do at Onyx and just one of the reasons why we're beyond grateful that so many of our incredible employer, community and educational partners, our dedicated mentors, and of course our ambitious and energized scholars are staying the course with us on this critical journey to create greater access and equity for Black post-secondary students and emerging professionals to garner meaningful career opportunities.

Equally as exciting and rewarding is the fact that both the supply and demand sides of our business continue to increase, despite the decreasing global prioritization of diversity, equity and inclusion. The two most recent additions to our impressive list of employer allies - The Home Depot and Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSE), a national agency providing the Government of Canada with information technology security and foreign signals intelligence - further validates that many forward-thinking companies and leaders recognize the immense value, in terms of employee satisfaction, productivity, profitability, and innovation, that comes with casting as wide a net as possible so that *all* qualified candidates have equal opportunities to leverage their innate and acquired skills, as well as their passions, to impact a business' short and long-term goals.

Our resolve to continue forging ahead was also strengthened when we onboarded our sixth cohort of Onyx Scholars in April of this year - the largest to date with over 450 highly

engaged, tech savvy and industrious future leaders who are eager to get their foot in the door. But the rise in participants was not the only metric for success that we celebrated, we also relished the uptick in applicants from outside of Ontario and a greater number of students who have double majors, some focussing on two industries that are closely aligned and others choosing different sectors that reflect their interests and a willingness to keep their options open, a flexible mindset that our team often encourages as a pathway to career success in an ever-changing economic and employment landscape.

As we look forward to Onyx's fifth anniversary this October, we know that much of the above-mentioned accomplishments can be attributed to our team's strategic planning and coordinated execution of initiatives that drive greater awareness of the brand, our mission, and our resources. Our adaptability, willingness to consistently apply lessons learned, relationship management capabilities, and the reinforcement of our key messaging to employers about the benefits of joining our coalition to course correct entrenched policies and practices, that consciously and unconsciously exclude qualified Black candidates, has also undoubtedly contributed to the achievement of our goals.

But we would be remiss if in our desire to pay tribute to the virtues of teamwork, we neglected to mention that our collaborations, over the past two years, with Black Students Associations on campuses across the country, has also played a significant role in our ability to garner more interest and awareness about what we do and how we do it. Even without the tracking methods that we employ to measure the impact of our on and offline endeavours with these associations, we know that there is a direct correlation between this type of authentic, peer-to-peer engagement and the quantity and quality of applications for our Onyx Scholars Program.

Although our exuberance about the growth and evolution of Onyx is palpable, we remain keenly aware of the fact that change is rarely easy. But it is, however, as essential as the fortitude and foresight to keep pressing onward toward a worthy and significant goal - a sometimes heavy lift that is made lighter by the proverbial notion of strength in numbers.



SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

Maxwell Evans

Dalhousie University

Bachelor of Commerce, 2024



EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT

We all know that CIBC is a leading North American financial institution with

Maxwell Evans is a marketing professional based in Oakville, Ontario, with deep ties to the Black community in Nova Scotia. Maxwell founded Dalhousie University's Black Business Student Association, mentoring over 75 students and creating opportunities through bursaries, events, and co-op placements.

Now a Brand Partnerships Coordinator at Kensington Grey, an influencer marketing agency for black and brown creators, he has collaborated with global brands like Nike and Disney. Maxwell is not only a proud Onyx Scholar, he is also an active contributor with one of our amazing community partners, The King's Trust Canada. In fact, he sits on the KTC Youth Council and was a part of the team that was selected to meet King Charles during his recent visit to Canada for The Speech from the Throne.

Maxwell's unwavering commitment to fostering equity and leadership among underrepresented youth is an inspiration to us all!

Watch Maxwell's CBC interview below:

['Exciting' and 'surreal': King's Trust Canada team members talk about meeting King Charles](#)



14 million personal banking, business, public sector and institutional clients. But while those numbers are certainly impressive and speak to their status as a first-class company, what is equally as impressive to all of us at Onyx is that their words and actions truly define what true allyship means.

From the moment that CIBC came on board as an Onyx partner in December of 2020, they, like many of our stellar employer partners, have played a pivotal role in ensuring that our scholars' pathway to employment is as equitable and seamless as possible. As an organization, CIBC proactively and intentionally leans into our key objective of levelling the playing field so that all qualified talent has access to career opportunities that cannot only shape their futures but also optimize how the organization and its staff executes on their objectives.

From consistently providing us with information about the plethora of job opportunities that exist across various lines of business and offering both rotational programs and diversity scholarships to our scholars to the primary contacts actively engaging with our leadership team and a wealth of their employees signing up for our Onyx Cafe Mentorship Program, the company-wide commitment to our mission is as unmistakable as our decision to select CIBC as one of the co-recipients of this year's Onyx Employer Partner Award.

Thank you, CIBC, for your unwavering support and for making a positive and lasting difference in the lives of Black college and university students, recent graduates and society at large.

SPRING FORWARD



Fall may be a few months away, but we are thrilled to announce that plans are well underway for our **6th Annual Virtual Black Professionals Career Fair**, which will be taking place on **Thursday, September 11, 2025, and Tuesday, September 16, 2025**. Since many of our valued partners have already expressed an interest in



attending, we wanted to get these dates in your calendars as soon as possible.

Our intent is to also ensure that you, and your teams, have ample time to coordinate efforts and maximize this distinct opportunity to connect with the wealth of ambitious, tech-savvy, enthusiastic, and hard-working future leaders in our Onyx Scholars Program.

Here are a few of the initial details:

◆ Similar to last year, our first day, Thursday, September 11th is exclusive for our premier and founding partners to connect with scholars. The three-hour session will include the always popular panel discussion, a Q&A, and for the second time, we are scheduling 1:1 meetings for you, or a representative from your recruitment team, to speak with our scholars and explore potential career opportunities that align with their skills and your objectives.

◆ On Tuesday, September 16th, all employer partners will have the opportunity to staff a virtual booth and participate in additional 1:1 pre-scheduled meetings with scholars whose fields of study, interests and passions align with your culture, priorities, and career opportunities.

More information to follow soon on the specifics for each day. But as always, the goal of continuously enhancing the experience for you and our job seekers remains uppermost in our minds, and we are working diligently to implement some of the constructive feedback and keen insights that we have received from both internal and external stakeholders.

As in previous years, we will be leveraging the Airmeeet platform to host this highly anticipated virtual event. **It is imperative that all employers schedule a technology run in advance to ensure that the platform is accessible on your home or work network. We cannot express enough how crucial this step is in the overall preparation process.** We look forward to working with each of you to capitalize on the branding, engagement, and recruitment opportunities for your team and your organization.

If you have any questions or want to advise that your company will be participating in the career fair, please contact our Director of Outreach, Simone Rennie.

LUCKY NUMBER 7

Communication is more than a two-way street, it's the information highway that helps our team stay aware of, and in tune with, the needs of the students and new grads for whom our job readiness and career success resources are a key complement to their academic knowledge, inherent skills, and first-time or new-hire work experiences, and the objectives of our employer partners, who collaborate with Onyx to amplify and evolve their recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts.



But listening is just the first step, the follow through is just as important, which is one of the reasons why we are acting upon the consistent feedback we have received from job seekers who want to get into our Onyx Scholars Program sooner via a second application window in the fall vs. waiting for

the next intake cycle each spring.



Our decision to recruit for, and onboard, a seventh cohort in October of this year, just a few months after welcoming our 6th group of incredible participants, was also inspired by our desire to ensure that the distinctive talent pool that we present to our employer partners continues to be as robust as possible.

And last, but certainly not least, the timing of our cohort 7 scholar application process will allow both 2025 cohorts to fully immerse themselves in the program and take advantage of our resume and interview prep sessions, Employer Discovery Events, and mentorship and career coaching opportunities in advance of the summer 2026 recruitment cycle, which will begin in January 2026 for most of the companies in our partner community.

More details to follow from our team, and on our socials. Don't forget to follow us [@onyxinitiative](#) on all platforms.



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