

**Exploring the Options for Enhancing the Academic and
Community Engagement Experiences of Black Students, Staff and
Faculty at Memorial University Campuses**

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Executive Summary

This report presents the key findings and recommendations that emerged from Memorial's Anti-Black Racism (ABR) community consultation, led by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism. Based on Memorial's potential strength as a signatory to the Scarborough Charter on ABR and Black inclusion, this consultation engaged more than 100 Black students, faculty, staff, and senior university leaders across the St. John's, Grenfell, and Signal Hill campuses and the Marine Institute. The Labrador campus reported no self-identified Black community members at the time of consultation.

The project sought to centre Black voices in Memorial's institutional conversations on equity and inclusion, identify systemic and structural barriers, and generate community-validated recommendations for institutional accountability and transformation. In keeping with the principles of community engagement, the project team organized feedback validation sessions following the consultation phase. Three community feedback meetings were held in April 2025 to share preliminary findings with participants, and confirm emerging themes. In addition, care was taken to ensure that the final report authentically represents participants' perspective. The primary recommendations are:

- Create a university-wide ABR policy and corresponding grievance mechanism.
- Increase the hiring of Black faculty, staff, and mental-health professionals.
- Develop an African Studies program.
- Collect institution-wide disaggregate data
- Use data to inform Black-focused equity-based decision-making and recruitment.
- Meaningful engage Black students in academic governance and leadership processes.

Other recommendations highlight the importance of embedding ABR literacy across training, leadership development, and orientation programs. In addition, suggestions were made to improve financial aid structures for Black students and create as safe as possible affirming spaces on each campus to enhance Black wellness, belonging, and community connection.

These recommendations offer Memorial a tangible pathway toward addressing systemic ABR and ensuring Black inclusion through sustained structural change. The report underscores that addressing ABR requires long-term commitment, leadership accountability, and institutional investment across academic, administrative, and community domains. By implementing these recommendations and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with Black communities, Memorial can move beyond symbolic gestures toward meaningful, measurable, and lasting transformation where Black students, staff, and faculty can truly thrive.

Framing The Consultation

Anti-Black Racism (ABR) operates as a distinct and systemic form of racism that targets Black people and communities through entrenched historical, social, and institutional hierarchies (Dei, 1996; Henry et al., 2017; Maynard, 2017). Within post-secondary education, ABR manifests in both overt and subtle ways, including racial profiling; the devaluation of Black scholarship; and inequitable access to mentorship, leadership, and advancement opportunities (Henry et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2025). Across Canada, these dynamics contribute to a climate where Black students, staff, and faculty often encounter structural and interpersonal barriers to full participation, belonging, and success.

At Memorial University, there is growing recognition of the need to examine how such systemic patterns may be experienced within its own institutional culture. A key challenge, however, lies in the absence of accessible demographic data regarding the representation of Black students, faculty, and staff across Memorial's campuses. While limited insights from the School of Graduate Studies and the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism (EDI-AR) Strategic Planning consultations suggest that Black individuals of the university community remain underrepresented, the broader lack of disaggregated data limits the ability to measure progress or design responsive policies. This invisibility within institutional systems reinforces the need for a structured, evidence-informed approach to understanding and addressing ABR.

In November 2021, Memorial joined other Canadian post-secondary institutions in signing the *Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education* (Scarborough Charter). This action marked an institutional acknowledgement of the responsibility to address ABR and promote Black inclusion in all areas of academic life. The Charter commits signatories to four guiding principles—Black inclusion, mutuality, accountability, and transparency and calls for intentional, measurable, and sustained action. Memorial's commitment under the Charter provides an important foundation for reflection, consultation, and systemic change. To advance these goals, the EDI-AR Office launched the ABR Project, designed to explore how ABR operates within the university and identify strategies that align with the Charter's commitments. In collaboration with faculty, staff, students, and community partners YWCA St. John's and the Anti-Racism Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador the project convened two full-day, multi-stakeholder consultations to examine concerns of ABR and Black inclusion, followed by a half-day meeting with university leadership to discuss actionable recommendations.

These consultations were guided by five objectives:

1. To understand the unique challenges faced by Black students, faculty, and staff at Memorial.
2. To identify pathways that enhance equitable learning and working experiences.
3. To convene decision-makers and individuals with lived and living experience to develop Memorial-specific policy and program strategies.
4. To generate and sustain a network of Black students, faculty, and staff across all campuses.

5. To disseminate findings through accessible formats such as infographics, reports, and scholarly publications.

This project generated insights crucial for guiding institutional processes, aligning them with the Charter's recommendations, and strengthening Memorial's commitment as a signatory. Furthermore, the project fosters stronger collaboration between the EDI-AR Office and both internal and external community partners. These partnerships broaden shared understanding of ABR and its impacts on members of the Black communities at Memorial. The participation of students, faculty, and staff showed the complexities of ABR within Memorial's infrastructure.

Anti-Black Racism Consultations at Memorial University: The Importance

The ABR consultations at Memorial University are vital to advancing institutional accountability, ABR redress, and systemic change. As a signatory

to the Scarborough Charter, Memorial holds a responsibility for translating its promises and intentions into measurable actions. These consultations provided a space where Black students, staff, faculty, and community members could voice their lived and living experiences, insights, and aspirations. By reflecting on what the university is doing well and identifying areas where it must improve, participants helped surface both gaps and opportunities in policies, practices, and campus culture. The process was designed to catalyze action, with an emphasis on turning reflections into tangible, and sustainable change.

Moreover, the consultations signalled the beginning of an ongoing, responsive dialogue based in the lived realities of Black community members at Memorial. This consultation process affirms that addressing ABR is not a single action but a sustained institutional long-term strategy that is forged with Black leadership, advances equity, and drives systemic reform across all campuses.

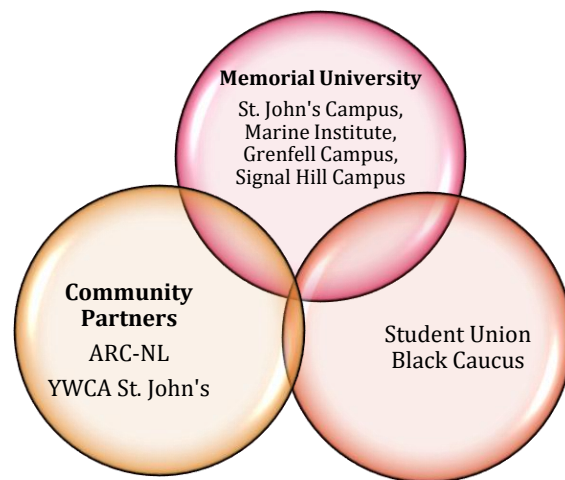


Figure 1. Project Collaborators

Process Overview

The implementation of the ABR consultation project at Memorial followed a collaborative and community-based approach to centre the voices and lived experiences of Black students, staff and faculty and to generate institutional accountability.

Project Team

The project was led by Dr. Delores V. Mullings, Vice-Provost (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism), as project lead, and Shazia Shaheen, project coordinator, who coordinated communications and facilitated collaboration with community and institutional partners (Figure 1).

Two graduate assistants, Ibukunoluwa Fowowe and Benjamin Gorman Siemon, were hired to provide administrative, logistical, and research support.

Outreach and Engagement

To maximize participation and access, the project team implemented a focused outreach strategy using both online and in-person communication channels. Invitations were circulated through university mailing lists, faculty listservs, campus posters, and social-media posts. Outreach also included engagement with student groups and community partners to reach Black-identified individuals across Memorial's campuses. The language used in all materials was intentionally accessible and invited Black community members to share their experiences and perspectives on ABR, and provide insights that could inform institutional responses.

Consultation Design and Facilitation

The ABR consultation project at Memorial followed a community and public engagement approach with focus on the lived and living experiences of Black students, faculty, and staff across all campuses. At the Grenfell Campus, the discussion took place in one large forum involving students, faculty, and staff. At the St. John's and Signal Hill campuses and Marine Institute (MI), participants formed three cohorts: faculty and staff, students, and a consultation of senior leaders from Memorial, who joined in hybrid format to share institutional perspectives and engage in dialogue. Each consultation began with a Land Acknowledgement and Labour Acknowledgement and discussion of its significance, followed by opening presentations by Dr. Delores V. Mullings, Vice-Provost (EDI-AR), and Mr. John A. Ariyo, Chief Executive, Scarborough Charter Secretariat. Their presentations established a shared national and institutional context for dialogue on ABR in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

Dr. Mullings' presentation, *Anti-Black Racism: The Silent Killer Amongst Black Students in Canadian Postsecondary Institutions*, examined the structural barriers confronting Black students, faculty, and staff. Drawing on national data, Dr. Mullings underscored the effects of systemic discrimination, isolation, and under-representation on academic success and well-being.

Mr. Ariyo's presentation, *The Scarborough Charter: Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Advancing Black Inclusion in Postsecondary Institutions*, outlined the Charter's framework as a national commitment to dismantling systemic racism and promoting Black inclusion in academia. He highlighted persistent inequities affecting Black Canadians and emphasized the Charter's call for universities to reflect Black inclusion and leadership in all areas.

Following the presentations, participants engaged in small- and large-group discussions guided by three following questions:

- a) *What is Memorial University doing well in addressing Anti-Black racism?*

- b) *What is Memorial not doing well in addressing Anti-Black racism?*
- c) *What actions are needed by MUN to address Anti-Black Racism short-term, mid-term, and long-term?*

These dialogues unfolded in two phases: first in smaller sessions, then in plenary discussions where insights were shared. Sessions were delivered in a hybrid format to accommodate distance and accessibility needs.

Experienced scholars and practitioners acted as facilitators:

- **Mr. John A. Ariyo**, Chief Executive, Scarborough Charter Secretariat
- **Dr. Paul Adjei**, Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Research)
- **Dr. Sobia Shaheen Shaikh**, Anti-Racism Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador (Community Partner)
- **Dr. Delores V. Mullings**, Project Lead

The consultations affirmed the importance of integrating lived and living experiences into policy development and implementation aligned with the Scarborough Charter. The insights from these dialogues form the basis of the project’s findings and recommendations. These foundations will guide Memorial’s ongoing commitment to addressing ABR, advancing Black inclusion, and strengthening institutional accountability across campuses.

Who Provided Feedback

This ABR consultation project engaged participants from across Memorial’s campuses and leadership (Figure 2). The first consultation, held at Grenfell Campus, had 21 participants, including students, staff, members of the Black caucus, and representatives from ABR leadership. Their contributions provided insight into the lived realities of Black individuals of the Grenfell community, highlighting the need for unique, campus-specific strategies to dismantle systemic ABR.



Consultation One (Grenfell)

21 participants — students, staff, Black caucus, and ABR leadership



Consultation Two (St. John’s, Signal Hill, MI)

37 participants — undergrad, grad students, Black faculty/staff



Consultation Three (Memorial Senior Leadership)

28 leaders — President, Provost, Deans, VPs, AVPs, Directors, Department Heads

Figure 2. Campuses

The second consultation, conducted across St. John’s Campus, Signal Hill, and the MI, brought together 37 participants, including undergraduate and graduate students, as well as Black faculty and

staff. This group shared powerful reflections on institutional barriers and opportunities for inclusive transformation. The third consultation involved 28 senior leaders from Memorial, including the President, Provost, Deans, Vice Presidents (VPs), Associate Vice Presidents (AVPs), Directors, and Department Heads. Their participation marked a possible step toward fostering top-down accountability and aligning leadership with the voices of the Black community members across Memorial’s campuses.

What We Heard: Experience And Leadership Voices

Grenfell Campus:

Participants at Grenfell Campus shared persistent structural and interpersonal experiences of ABR and identified specific challenges. A major concern was the racial profiling of Black students, particularly in situations where mental-health conditions were misinterpreted by campus enforcement, leading to racist interventions.

Participants also noted the limited number of Black faculty members and a lack of mentorship opportunities for students and faculty. These limitations exacerbated support networks and opportunities for professional growth. Faculty recruitment and retention emerged as a major concern with Black faculty occupying short-term or contractual positions or harassed into leaving full-time tenured positions. Participants described recruitment practices as inequitable, which further deepening the systemic ABR and exclusion. In terms of well-being, participants placed a strong emphasis on the need for racially and culturally responsive mental-health services, which are currently lacking. Participants also expressed feeling isolated (Figure 3).

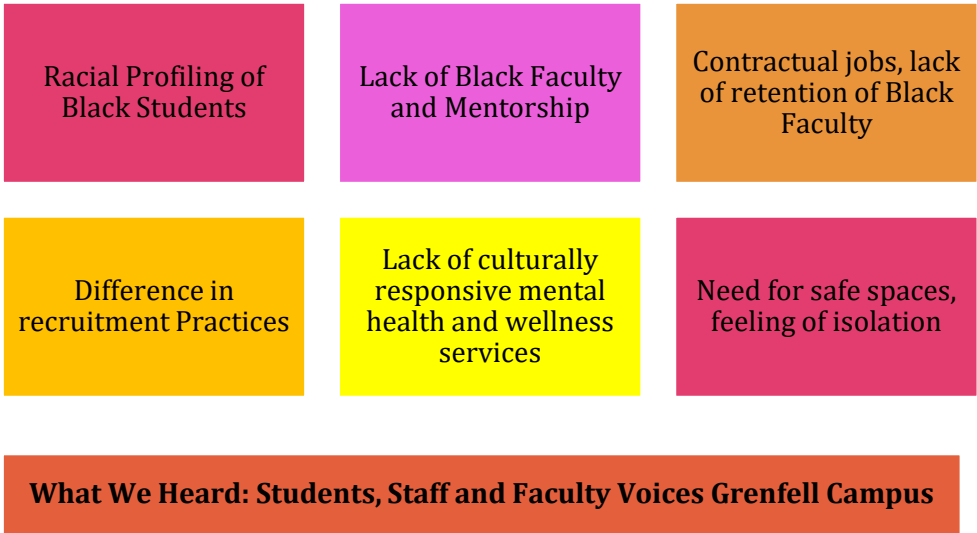


Figure 3. What We Heard: Consultation at Grenfell Campus

St. John’s, MI, Signal Hill:

Participants from the St. John’s and Signal Hill campuses and MI identified the establishment of the Office of the Vice-Provost (EDI-AR) and the creation of the Vice-Provost position as positive developments in addressing ABR. The opportunity to participate in the consultation was viewed as an important space to share experiences and perspectives. Participants also referenced the emergence of the Black Graduate Student Society and the hiring of Black faculty and staff as signs of progress toward addressing ABR in hiring. These actions were noted as early efforts demonstrating acknowledgement of ABR within the institution.

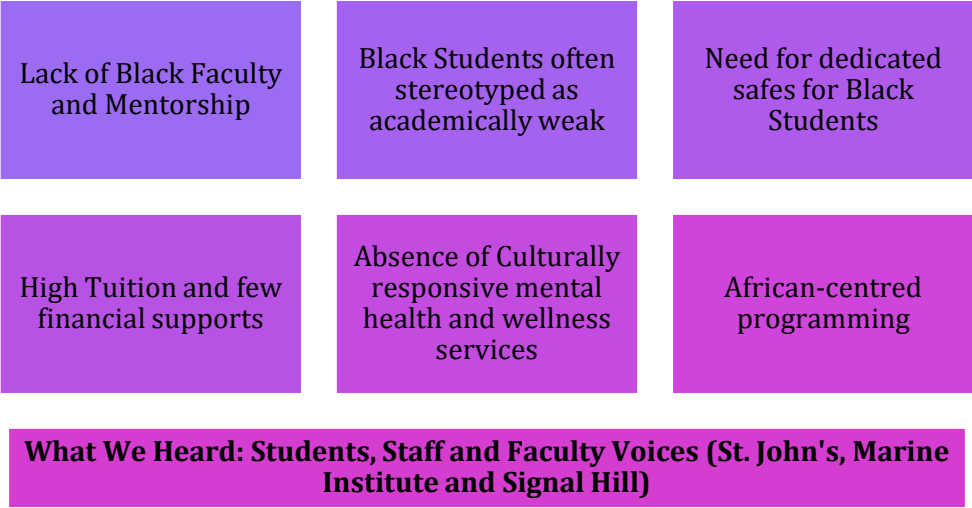


Figure 4. What We Heard: Consultation at St. John’s Campus, MI, Signal Hill

Participants also described several areas where challenges exist. The absence of a university-wide framework to address ABR; limited representation of Black students, faculty, and teaching assistants; and the lack of mandatory training for faculty, staff, and students who are not Black were commonly mentioned. Participants noted unclear reporting mechanisms for ABR incidents, high tuition fees for international students, and limited scholarships as barriers to equitable participation. The lack of disaggregated race-based data and the absence of a Black or African Studies program were also identified as gaps. Participants within all sessions emphasized the need for greater institutional attention, resources, and accountability to address ABR across Memorial’s campuses (Figure 4).

Senior Leadership Voices: Participants from the senior leadership consultation identified several ongoing measures to address ABR and foster inclusion within Memorial. They noted the establishment and staffing of the Office of the Vice-Provost (EDI-AR), the creation of the Vice-Provost portfolio, and Memorial’s commitment as a signatory to the Scarborough Charter. They referred to the inclusion of EDI-AR principles in Memorial’s *Transforming Our Horizons* strategic plan and in policies, program reviews, and accreditation processes. Participants highlighted diversity-sensitive hiring practices, student supports, and staff responsiveness to racism incidents as positive steps. They also mentioned the importance of forums, training opportunities, and leadership engagement as indicators of institutional attention to ABR.



Figure 5. What We Heard: Consultation with Senior Leadership at MUN

At the same time, participants described gaps that remain, including the absence of disaggregated race-based data, limited measurable outcomes to address ABR, and a tendency toward reactive rather than proactive approaches. They emphasized the need for structured escalation processes for ABR concerns, clearer accountability mechanisms, and increased representation of Black faculty, staff, and leadership. They also identified a lack of sensitivity training, limited awareness of systemic barriers, such as housing and visa challenges, and insufficient mentorship opportunities. Participants noted that targeted funding for ABR initiatives and measurable progress indicators are needed to sustain the work (Figure 5).

Analysis and Discussion:

Black students, faculty, and staff shared their experiences with institutional inequities in representation, lack of representation, and access to support, and well-being. Black participants discussed feeling disempowered within Memorial as the campus culture and environment do not adequately support or include them.

Mentorship emerged as a critical area for investment, specifically the need to build meaningful and sustainable pathways that support Black students and early-career Black professionals. Equally important is the development of Black-focused programs and services, particularly those aimed at mental health and wellness, where culturally responsive care remains lacking. Creating spaces that are not only safe, but empowering is central to fostering a sense of belonging and community.

These discussions also emphasize the importance of institutional recognition of ABR as a systemic concern. As well, there is a need for visible, sustained commitments to address ABR, and increase equity and Black inclusion. This includes mandatory education and training on ABR for staff, faculty, and administrators to foster awareness, accountability, and improve professional skills. Additionally, calls were made for an Afrocentric curriculum that reflects the lives, contributions, and histories of Black communities, allowing for more inclusive academic content and engagement.

Senior leadership articulated the need for structural change to address ABR and identified specific areas to be improved within Memorial infrastructure. For, example, leaders suggested having better response mechanisms and being proactive rather than reactive to incidents of ABR. They also identified policies and programs that seek to address ABR. Further, senior leaders pointed to this consultation, being a signatory to the Scarborough Charter, naming ABR in *Transforming Our Horizon* and individual units, schools and faculties' accreditation as examples of institutional commitment to address ABR. Senior leaders had different ideas about Memorial's strengths and limitations regarding ABR than Black students, staff and faculty. The difference in perception provides a strong foundation from which to launch ABR strategic priorities at Memorial.

Both senior leaders and Black-identified students, staff and faculty identified the EDI-AR office and Dr. Mullings as a positive contribution to addressing ABR; however, Dr. Mullings' appointment predates Memorial becoming signatory to the Scarborough Charter and she was hired in an open search that was not designated a Black focused or equity hire. In addition, this consultation is aligned with Dr. Mullings' scholarship and was made possible through funding from the Office of Public Engagement. Finally, caution must be taken to avoid conflating the presence of a Black senior leader to the university's commitment to address ABR and Black inclusion.

These insights offer a roadmap to guide Memorial's agenda to address ABR by actioning measurable progress.

Recommendations

- Immediate acknowledgement of systemic ABR at Memorial.
- Dedicated ABR training, Black-focused and culturally focused services.
- Black Studies program.
- Formation of Scarborough Charter Steering Committee.
- Establishment of Scarborough Charter Action Plan.
- ABR education across Memorial.
- Implementation of a purposeful mechanism to increase hiring and retention of Black staff and faculty.
- Establishment of ABR grievance pathways.
- Offer of scholarships, bursaries, and jobs for Black students.
- Mentorship for students, faculty and staff.

Community Feedback Meetings

Following the community engagement approach, three community feedback meetings were held in April 2025 to share results of the consultation across Memorial. During these meetings, themes were

validated and clarification was sought. Two of the meetings were held online—one for Grenfell Campus and another for participants affiliated with the St. John's Campus, Signal Hill, and the MI—while the third was held in person at the YWCA in St. John's. In total, 37 participants attended the sessions, representing students, faculty, senior leaders, and community organizations. A presentation summarizing the emerging findings from the public consultations was shared during each session.

Limitations

Time constraints and funding limitations created gaps within the project. For example, mental and emotional accessibility supports included trigger warnings and request to self-protect during discussions. Given the small participant pool, privacy, safety, and anonymity were prioritized; therefore, participants' identities were not disclosed beyond the binary of men and women. The project team and facilitators provided clarity, open dialogue during facilitation, and flexible participation options to address some of these gaps.

Moving Forward: From Listening and Sharing to Action

This project marks an important moment in Memorial's potential to addressing systemic ABR. Black students, staff, and faculty consistently called for faculty and staff representation, racially responsive support, as safe as possible spaces, and institutional accountability.

Senior leadership expressed a readiness to engage, invest, and support purposeful ABR change. It is important that those intentions are followed with specific actions to avoid a performance discourse. This alignment between community insights and institutional responsibility presents an opportunity to move from dialogue to sustained action.

The report with the Scarborough Charter Steering Committee, was in process of being established at the time of the consultation, to guide Memorial's ABR initiatives per its commitments as signatory to the *Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion*. The steering committee's activities were paused following the retirement of President Neil Bose; however, this report will serve as an important resource when its work resumes.

This report will be shared widely within the university community and with external partners. This will allow broader engagement with the findings and recommendations, reinforcing accountability and collective responsibility for addressing ABR.

Moving forward, the report's insights and recommendations can inform institutional planning, policy development, and community partnerships across Memorial. Continued attention to implementation, resource allocation, and sustained leadership commitment will be essential in transforming the momentum of this consultation into concrete, long-term, sustainable change.

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