

A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY, SERVING THE PUBLIC GOOD.

AN ASSESSMENT OF MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY'S
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2012-20



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A NOTE ABOUT THIS REPORT:

This is a condensed version of a much longer evaluation report. If you're interested in learning more about our methodology, or if you'd like to see unit-by-unit results, we recommend that you [read the full report](#).

There is also an online dashboard tool that allows users to look at data and results based on specific categories. You can access the interactive tool [here](#).

ACRONYMS:

- OPE:** Office of Public Engagement
- PE:** Public Engagement
- PEF:** Public Engagement Framework
- KII:** Key informant interviews

MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Lisa Browne,
Vice-President
(Advancement and
External Relations)

When Memorial faculty and staff told us about their motivations for including public engagement in their work, one of the most common answers we heard was wanting to contribute to the province. I was delighted to read this. As the only university in the province and with a special obligation to the province, Memorial University is a critical intellectual, economic, and social driver.

I'm always impressed by the sense of ownership people have for our university. They care about what we do, and they want Newfoundland and Labrador to be a healthy, happy, thriving place, now, and in the future. The impact of our university, which will mark its 100th anniversary in 2025, is significant and we must continue to have an impact on all communities.

When we asked people inside and outside Memorial whether we are making a positive difference in Newfoundland and Labrador, the answer was a strong "yes." We heard that Memorial students, faculty, and staff want to do more public engagement, and that our public partners are planning to keep partnering with us.

So, what's behind that feeling of trust? It's all about relationships: people outside of Memorial who want to make a difference, joining forces with students, faculty and staff who want to do the same.

We are excited to move into the next phase of Memorial's relationship with the people of this province: there is much more to come, and we are looking forward to making things happen, together.



Rob Greenwood

Nearly a decade ago, when the Public Engagement Framework was initiated, Memorial was already a deeply engaged university: we were building on an existing strength.

Since then, public engagement has grown, not just between Memorial and our public partners, but also as a priority in higher education, nationally and internationally. When universities and their regions work together, both sides see the benefits: collaboration strengthens us all.

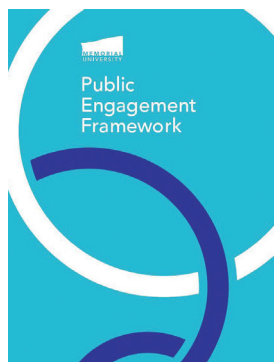
This sense of public purpose is reflected in Memorial's strategic plan, Transforming our Horizons: public engagement is a priority at this university, and in Newfoundland and Labrador. As we move into the next phase of public engagement at Memorial, this input from our communities, inside and out, will help guide the future of public engagement at Memorial.

Here's to a collaborative future!

THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2012-2020: PHASE 1



Our obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is a core part of Memorial's reason for being. As this province's only university, we take our responsibility to this place seriously.



In 2012, Memorial launched the [Public Engagement Framework \(PEF\)](#), a strategy to guide Memorial's publicly engaged work. The Framework offered goals and objectives (developed by students, faculty, staff, and public partners) to work toward, and provided a vision, definition, and expectations for how Memorial should connect with the public.



INTERESTED IN LEARNING A BIT MORE ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK?

So what does "public engagement" mean at Memorial? Basically it is any interaction where people from Memorial collaborate with people outside Memorial on work that relates to Memorial's mission. The definition also includes some expectations for PE at Memorial: it specifically notes that public engagement includes mutual respect, mutual contributions, and mutual benefits for all parties involved.



PE links to Memorial's academic mission, including teaching and learning, research, scholarship and creative activity, and service – sometimes including elements of all four!

With the arrival of the PEF, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) was created to help Memorial work toward the Framework goals. OPE is a pan-university advocate for public engagement, and acts as a support unit for Memorial's engaged students, faculty, staff, units, and public partners.

DID YOU KNOW?

OPE DISTRIBUTES OVER \$300,000 ANNUALLY TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS BETWEEN MEMORIAL AND THE PUBLIC.

HAS THE FRAMEWORK BEEN A SUCCESS?

The first phase of the PEF ended in 2020. Before moving forward with the next phase of Memorial's public engagement strategy, it was important to understand how the PEF has affected public engagement at Memorial. How well did we meet our goals? What are the current levels of public engagement at Memorial, and how have they changed since 2012? What is working, and what isn't?

To answer these questions, the OPE team worked with an external evaluation expert to come up with an evaluation plan. We also had support from a committee that included Memorial students, faculty, staff, and public partners. They gave input on our approach and helped shape how we would collect information and what types of questions we would ask.

The question at the root of it all was: "Has the PEF been successful in doing what it set out to do?" To answer that question, the team gathered data through a variety of methods, including surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, and exploring Memorial reports, documents, stories, and other secondary data sources. [You can read through our entire methodology here.](#)

SO, WHAT DID WE FIND?

The results of the evaluation have shown that public engagement at Memorial is strong – both in practice and in reputation!

- Memorial students, faculty, and staff believe in the value of public engagement and they want to do more of it. Most felt that the PEF had positive benefits to the level of PE happening across our campuses. Read more about what Memorial people had to say on pages 4 - 5
- Our public partners also see value in collaborating with Memorial and believe that Memorial is making a positive difference in Newfoundland and Labrador. Read more about what public partners had to say on pages 6 - 7
- Public engagement professionals from other institutions across Canada have a very positive impression of PE at Memorial and believe that Memorial is doing more PE than other Canadian universities. Read more about what external PE professionals had to say on page 7



Photo Credit: Signal Hill Campus

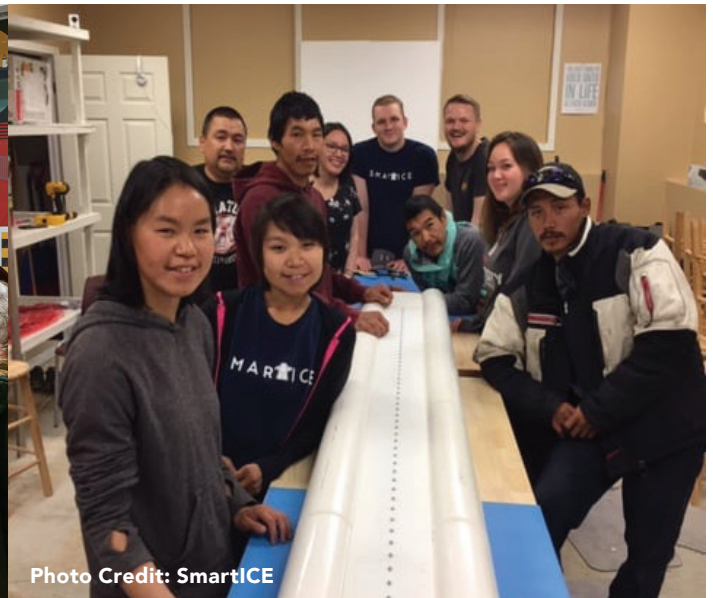


Photo Credit: SmartICE

While we are encouraged by many of the results, the evaluation has also highlighted areas where Memorial could do better. We've included both positive and negative feedback in this report, but to get the full picture (both good and bad), we recommend that you take a look at [our full evaluation report.](#)

WHAT WE HEARD AT MEMORIAL

PERSPECTIVES FROM STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF



Memorial is fortunate to have engaged students, faculty, and staff at all of our campuses, who enrich both our campuses and communities! It was important to us that our evaluation was inclusive to all students, faculty, and staff at Memorial: public engagement can take many different forms, and can look very different from department to department.

To understand these internal perspectives, we conducted a faculty and staff survey, and conducted focus groups with students, faculty, and staff. We also did key informant interviews and collected secondary data.

FACULTY AND STAFF SURVEY RESULTS:

Clearly, public engagement is an area of interest for many at Memorial: 600 faculty and staff members completed our survey, with a near 50/50 split between the two groups. **Here's what those people told us:**

“As Newfoundland and Labrador’s only university PE is a critical link between the institution and the community. People want to know there is a net benefit to the province.
Opinion from Faculty/Staff Survey.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IS ALIVE AND WELL AT MEMORIAL:

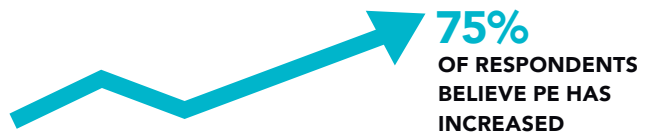
85% OF FACULTY AND STAFF BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A HIGH NEED FOR PE AT MEMORIAL

75% MORE PE

2% NO PE NEEDED

Not only do staff and faculty believe that there is a high need for PE, but 75% of survey respondents would like to see more PE at Memorial – with only 2% disagreeing.

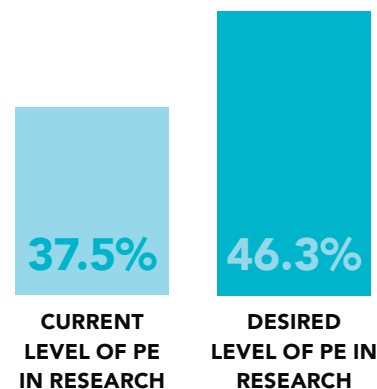
We also wanted to see whether faculty and staff thought that PEF had increased since the implementation of the PE in 2012/2013. Seventy-five per cent of respondents who shared an opinion indicated that PE at Memorial has increased since then (41% of total respondents indicated “not sure/no opinion.” This may reflect a lack of knowledge about PE over time or a more recent arrival at Memorial.)



We also asked faculty about the levels of PE in their research and teaching, and learning work (we didn't do this for staff, since many staff don't have specific responsibility for these areas.)

RESEARCH:

Faculty reported that on average, about 37.4% of their research involves PE; however, they would like to be including PE in 46.3% of their research.



Our results also showed big differences across faculties and departments: the highest recorded level of research that included PE in a single unit was 91%, with the lowest at 18%.



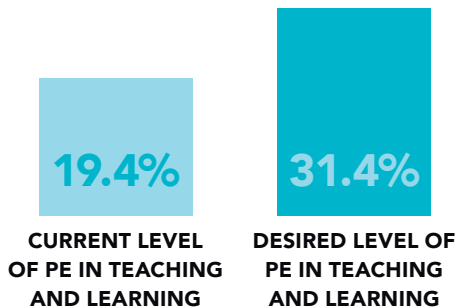
Public engagement benefits everyone in the university, but it is not valued by everyone at the university. Academic Staff often have very little incentive (support/recognition) for public engagement.

Opinion from Faculty/Staff Survey

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

Teaching and learning had considerably lower reported levels of PE than research. Faculty reported that 19.4% of their teaching and learning involves PE. They also indicated they would like 31.4% of their teaching and learning to involve public engagement elements.

Remember, these results could be influenced by various factors. Public engagement is more of a core element in certain disciplines, some faculties may have a broader understanding of what actually constitutes PE than others, and some units had more robust survey participation than others. If you'd like to dig into the numbers on a unit-by-unit basis, you can check out the [full report](#) or our [online dashboard](#).



What motivates faculty and staff to do PE?

Along with understanding how much PE is happening at Memorial, we also wanted to understand more about what is motivating the faculty and staff who are doing publicly engaged work.

THE MOST SELECTED MOTIVATIONS FOR DOING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

- **Contribute to community/province**
- **Sense of moral obligation**
- **Expand the university's community**

These motivations link directly to Memorial's special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and suggest that many faculty and staff see our responsibility to this province as a core aspect of Memorial's work. Additionally, staff and faculty have been motivated by a desire to help increase the relevance of their work and a desire to meet new people, and learn new skills.

What are the barriers to public engagement at Memorial?

Of course, there are also things that make it harder for faculty and staff to do the amount of engaged work that they'd prefer. There was one barrier that was, by far, the most commonly cited issue: time!

While it is true that publicly engaged work can, literally, take more time (relationship-building and collaboration doesn't necessarily progress along a set timeline!) a lack of "time" could also be interpreted through the lens of prioritization. With a limited amount of time in the day, only the activities that are most highly prioritized (by faculty and staff or their supervisors) will be undertaken.



I would have more time for this kind of work if there was less struggle with logistics and bureaucracy.

Opinion from student focus group

Additional barriers that were identified included a lack of support, a lack of formal inclusion of public engagement within job requirements, a lack of training in PE, and a lack of recognition.

"Lack of recognition" was an interesting barrier, as it closely aligned to "not reflected in promotion in tenure." If the responses to those two answers were combined, they would become the second most-cited barrier.

Promotion and tenure challenges were also reflected when we asked what could be done to improve public engagement at Memorial, emerging as the top theme mentioned. Other key areas for improvement included more funding opportunities, more resources and supports, increased awareness of PE opportunities, including PE in work/course loads, and expanding Memorial's PE focus.



Public Engagement is such a central component of my work and I am happy to be at MUN to pursue this, I hope, throughout my career.

Opinion from Faculty/Staff Survey

BOTTOM-LINE:

Overall, Memorial students, faculty, and staff feel a strong sense of commitment to helping NL, and the world. As we move into the next phase of PE at Memorial, we need to provide even more supports to allow greater participation within the university.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM OUTSIDE MEMORIAL

PERSPECTIVES FROM OUR PUBLIC PARTNERS AND PE PROFESSIONALS AT OTHER CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES



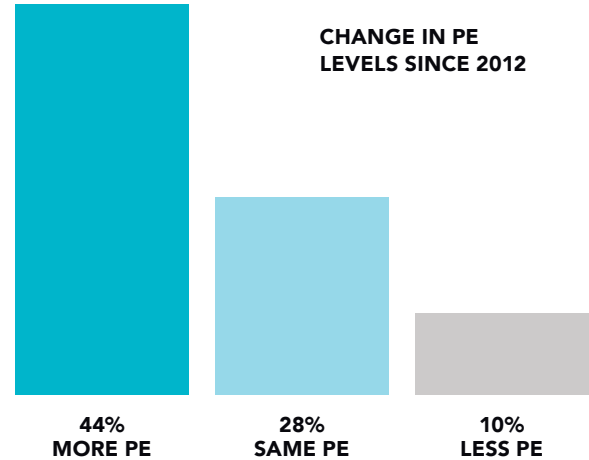
Photo Credit: Grenfell Campus

Memorial’s approach to PE is rooted in our commitment to Newfoundland and Labrador. Hearing from our public partners was a key element of the work of this evaluation. To understand external perspectives, we conducted a public partner survey, and conducted focus groups and key informant interviews.

PUBLIC PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

Over 100 public partners completed our survey, representing organizations from across Newfoundland and Labrador. Many have deep relationships with Memorial, with 68% indicating that they interact with Memorial at least once every year, and 29% saying they connect on a monthly basis.

From an initial standpoint, it is evident that our relationships with our public partners are well established, but as with our internal results, the evaluation also indicated areas where we can improve.



We also asked public partners if they had noticed changes in PE at Memorial since the introduction of the PEF (from 2012 to 2020). Forty-four per cent thought PE increased, 28% thought it was around the same, and 10% indicated there has been a reduction. The remaining percentage were unsure.

“ I found Memorial to be very confusing to navigate at times. I would face the same issues every semester, and even though I had already found the solution the semester previously, had to engage in the same process time and again. ”
Opinion of Public Partner Survey respondent

“ A great university that is recognized outside of the province for its respected reputation. ”
Opinion of Public Partner Survey respondent

Eighty-three per cent of public partners surveyed agreed that Memorial is helping make a positive difference in NL, and 81% believe that Memorial is “a public university, serving the public good.” This is a core goal of the PEF, so it is very good news that so many of our public partners feel we are living up to that promise.

The majority of public partner respondents said that Memorial makes its expertise and knowledge available to the public (68%), that it recognizes the community’s expertise (59%), and values engagement with public partners in NL (73%).



“ As an alumnus and engaged partner with Memorial I am very proud of the work, the product and the capacity that is developed by Memorial. It is a critical component of our community and its contribution to the public discourse is extremely valuable. ”
Opinion of Public Partner Survey respondent



Photo Credit: Grenfell Campus

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF PE PROFESSIONALS AT OTHER CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

To get a greater understanding of Memorial's position as a PE leader in Canada, we surveyed PE experts at other Canadian universities.

“In comparison to international peers, Memorial is a leader in community engagement, in particular how it is integrated into the wider strategy of the institution. Opinion of respondent employed at other Canadian universities.”

Our results highlight that throughout Canada, Memorial has maintained a strong reputation as a leader in PE. In fact, in our external survey, 91% of respondents from other Canadian universities rated Memorial's level of public engagement as “higher than other Canadian institutions.”



91%

EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS BELIEVE MEMORIAL HAS HIGHER PE THAN OTHER CANADIAN INSTITUTIONS

In general, public partners have found it easy to engage with Memorial, although to a lesser degree in relation to using Memorial's facilities (including buildings, labs, and equipment). This is an interesting result, as it may indicate that the public doesn't understand how to access facilities (we might not be doing enough to make this easy!) or even that such access is an option.

Finally, we wanted to know whether our partners would consider engaging with Memorial again in the future. Respondents indicated that 85% are likely to engage again in the future, with 9% indicating they would be unlikely to engage with Memorial again.

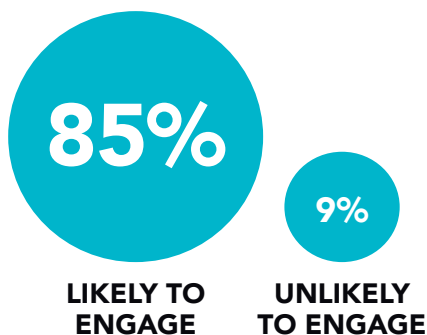


Photo Credit: Rich Blenkinsopp

“Memorial is a leader in public engagement, and a pioneer of leading-edge public engagement tools and processes. Opinion of respondent employed at other Canadian universities.”

WHAT COMES NEXT?



Photo Credit: Greenfell Campus

With the conclusion of the first phase of the PEF, it's now time to turn our attention to the future. Conducting this evaluation was the first step in that process: the information and insight that we've collected will now help us to develop the next steps in Memorial's PE story.

While our results suggest that many elements of Memorial's PE strategy are working well, over the coming year, we will be looking at ways to address areas of concern, considering areas of focus that have emerged since the development of the initial PEF, and integrating perspectives from other key Memorial strategies (including Transforming our Horizons).

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR TEAM

The OPE would like to offer our sincere thanks to the evaluation committee for their dedication to ensuring that this evaluation was a success. We also had the pleasure of working with a number of exceptional Memorial students throughout this process. Special thanks to our Masters in Applied Psychological Science co-op students, Sydney Snow and Courtney Lucas; Masters in Political Science intern, Charlotte Moase; our ISWEP student, Shaviennath Sundar from the Faculty of Business Administration; and our programming assistant, Akseli Virratvouri, a PhD candidate with the department of Folklore. Finally, thank you to everyone who participated in our surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews: this would not have been possible without your time and input!

Please feel free to reach out to the OPE with any questions, comments or concerns. We're happy to meet with units, faculties and departments to discuss the results of the evaluation and to consider ways to support PE within individual contexts.



Photo Credit: Duo Concertante



Our email address is engagement@mun.ca. Additionally, make sure to keep up to date on all things PE at Memorial and around NL via our social media:

