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Black Public Health: Promising Practices Series

January 13, 2026

Ministry of Health

Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health

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Disclosures – Samiya Abdi

- Relationships with a for-profit and/or a not-for-profit organizations:
 - Black Health Alliance (Board Vice-Chair)
 - PHO Ethics Review Board (Board Member)
 - Senior Program Specialist leading the Health Equity portfolio at PHO

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Land Acknowledgement & African Ancestral Acknowledgement

Objectives

- Describe the purpose, scope of work and Guiding Principles of the Black Public Health Advisory Committee.
- Discuss how public health institutions engage with Black communities in meaningful ways.
- Reflect on opportunities and approaches that increase trust, remove barriers and improve health equity for Black communities.

Disclosures – Dr. Onye Nnorom

- This presentation includes information about the Black Health Education Collaborative's educational resources (along with other resources). Dr. Nnorom is the co-founder of the BHEC and served on the Board from 2021-2024. Dr. Nnorom is not remunerated by BHEC.
- Other:
- Relationships with a for-profit and/or a not-for-profit organizations:
 - Talent Bureau (public speaking)
 - Black Women's Health Initiative (honorarium)
 - Black Research Network (research grant)

Context: Not a new conversation

Is Black Health a Public Health Issue? (Yes it is, thank you for asking!)

Dr. Onye Nnorom
February 7, 2017
Public Health Ontario Grand Rounds

On your marks... Prepare to address systemic racism in public health

Dr. Onye Nnorom
Ms. Akilah Haneef-Jabari
PHO Grand Rounds February 20, 2018



PUBLIC HEALTH 2.0: Black Health, COVID-19 & Vaccines

Public Health Ontario Rounds

November 16, 2021



Angela Robertson, Executive Director, Parkdale Queen West CHC

Cheryl Prescod, Executive Director Black Creek CHC

Onye Nnorom, MDCM, CCFP, MPH, FRCPC

- President, Black Physicians' Association of Ontario
- Black Health Theme Lead, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, U of T
- Associate Program Director, PPHM Residency Program, DLSPH, U of T

"The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being" Toni Morrison, 1975

Anti -Black Racism

- The term '[Anti -Black Racism](#)' was first expressed by Dr. Akua Benjamin, Professor Emeritus and former Director of TMU's School of Social Work. It seeks to highlight the unique nature of systemic racism on Black - Canadians and the history as well as experiences of slavery and colonization of people of Black -African descent in Canada.
- Anti -Black Racism is defined here as policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black -African descent.

Black people in Ontario

- Census, 2021: 52.4% of the total Black population in Canada resides in Ontario
- 5.5% of Ontario's population
- Over 200 ethnic and cultural origins
- Almost half are Canadian-born, incl ancestry traced to slavery in Canada
- Immigration: Jamaica, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, Somalia, Ghana, and Ethiopia (most common origins)



Lessons from the Pandemic

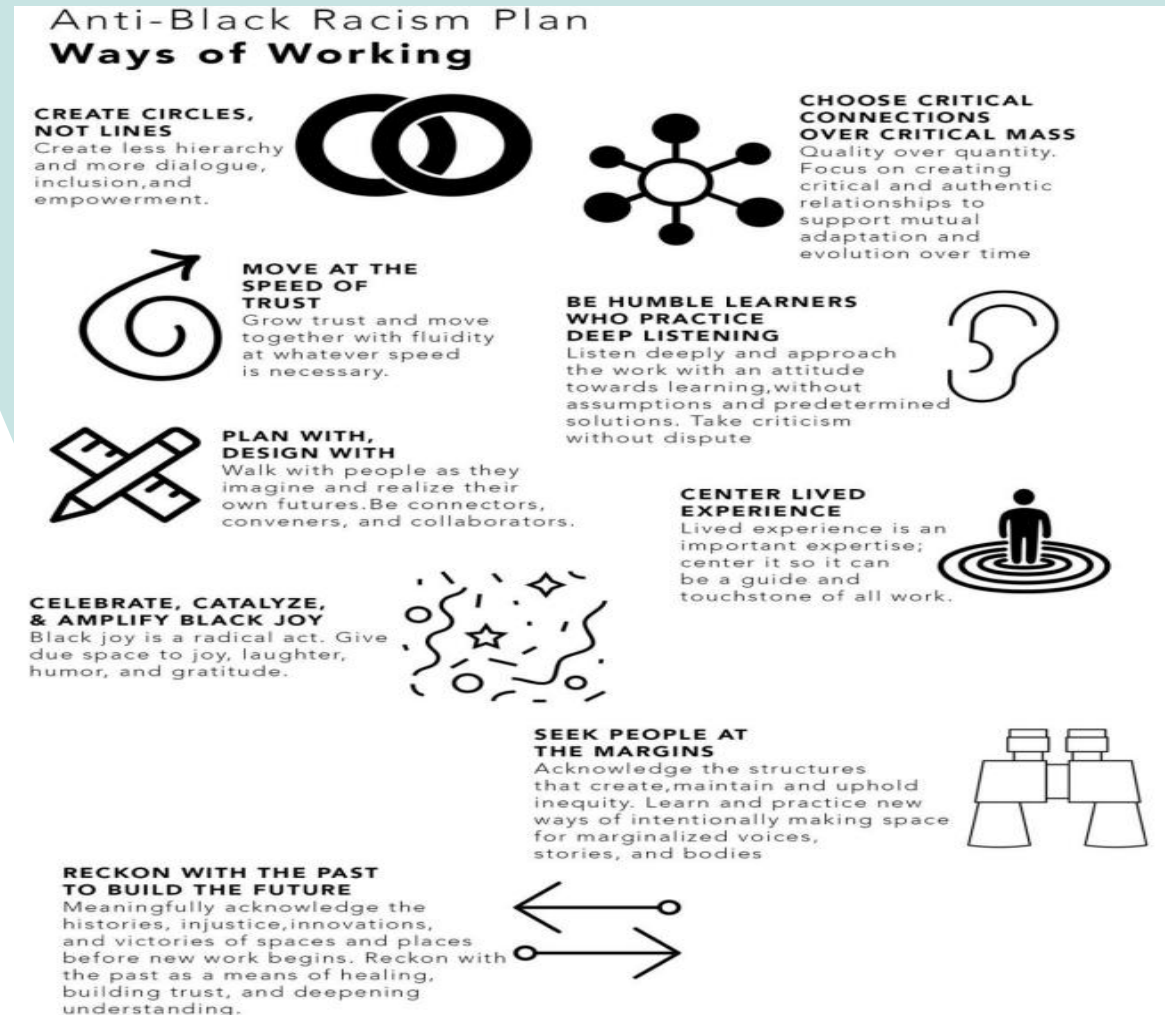
- A [call from Black Health Leaders](#) and communities to recognize and act on the devastating impact of anti-Black racism on the health and wellbeing of Black Ontarians.
- June 2020 Boards of Health and public health organizations issue declarations and statements recognizing anti-Black racism as a public health crisis and commit to addressing systemic racism that result in inequities for the Black community and other marginalized groups.
- Black Scientists' Task Force on Vaccine Equity
- Partnership with community ambassadors and leaders to design and co-deliver mobile Covid-19 testing and vaccine clinics
- BPAO & BHA



**DECLARE ANTI-BLACK
RACISM A
PUBLIC HEALTH
CRISIS**

Lessons from the Pandemic

- Middlesex London Health Unit [Anti-Black Racism Action Plan](#)



Beyond the Pandemic: EGAP

- The Black Health Equity Working Group:
 - EGAP (Engagement, Governance, Access and Protection) is a framework that envisages Black communities gaining control over their collective data .
 - The collection of race-based data should never be the end goal: it must be used to create pathways for dismantling structural racism and advancing health equity



Beyond the pandemic : Ontario Health

- Funding existing Community Health Centers for a specific focus on Black health promotion and wellness (e.g., pop-up clinics, similar to those used during the COVID-19 pandemic).



NEW! Black Health Core Competencies for Public Health

Health Equity and Social Justice (9.0) competency:

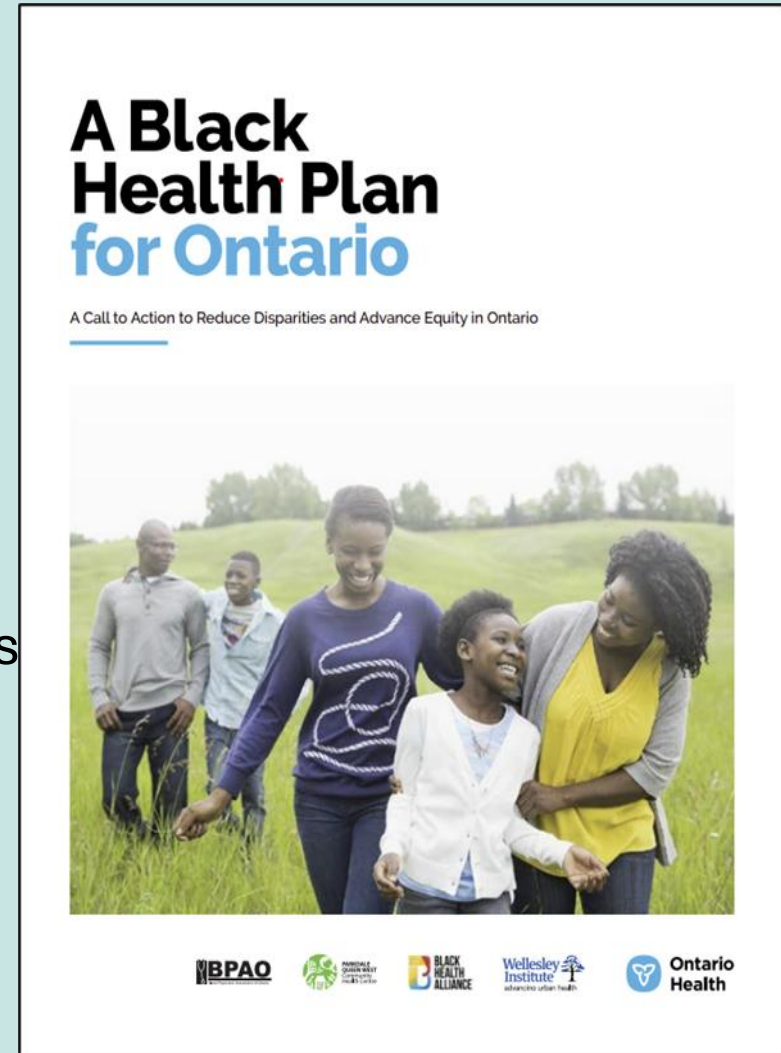
- 9.4: Respect the human rights of people of African descent, and seek inspiration from the measures included in the [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#) and the International Decade for People of African Descent, recognizing the impacts of the after life of slavery and colonization on Black people and Black communities.

Assessment and Analysis (2.0) category description includes:

- “conducting these activities with communities, particularly those facing inequities, and **understanding community perspectives on data control**, for example, the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possessions (OCAP) for First Nations and Engagement, Governance, Access and Protection (EGAP) for Black communities.”

The Black Health Plan

- The Black Health Plan provides a roadmap for creating equitable health conditions for Black populations.
- The plan is built along three pillars:
 - Equitable pandemic response for Black populations
 - Equitable health system recovery with a focus on Black populations
 - **Sustained health equity for Black populations**
- Each pillar includes a corresponding set of recommendations for the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, Ontario Health Teams and health service providers.
- The Black Health Plan was developed jointly by Ontario Health, The Wellesley Institute and the Black Health Alliance, led by community and health care leaders.



What is the BPHAC?

Purpose

- The Black Public Health Advisory Committee (BPHAC)
- To **advance Black health equity** in Ontario by supporting Public Health Units (PHUs) in implementing the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) as it pertains to Black health, promoting race-based data collection, and improving health outcomes for Black communities.

Scope

- This committee provides expertise and guidance with matters pertaining to Black public health in Ontario, including the work of Public Health Ontario (PHO), the Ministry of Health (the ministry), and PHUs.
- In collaboration with the **Black Health Plan Working Group**, this committee can provide support on matters pertaining to clinical public health and/or Black population health.

BPHAC Guiding Principles

Trust, authenticity, and reciprocity.

Africentricity in knowledge and action.

Autonomy and self-determination.

Innovation and accountability.

Accessibility and collaboration.

Anti-oppression and decolonization.

Strengths-based, solution-focused approaches.

BPHAC Objectives

Knowledge Sharing and Innovation

Provide a platform to exchange best practices, research, and emerging surveillance data to inform decision-making and reduce duplication.

Capacity Building

Support PHUs in meeting OPHS Health Equity requirements, including developing a reference document for engaging Black communities.

Guidance and Expertise

Advise on public reports, including the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) reports and PHO mandated data reports for PHUs.

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation

Foster ongoing enhancement of public health initiatives and gather feedback from members.

BPHAC Membership

Co-Chairs:

Dr. Onye Nnorom (OCMOH) & Ms. Samiya Abdi (PHO)

+ Ministry of Health provides secretariat support.

The Wellesley
Institute

Ontario Health

PHUs (8)

Ministry of
Health

Better Outcomes &
Registry Network
(BORN), Ontario

PHO

Representatives have an interest in Black Public Health and/or already serve on the Black Health Plan Working Group.



**Engaging with Black
Communities**
Preliminary Literature Search

Engaging with Black Communities

Search Questions:

1. How do public health organizations work with Black Communities in Canada?
2. What are best practices to engage with Black Communities?

Engaging with Black Communities

Exploratory Search:

Grey Literature – Google Search

- “Engaging with Black Communities”
- “**Public Health organizations working with Black Communities in Canada**”
- Targeted searches – replaced ‘public health organizations’ above with “PHAC”, “PHO”, “Public Health Units”

Journal Articles – McMaster Library, Omni (academic search platform, resources from 19 Ontario Universities)

- “Engagement with Black Communities” (**6,817 results**)
- “Public Health engagement with Black Communities in Canada” (**299 results**)

Engaging with Black Communities

Exploratory Search Results: Grey Literature

National:

- Black Health Alliance: **Getting to know Black Communities** – A Toolkit for Population Health Assessments
- Future Skills Centre (Funded by the Government of Canada): **Working with Black Communities**

Provincial:

- Nova Scotia Health: Supporting Black Public Health

Local:

- Middlesex-London Health Unit: Anti-Black Racism Plan and **Anti-Black Racism Plan Advisory Committee**
- Public Health Sudbury: Lessons Learned From Engaging with Members of the Black Community in Sudbury & Districts
- Mississauga's Black Community Engagement Initiative

Engaging with Black Communities

Exploratory Search Results: Journal Article Examples

- Giwa, A., Mullings, D. V., Renazho, A. M. N., & Salami, O. (2025). “Black People Listen to Black People”: **Strategies to Improve COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Among Black People Living in Canada**. COVID, 5(4), Article 45. <https://doi.org/10.3390/covid5040045>
- George, R. C., & Abebe, A. (2024). Black Community Health Advocates in Ontario: **A Look at Health Policy Engagement From the Ground Up**. Healthcare Policy | Politiques de Santé, 20(SP), 62–73. <https://doi.org/10.12927/hcpol.2024.27413>

Engaging with Black Communities


Key Take-Aways & Next Steps

Key Take-Aways:

- **Canadian literature is available.**
- Journal article search included unrelated articles and clinically-focused articles on title review.

Next Steps:

- Proceed with a more formalized literature search strategy focused on Canada context.
 - PHO Librarian has returned the grey literature search results and the published evidence search results.
- Advanced search with expanded search terms using AND/OR (ex. Black, African, Caribbean).
- Knowledge translation plan.
- Gather advice and recommendations from the BPHAC.

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Black Health Promising Practices

Examples from Across the Province

Black Health Promising Practices



Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU)

- MLHU has created an **Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee**, which is made-up of the diverse members of the Black, African and Caribbean Communities of London.
- This committee provides feedback and holds MLHU accountable to the Anti-Black Racism Plan.



Black Health Promising Practices



Peel Public Health

- Peel Public Health co-chairs and provides secretariat support to the **Black, African, and Caribbean (BAC) Community Health and Wellness Collaborative**.
 - Collaborative consists of health and social service agencies within Peel that assembled to focus on vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Since expanded scope to focus on the health and well-being of Black communities in Peel by uplifting Black-led, community-driven work within the region.
- Peel Public Health's family health department conducted a **community health assessment for Black maternal health**.



Black Health Promising Practices



Toronto Public Health (TPH)

- TPH intervention to address **meningitis and measles** with a focus on Black populations.
- TPH supports the work of Community Health Centres (CHCs) and public health nurses engaging Black populations on **immunization efforts in schools**.
 - Reported immunization initiatives in **Afrocentric schools** led to a reduction in immunization status suspension rates by 46%.
- TPH partnership with Black-led midwife organization called **Ancestral Hands**, focuses on **breastfeeding services and the reproductive early years program**.
- TPH partnership with Afrocentric schools to consider **comprehensive school health** needs broadly, including mental health and other community identified needs. Hopes to have more proportionate, targeted initiatives with schools.
- TPH partnerships across Toronto with children's services to focus on **strong Black families** through work with EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

 **TORONTO** Public Health



Black Health Promising Practices

Public Health Sudbury & Districts (PHSD)



- PHSD formed a **Racial Equity Work Group** in 2019 and developed a **Racial Equity Action Framework (REAF)**.
- Actively engaged the Black community in collaborations on **COVID-19 pandemic response**.
- PHSD is increasing their **capacity for advancing racial equity** by:
 - Delivering Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression staff training;
 - Integrating REAF lens in planning process;
 - Revising Health Equity Checklist to guide equity-focused interventions; and
 - Developing knowledge mobilization tools to **share localized data** and insights from the Black community.



Public Health
Santé publique
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS



Discussion and Q&A



What Role Can you Play?

- Based on what you've heard today, what actions could you take to incorporate addressing anti-Black racism in your public health work?

Resources for further Learning

- [Black health MPH](#) at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto
- The [Black Health Primer](#) by Black Health Education Collaborative (BHEC)
- The NCCDH – BHEC Anti-Black Racism and Public Health [Webinar Series](#)

Next steps

- Black Public Health: Promising Practices Series Part II
 - *A Model for Collaboration: Initiatives of the Black, African, and Caribbean Community Health and Wellness Collaborative in Peel*
 - Jan 20, 2026 @ 12-1pm
- Curated List of Resources on Black Health
- Reference document on Engaging with Black Communities