



**Anti-Racism Task Force  
Final Report  
A Path Forward**

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## Anti-Racism Task Force Final Report: A Path Forward

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## Background and Purpose

Recent world events have put into stark relief the pervasive and enduring impact of racism on society in Canada, across Turtle Island (North America) and globally. These events include; the police-involved murders of Black persons (with particular attention needed for the rate at which gender non-conforming and/or transgender black persons face violence), the rising activism against anti-Black racism, Indigenous-led land defense, the disproportionate economic and health impacts amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic with accompanying increases in anti-Asian racism, and extreme climate events which are disproportionately experienced by Indigenous, Black and People of Colour. The effects of systemic racism are apparent within all aspects of life, including in higher education. Systemic racism continues to hinder students, staff and faculty from reaching their full potential. Racism also diminishes the quality of life and the learning and work environment for all.

To more directly and systematically address the effects of racism at Trent University, the Provost and VP Academic announced the creation of two working groups related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion matters at Trent University on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The **Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF)** was one of those groups. The TUFA/Trent University Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee was the other.

The principal task of the ARTF was to make recommendations that Trent could adopt to remove identified barriers and provide a comprehensive move-forward agenda related to anti-racism issues at Trent. These recommendations will be the basis for the formulation of a plan. The plan will include specific actions and metrics and be drafted with the engagement of a broader set of stakeholders and subject matter experts committed to anti-racism at Trent.

The ARTF was tasked to consider the present environment of equity, diversity and inclusion at Trent University and formulate recommendations for improvement by:

- Evaluating the campus environment (learning, living, working) as experienced by racialized students, faculty and staff, with a view to identifying the present University race-related culture which may include steps such as data collection and other means as determined by the Task Force;
- Identifying institutional and other barriers (systemic and individual) faced by racialized members of the Trent community;
- Recommending an Anti-Racism Action Plan to remove these identified barriers and provide a comprehensive move-forward agenda to ensure equity, diversity and inclusivity at Trent.

Trent is committed to ensuring that all members of our campus communities are valued and treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race. Trent University aims to be an institution in which everyone's human rights are a lived reality, where each member takes responsibility for a culture of inclusion, and policies and practices support equity, diversity and inclusion.

## Definitions

The ARTF defines “race” as a socially constructed category, created and reproduced through specific formations of power, knowledge, and discourse. To define race as “socially constructed” means that society forms ideas of race-based on geographic, historical, political, economic, and cultural factors, as well as physical traits, even though none of these can legitimately be used to classify groups of people. From a biological perspective, there are no subspecies of modern human beings.

Racialization refers to the process[es] through which groups come to be socially constructed as races, based on characteristics such as ethnicity, language, economics, religions, culture, and politics.

Intersectionality refers to the ways that people’s lives are shaped by multiple and overlapping identities and social locations. These multiple social identities overlap to produce distinct experiences for an individual or group, creating additional barriers or opportunities.

Systemic (or structural) racism is a set of cultural beliefs, laws and practices that privilege one group over another based-on skin colour.

The Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat defines anti-racism as the practice of identifying, challenging and changing the values, structures, and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism.

## Consultation and Process

To meet its mandate, the ARTF devised and carried out a consultation process from April to October 2021 comprising the following components.

### **1. HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey**

Through the HEDS (Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium), the ARTF administered an online “campus climate” survey that allowed all students, faculty, and staff members to provide feedback anonymously regarding their perceptions of Trent University’s climate, how the university supports diversity and equity, and their experiences with discrimination and harassment at Trent University.

### **2. Confidential Written Submissions**

In addition to the invitation to participate in the online campus climate survey, the ARTF also invited campus community members to make confidential written submissions. These submissions provided an alternative channel for sharing observations and experiences with racism on campus and ideas for making Trent a safer, more respectful, and inclusive place.

### **3. Facilitated Sessions**

The ARTF offered Open and Closed Listening Sessions with an independent facilitator, Dr. Kimberley Barrett, to allow campus community members to share their observations and experiences. Open sessions were available to all university community members, while closed sessions were provided at the request of any on-campus group. All ethnocultural groups, associations, clubs, and union groups on campus were encouraged to participate.

It was important for these consultations to be meaningful and as such, conditions that promoted open discussion with assurances of anonymity and confidentiality were created.

In addition to the work involved with the consultation process, the ARTF:

- examined multiple aspects of institutional, work, academic and learning environments,
- analyzed the survey results and reports of the listening sessions,
- analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data and administered a survey to probe specific issues identified during the exploratory stage of the group's work,
- made clear, concise, and actionable recommendations for anti-racism based on the information gathered, and
- published a final report to be shared at large.

## Findings

The following is a summary of findings from the consultations listed above. More detailed reports are available for each consultation component; references to these are provided following each section.)

### 1. HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey

As part of the ARTF data-gathering efforts, Trent University administered the HEDS survey on diversity and equity in spring 2021. Total respondents for the forty-item survey included 1,238 students, staff and faculty<sup>1</sup>. The overall response rate was a little more than 11%. The response rates for students and employees (including the "other" category) were 10% and 19%, respectively. Students made up the majority (70%) of respondents.

The survey was divided into three topical areas and a section for demographics. The areas included two related to campus climate, institutional diversity and sense of community belonging, and a third addressing discrimination and harassment. Students, faculty and staff who identified as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied at higher rates than White identifying respondents for survey items related to the overall campus climate, diversity on campus and sense of belonging and community.

The proportion of BIPOC respondents reporting that they had experienced discrimination and harassment was almost twice that of White respondents (33% vs 18% with 15% for White men). Forty percent of BIPOC respondents who identify as women or non-binary reported having experienced discrimination or harassment of some kind during their time at Trent. Overall, more than 50% of respondents reported hearing disparaging or insensitive remarks about groups by a member of the Trent community sometimes or often. In terms of knowing where to report alleged discrimination and harassment, 50% of respondents indicated that the process for reporting was unclear. Only 32% of respondents agreed that the process for reporting discrimination and harassment at Trent is effective.

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers are inclusive of both Peterborough and Durham campuses. Unless otherwise stated, numbers reflect both campuses.

Survey demographics were as follows: 64% White only overall, 33% one or more racial categories other than white (BIPOC) overall, 39% BIPOC for undergraduates and 46% BIPOC for graduate students. For students identifying as Canadian citizens, 25% identified as BIPOC.

## 2. Confidential Written Submissions

In response to a call for confidential written submissions from ARTF, 23 submissions were received. Ten were from undergraduate students, 4 each from graduate students, faculty and staff and 1 from an alumnus. A few identified as being POC in their submissions. Most identified racism as a significant problem at Trent University and expressed that the institution is not doing enough to understand and address the issue. Numerous respondents discussed inadequacies in the current procedures for reporting racism, partly due to the lack of process to address incidents that do not rise to the level of illegal discrimination or harassment. Some also discussed concerns related to retaliation and backlash if they were to raise issues of racism.

A couple of the students who submitted written comments recounted personal experiences of racism related to inappropriate comments in the classroom and frequently being socially excluded by other students. Others reported witnessing instances of racism directed towards their colleagues or other students. Several others focused on systemic and structural dimensions of racism at Trent. One person simply stated, "I am excited for this."

A few respondents indicated that they did not feel racism was a significant problem at Trent and opposed anti-racism and anti-oppression efforts in general. Three people discussed perceived issues with the methodology and mandate of the ARTF. One respondent expressed that this work threatens (or causes harm) to White Male members of the Trent community. In contrast, almost half of those submitting written comments suggested that all faculty, staff, students and administration participate in training to address issues related to racism. One undergraduate student provided a detailed list of recommendations based on an intersectional view of racism and diversity.

## 3. Facilitated Sessions

As part of the consultation process undertaken by the Trent University Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF), twenty-six listening sessions were conducted between April 26, 2021, and September 28, 2021. An additional listening session was held for the Black Student Support Group on October 19, 2021. The purpose of the sessions was to allow campus community members to share their observations and experiences related to structural and individual racism at Trent. Open sessions were offered for all members of the university community. In addition, closed sessions were provided to groups based on campus role (i.e. senior administration, students, staff and faculty) and/or racialization (i.e. BIPOC persons). Each type of session was offered in equal numbers. Participation in sessions ranged from as many as 19 to as few as 1. Sessions were offered in the spring (Block 1) and the fall (Block 2).

The demographics of participants appeared to mirror that of the university, including folks who identify as Indigenous, Black, Latinx and international, with the majority identifying as

White. All senior administrators, including the president, and Board participated in at least one of the listening sessions.

In nearly every session, participants raised concerns regarding the process for reporting and providing redress for racism on campus. They also expressed the desire to have someone senior identified within the University to coordinate and lead equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism efforts. In addition to these overarching areas of concern, eight themes emerged from comments. These included: (1) pride in Trent's leadership in indigenizing education; (2) deep concern regarding overt racism in Peterborough, and subtle bias in the selection of key positions in the university; (3) the prevalence of microaggressions on campus; (4) a need for greater support for the involvement of racialized faculty in key positions and students in campus life; (5) the necessity of comprehensive, coordinated anti-racism training, for all Trent staff, faculty and students, with some targeted for role and identity, (6) the importance of representation, (7) a desire to create multicultural milieu on campus and (8) the need for meaningful institutionalization of anti-racism across the institution using an intersectional approach.

## Recommendations

Recommendations were developed based on the information received and collected during the consultation process. Recommendations are organized into five sections: 1) budget and planning; 2) representation and hiring; 3) training and professional development; 4) community engagement and partnerships; and 5) support for the Trent community. These recommendations apply to both Peterborough and Durham campuses, however unique approaches and consultations should be done to best address any differing needs on the Durham campus.

### Budget and Planning

1. The Provost and Vice-President Academic will appoint a senior EDI advisor through a public hiring process who will report to the Provost and oversee the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. Staff will be hired to support this position with one position for each campus (e.g. Academic Administrative Assistant and other staff as required (e.g. researchers) to ensure implementation of the plan on both campuses).
2. Adequate resources (annual budget) will be provided for the implementation of the Task Force recommendations (e.g. for research, outputs, promotion of materials, etc.) on both campuses.
3. The Provost and Vice-President Academic will strike the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Committee chaired by the Provost and Vice-President Academic (or delegate) to begin meeting in March 2022, with one subcommittee focused on Peterborough-based initiatives and concerns and one subcommittee focused on Durham-based initiatives and concerns. Membership of this Committee will comprise the EDI senior advisor, faculty, staff, students and BIPOC community representatives to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations. Budget



will be outlined to pay students and any BIPOC community representatives who are not already being paid for their service on this committee.

4. Disseminate information from the work of the Task Force in accessible format to the campus community by February 2022. (This could be accomplished by posting information online, emails, making reports at key standing meetings, including Faculty Board, Senate, the Board of Governors, Decanal and Department meetings, administrative meetings and through virtual town halls, among other strategies). Data should be disaggregated to highlight differences between Peterborough and Durham.
5. Develop a university statement regarding equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and belonging.
6. Create new and clear processes for reporting racial bias and provide support to the targets of these incidents. Differences in reporting, including (when necessary) different processes, should be considered separately for Peterborough and Durham campuses.
7. Review and develop strategies to make the existing discrimination and harassment policy more accessible to students, faculty and staff. Two actions that might help to accomplish this include assigning trained advocates to parties involved to guide them through the process and sending informational reminders about the process regularly. At minimum, two assigned trained advocates should be based on the Durham campus.
8. Develop Departmental EDI plans to include anti-racism goals and incorporate EDI goals into existing annual report templates. Consult with Senate and Human Resources (HR) regarding the best approach.
9. Make the impact on racial equity a consideration in all financial, hiring and policy decision-making processes with particular attention to naming (and renaming, e.g. concerns were expressed regarding the name of Champlain College and for which there is now a Champlain Committee to consider the legacy of Champlain at the University) of spaces and new practices, including remote work.
10. The University President will include updates regarding EDI and anti-racism work to the Board of Governors, Senate and Faculty Board at least once per year.
11. The Board of Governors will recruit members with EDI expertise to the Board of Governors.
12. Take measures to ensure that people on all Trent campuses, particularly those in Durham, have access to EDI programming. This can include hiring additional EDI programming employees for the Durham campus and/or assuring any training done

in-person in Peterborough is repeated in person in Durham within the same academic year.

13. Hire senior management level EDI professional to lead and coordinate this work.

### Representation and Hiring

14. Human Resources will report on the number of staff and faculty belonging to racialized and equity-seeking groups. The report will enable the University to set goals, update practices, and build diversity and inclusion support on campus.
15. Develop a BIPOC Hiring Action Plan to include hiring policy and practices and hiring of BIPOC that will expand the faculty and staff diversity at Trent University at all levels. Some strategies to consider in these efforts include; cluster hires, a 'grow your own' program involving racialized graduate students, opportunity hires, and converting some limited-term appointments to new full-time positions to address equity, diversity and inclusion. Coordination of this goal to hire BIPOC faculty will take place with the VP Advancement regarding fundraising for the hires. Dates, metrics, and finances will be outlined to achieve this work. Adequate funding, including funding for additional staff and student involvement, will be supplied to support the development and implementation of this hiring action.
16. Launch an Indigenous Initiatives Strategy. The strategy will provide an overview of the current state of Indigenous actions on campus and a way forward in the areas of governance, Indigenous student support, pedagogy and curriculum, research and scholarship and campus environment. Adequate funding, including funding for additional staff and student involvement, will be supplied to support the development and implementation of this strategy.
17. Develop a campus-wide self-identification survey for students to provide a richer picture of campus diversity. The data will be presented through a disaggregated and intersectional analysis.
18. The Board of Governors will develop a plan to increase the racial diversity of its members and will report to the Trent community its progress toward this goal annually.

### Training and Professional Development

19. Include mandatory training modules about legal/compliance issues related to discrimination, implicit bias, microaggressions, antiracism and allyship in the orientation for all people new to the Trent community (e.g., student, faculty, staff, volunteers, Board of Governors members, Campus Security). Make the training easily accessible. Follow up to ensure people meet this expectation and provide incentives for participation and consequences if the training is not completed. Follow up can include not allowing students to officially graduate without completion. Provide annual Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias training for the senior University leadership team. Training will highlight anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, anti-bias, anti-oppression, and discrimination against equity-seeking groups and BIPOC communities.

20. Develop anti-oppression and anti-racism in-person and online training modules and provide ongoing training that is meaningful, responsive to needs identified by BIPOC persons, coordinated and widely advertised throughout the academic year, and assessed for their effectiveness in relation to identified and ongoing needs (e.g. through surveys, scheduled evaluation). Incentives should be provided for participation, and hourly employees should be remunerated for their participation.
21. Develop and launch an annual or biannual webinar series that explores how to be an effective anti-racism ally, identify and address microaggressions, and be an inclusive leader. Adequate funding will be provided for doing this work.
22. Develop a mandatory undergraduate course on Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Oppression open to all undergraduate students, exploring concepts of power, oppression, bias, and privilege.
23. Develop a Black Studies minor. This will include creating new courses that will incorporate an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach to Black Studies.
24. Include reporting of EDI training and professional development on the part of Faculty and Staff in their respective annual performance reports, and for faculty and librarians, in their applications for promotion and tenure. Provide an opportunity for students to record their EDI-related training and experiences on a co-curricular transcript.
25. Provide opportunities for the Trent community to engage in an ongoing structured dialogue about anti-racism and anti-racism initiatives and processes within Trent. A strategy for this might include partnering with the Human Library Organization or working with a consulting group like the Sustained Dialogue Institute.
26. Create initiatives and spaces to support the professional development and social well-being of racialized faculty and staff, such as mentoring circles for building communities of practice, mentoring for advancement, employee resource groups for creating community, and professional development for staff. Adequate funding will be set aside each year to be used for these initiatives.
27. Create an annual review for the Indigenous Studies (INDG 1000) general education course to discuss pedagogy, learning and future directions. Consider creating two levels of this course, one for those new to Indigenous studies and another for those more knowledgeable of Indigenous knowledge.
28. The Centre for Teaching and Learning provide mandatory and regular professional development for course instructors (full and part-time), teaching assistants, other instructional staff) on inclusive pedagogy, equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization addressing topics such as diminishing stereotype threat, universal design, fostering anti-racism and decolonization, and creating classrooms that are spaces of anti-racism.

29. Conduct panel discussions highlighting how Trent faculty in all disciplines are currently integrating the work of racialized scholars and issues related to anti-racism into the curriculum.
30. Provide funding (e.g. grants) to incentivize and support faculty integrating inclusive pedagogy and EDI and decolonizing content into existing courses.

### Community Engagement and Partnerships

31. Invite the City of Peterborough and City of Oshawa Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officers to serve on the University's EDIB committee.
32. Work with social justice and community organizations (e.g. Community Relations Committee of Peterborough, New Canadians Centre) in Peterborough and Oshawa to address student, staff, and faculty reports of bias and create a social norming program to promote anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion.
33. Promote service-learning, community-engaged research and volunteering on the part of students, faculty, staff and alumni to normalize the presence of this more diverse constituency in the community, work on projects that are mutually beneficial and develop evidence-based tools to help create more inclusive, anti-racist ways of doing business in town with an emphasis on efforts in Peterborough and Oshawa. Funding from SSHRC can assist in these efforts.
34. Create a President's Community Anti-Racism Council that invites advice, collaboration and representation from BIPOC community groups as members and deepens relationships with Indigenous leaders from both Peterborough and Durham communities.

### Support for the Trent Community (at both Peterborough and Durham Campuses)

35. Create a pilot project for a 24/7 wellness check team, for students to be able to contact in wellness emergencies, as opposed to having to call security.
36. Create student services and wraparound supports that address the unique challenges of BIPOC and international students at Trent. This should involve rethinking current services and offering new ones that consider the unique nature of the Peterborough and Durham Campuses. Durham campus resources will not be lumped under Peterborough resources and supports, rather proper funding and resources will be allocated to address the unique needs of racialized Durham students.
37. Create scholarships for BIPOC students recognizing BIPOC academic excellence. (a Heritage Bursary for Black and Indigenous Students).
38. Launch an EDI Enhancement Fund. This fund is open to students, faculty and staff for initiatives that create equity and inclusion on both campuses. A portion within the EDI Enhancement Fund will be earmarked specifically for the Durham campus.

39. Create and fund programs to empower BIPOC and international students to influence campus culture to achieve equity, diversity and inclusion. For example, a peer coaching program employing racialized students to help primarily first-year BIPOC and international students navigate academic culture and help them find their niche within Trent. Another would be to create more opportunities for employment across both campuses for racialized students. In addition, CareerSpace could partner with the Onyx Initiative, which helps Black students find jobs and mentors in a wide range of employment opportunities.
40. Create and fund programs to help make Trent feel more like home to BIPOC and international students whereby existing practices, for example, within Colleges, adopt cultural traditions that can be incorporated into and become Trent traditions. For example, recipes from diverse and various countries could be added to the cafeteria in regular rotation (not just during special events or holidays), and special event menus and Indigenous ceremonies beyond the status quo should be considered for inclusion at Trent annual events such as Philanthropy Day, Awards Events, and Convocations. Providing more institutional support for cultural celebrations such as Black History Month would also help support the achievement of this goal.
41. Recognizing the copious data that outline the needs of BIPOC and other equity-seeking communities, Trent University will fund additional, permanent positions for counsellors who specialize in mental health and racism issues for students, faculty, and staff. At a minimum, two positions will be allocated for the Durham campus.

## Conclusions

The information gathered during the ARTF consultation process indicates that the effects of racism are inhibiting the ability of members of the Trent community to reach their academic and professional potential. Students and employees who identify as Indigenous, Black and People of Colour experience discrimination and harassment at a much higher rate than their white identifying peers. This is particularly pronounced and overt in the city of Peterborough but also occurs frequently on campus in more subtle ways. In terms of racialized students on the Durham campus, there is a higher proportion of racialized students but a lack of access to supports available in Peterborough (i.e., BIPOC counsellor). Faculty, staff, students, and alumni, both white and BIPOC identifying, shared examples of how they were ill-prepared to respond to challenges presented either when being the target of discrimination or to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse workplace. Members of the Trent community also identified ways in which current practices and campus milieu are inconsistent with the institutional commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. Although many voiced pride in the University's leadership in Indigenous education and indigenizing curriculum, they also communicated the need to continue to deepen this commitment and expand anti-racism efforts to address anti-black and person of colour racism and xenophobia. Considering the data collected, a strategic approach is needed to address systemic racism and decolonization to achieve equity and inclusive excellence at Trent University.