

**ASSESSING CANADIAN
PUBLIC HEALTH
EDUCATION:
CURRICULAR
GAPS IN
BLACK HEALTH**

Acknowledgements

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About the Black Health Education Collaborative

The Black Health Education Collaborative (BHEC) is a community of scholars and practitioners committed to improving Black health through education and research. The BHEC's mission is to transform medical and health professional education to improve the health of Black people and communities across Canada. BHEC addresses anti-Black racism and the interlocking systems that impact the health and wellbeing of Black communities across Canada. Through systems transformation, BHEC focuses on shifting health and educational systems to be more responsive to Black health through collaboration with academic and professional institutions and community organizations alongside working closely with Black communities to inform the work and amplify Black voices.

For any queries or concerns regarding this report or the Black Health Education Collaborative, please email info@bhec.ca.

Land & Ancestral Acknowledgment

The Black Health Education Collaborative acknowledges with gratitude the Indigenous and Afri-Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island who continue to thrive and resist colonial violence while striving for self-determination and decolonial futures. We live, work and play in various territories including the lands of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississauga's of the Credit River; Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, the Anishinaabe, and on the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation; Kanien:keha'ka and Mi'kmaq.

We remember our ancestors, forcibly displaced African peoples, trafficked into Turtle Island as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the histories and legacies of colonialism and neo-colonialism which continue to impact African Peoples and the descendants of the Black diaspora across the world.

We recognize that racial colonial violence harms Black, Afri-Indigenous, and Indigenous Peoples through both common and distinct logics and actions. We recognize our responsibility and obligations as African Peoples to be good guests on these lands. We offer thanks to our elders and communities from whom we learn. May your wisdom inform our actions towards a more just future.



Key Messages

- Understanding anti-Black racism as a determinant of health is recognized as important. However, systemic institutional efforts to integrate content on Black health and anti-Black racism into curricula remain limited, exemplified by a lack of subject matter experts.
- Anti-Black racism and Black health are often not explicitly named and are incorporated into Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives. This approach fails to acknowledge the unique experiences of Black communities, does not challenge systemic anti-Black racism, lacks accountability, and impacts the allocation of resources needed to address these issues.
- It is essential for public health education to include content on anti-Black racism and Black health to prepare responsive learners who serve all communities effectively and promote health equity through anti-racist practice.



Executive Summary

The Black Health Education Collaborative (BHEC) is a pan-Canadian organization committed to transforming medical and health professional education to improve the health of Black communities across Canada. This is achieved through the development of curricula, continued professional development, and research. In 2022, BHEC conducted a situational assessment to understand how anti-Black racism in healthcare and Black health are included in Master of Public Health (MPH) programs across Canada (4). A survey was sent to all Canadian universities with an MPH program, and responses were received from a minority of these programs. The survey was completed by individuals in various roles within the institutions, including faculty and leadership.

As a structural determinant of health, anti-Black racism is informed by historical legacies and manifests today as health inequities experienced by Black communities across Canada (1, 2). It is essential that public health curricula include content on anti-Black racism and Black health, taught by subject matter experts from academic and community backgrounds (3). For the future of public health practice, it is imperative that learners receive this crucial aspect of their education and that it is facilitated by public health institutions in a way that is accessible and respectful of Black experiences.

The findings reveal that, currently, there is inadequate coverage of anti-Black racism and Black health, signaling an educational gap in Canadian MPH curricula. Notably, the survey indicates that anti-Black racism and Black health are often not identified or addressed explicitly but are included as part of broader Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives. Only a minority of institutions stated explicit commitments to addressing anti-Black racism and Black health, with many efforts still in development. While some programs incorporate content or initiatives on anti-Black racism and Black health, most institutions lack systemic approaches to integrating this content into their curricula. The responses also highlighted the limited resources to support this work. In terms of instruction, there was limited engagement with Black subject matter experts or Black Health Theme leads. This may impact the consistency of coverage of these topics. Respondents recognized the importance of understanding how anti-Black racism acts as a determinant of health and the role of public health practitioners as agents of change towards health equity. However, gaps in content, expertise, and resources persist.

There are significant implications of these knowledge gaps for public health practice, the health experiences of Black communities, and the advancement of health equity. Public health education must recognize the racist foundations that inform the determinants of health and extend into the public health system itself. The systematic exclusion of these topics indicates that, in practice, the health of Black communities will continue to be overlooked. If the health of Black communities in Canada is not adequately addressed through public health training, learners will remain unprepared. As such, public health education must be responsive to the needs of communities and populations across Canada. Public health students, as future practitioners, must be equipped to understand and address anti-Black racism as a determinant of health, along with its impact on the health and wellbeing of Black communities across Canada.

MPH curricula in public health schools across Canada must address the current gaps and inconsistencies in education on Black health and anti-Black racism. Incorporating this content is essential because anti-racist practices promote health equity and ensure that public health professionals are adequately prepared to serve diverse communities throughout Canada.



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