

# Roadmap to confront anti-Black racism at Holland Bloorview

An 18-month organizational action plan

Prepared by the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-Racism (IDEAA) office in partnership with the senior management team (SMT)

September 2023  
Version 1.0



## Land Acknowledgement

We, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, acknowledge the sacred land that our hospital resides on today. This land, Mother Earth, our Earth Mother, is the territory of the Huron-Wendat First Nation, the Seneca as part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.

Today, Tkaronto is still the home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We are grateful, honoured, and humbled to have the opportunity to live and work in this city and territory.

We recognize Indigenous land title as set out in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which envisioned self-determination and self-government. We understand and aim to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and [94 calls to action](#) that recommend all levels of government implement Indigenous rights in the original spirit of the treaties. Indigenous peoples, and allies for reconciliation, view the treaties as a sacred obligation that commits both parties to maintain a respectful relationship, sharing the lands and resources equitably. We are committed to a path of truth and reconciliation that is based on partnership and respect for the many ways of learning, knowing, and being.

In the spirit of this report and action plan, we further recognize that many Black peoples have settled on this land through forced removal, transport, and multi-generational captivity perpetuated by the trans Atlantic Slave Trade. Enslaved Africans were held captive to build industries, act as domestic servants, and forcibly work the lands across the geography now known as Canada. Because of this, we recognize that the trans Atlantic Slave Trade and contemporary systems of anti-Black racism are interlinked with – and mutually dependent on – ongoing settler colonialism. By confronting one of these systems, we likewise commit to confronting all of them.

Chi Miigwetch-Nya whago ah – Merci -Thank you

## A message from the senior management team (SMT)

In July 2022, as part of our ongoing commitment to name and address anti-Black racism at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (hereafter referred to as Holland Bloorview), we commissioned [Dr. Notisha Massaquoi](#), an independent expert on anti-Black racism, to lead a rigorous eight-month assessment and report on the experiences of Black employees at all levels of the hospital. Dr. Massaquoi's final report was released in March 2023 and shared widely.

The report is deeply troubling, honest, and filled with painful accounts of what it means to be Black at Holland Bloorview. We apologize for the hurt experienced by our Black colleagues, who have experienced anti-Black racism within Holland Bloorview. We continue to extend our sincere gratitude to the Black employees who participated in the report for their vulnerability, sacrifice of time and emotional energy, and for sounding the alarm on structural anti-Black racism across Holland Bloorview. For anyone who continues to be impacted by reading or participating in Dr. Massaquoi's report, we encourage you to access support through a list of support people and resources curated by the hospital's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-Racism (IDEAA) office, or contact our external Employee and Family Assistance Program provider ComPsych at 1-877-522-5498 (TRS: dial 711).

In the SMT's cover letter to Dr. Massaquoi's report, we suggested that, "before being able to confront anti-Black racism, we need to acknowledge its presence and its pervasive impact." While we are very early in our journey, we believe Dr. Massaquoi's report has been critical to shining a light on the depth and nature of anti-Black racism at our hospital. This has offered us important learning that will continue to inform and guide our organization's response.

The pages that follow outline the SMT's commitment to action and a set of anti-racist change initiatives to be implemented over the next 18 months.

As your senior management team, we commit to modeling principles for anti-racist transformation as a central tenet of organizational accountability and justice. Our shared promise to you is that we will:

- **Take ongoing direction from Black employees** – by continuing to consult with Black employees (when this is what is desired and being called for) to identify and prioritize change initiatives that matter most.
- **Foreground accountability** – by giving you full transparency and insight into the hospital's response. This includes consistent updates on our progress, measuring change through clear metrics associated with each initiative in the action plan, and transparently sharing related reports and findings from internal or external processes which support the organization's action towards dismantling systemic anti-Black racism.
- **Nurture momentum** – by continuously investing in, amplifying, and building upon efforts to dismantle anti-Black racism at our hospital.

- **Lead with courage** – by pushing through the discomfort that comes with anti-racist conversations and organizational change, around anti-Blackness in particular, and model courageous leadership in this space.

In our cover letter to Dr. Massaquoi’s report we encouraged you to hold the SMT “accountable for taking the necessary next steps that will create the impact we want”, as well as the transformative anti-racist action that we know is necessary. By making the 18-month plan public, we are creating personal accountabilities that will be measured and reported on. We understand that the next 18 months represent only the beginning in our journey to dismantle anti-Black racism at Holland Bloorview. We invite you to partner with us in sparking change at every opportunity, and to commit to making Holland Bloorview a safer, more accountable, and more inclusive place for Black employees of today and of the future.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Evdokia Anagnostou**

*Vice President of Research and Director of the Bloorview Research Institute, Child neurologist*



**Irene Andress**

*Vice-President, Programs & Services and Chief Nursing Executive (CNE)*



**Enza Dininio**

*Vice-President, Corporate Performance, Digital Health Innovation and CFO.*



**Julia Hanigsberg**

*President and CEO, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital*



**Sandra Hawken**

*President and CEO, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation*



**Tracey Millar**

*Vice-President, People and Culture.*



**Dr. Golda Milo-Manson**

*Vice-President, Medicine and Academic Affairs*



**Aman Sium**

*Vice-President, Experience, Transformation and Social Accountability (ETSA)*



**Stewart Wong**

*Vice-President, Communications, Strategy and Sustainability.*

## Background

### **What is anti-Black racism?**

*Anti-Black racism (ABR) describes the “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 Health Alliance, 2023](#))*

Anti-Black racism is a structure, not an event. This means that it is not something that Black people and communities experience as isolated moments. Instead, anti-Black racism works to create parallel systems of systemic advantage and disadvantage that privilege or punish people based on their race, with Black people being overwhelmingly subject to the latter. Evidence continues to highlight the ways anti-Black racism places limits upon opportunities and outcomes for Black people across systems, such as schooling ([James, 2012](#); [Dei, 2008](#)), policing and the justice system ([Maynard, 2017](#)), employment and income security ([Foster et al, 2023](#); [Block, Galabuzi & Tranjan, 2019](#)), health care ([Ezeife et al, 2022](#); [Salami et al, 2022](#); [Constantino et al, 2020](#); [Siddiqi et al, 2014](#)), and all other aspects of life.

As such, we recognize that anti-Black racism at Holland Bloorview is intimately connected to anti-Black racism across society.

We further appreciate the spectrum, or “levels”, that anti-Black racism functions across: individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural (sometimes called systemic). Dr. Massaquoi’s report includes numerous examples of anti-Black racism occurring across these levels. Therefore, Holland Bloorview’s 18-month organizational action plan (p. 8 - 12) must include interventions at each of these levels.

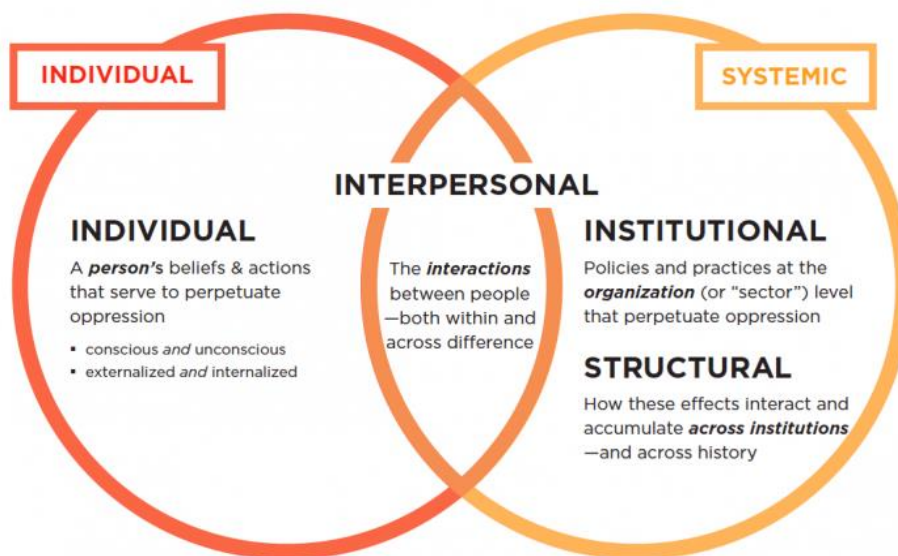


Image source: “Lens of Systemic Oppression”, [National Equity Project](#)

## Purpose and scope of action plan

Holland Bloorview’s action plan to confront anti-Black racism was informed by Black employees, various other stakeholders, and draws from evidence from across sectors on how to meaningfully combat anti-Black racism in organizational environments. The action plan was approved by the hospital’s senior management team in July 2023 with the intention of sharing it internally, as well as posting it on the hospital’s external website.

The purpose of this plan is to guide Holland Bloorview’s planning and change initiatives to confront anti-Black racism within our walls, with a distinct focus on improving Black employee experiences.

To focus the hospital’s anti-racist efforts over the next year and a half, a set of prioritization criteria was developed by the IDEAA office with guidance from Dr. Massaquoi. While appreciating that all recommendations in Dr. Massaquoi’s report need careful attention, we will start by prioritizing change initiatives that meet the following criteria:

- Focus in this area directly confronts areas of greatest harm and urgency as expressed by Black employees.
- There is confidence that the benefits associated with an initiative can be sustained and expanded over time.
- Focus in this area will *de-burden* Black employees e.g., reduce disproportionate workload, remove barriers to career progression, combat microaggressions within teams.
- Adequate resourcing and implementation conditions either exist now *or* can be created.
- Focus in this area will allow for a cascade of future activities that will build upon it.

## Building from where we are at

Since launching in 2018, Holland Bloorview’s IDEAA office has been a catalyst for advancing social justice across our hospital community, including building the foundational roles and structures to advance anti-racism. While we recognize that our hospital has a long way to go in meaningfully confronting anti-Black racism, there are several anti-racist practices and activities from the past year that we are building from. These include, but are not limited to:

Activity	Objective / Aim
Development of a ‘DIY’ debrief toolkit to pair with Dr. Massaquoi’s report (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To support leadership in holding ongoing debriefs of Dr. Massaquoi’s report with their teams, and to reflect on local program response.</li></ul>
Launch of anti-Black racism e-module, required for all hospital employees (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To equip all employees with a common definition of anti-Black racism, related concepts and tools to identify it, and to share historical examples of anti-Black racism in Canadian health care.</li></ul>

Activity	Objective / Aim
Implementation of a workplace discrimination, racism and harassment reporting process using third-party investigation (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide all employees, including those experiencing racism, with a confidential and trauma-informed way to report their experience and to seek resolution in ways that intend to cause no further harm or distress.</li> </ul>
Hosting recurring anti-Racism learning series (annual since 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a safe space for shared learning and reflective practice around racism and anti-racism; to learn from invited experts and community guests; distinct focus on anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.</li> </ul>
Launch of <b>Empowering Black Academics, Researchers and Knowledge creators</b> ( <a href="#">EMBARK</a> ) program in Bloorview Research Institute (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that early-career Black scientists receive personalized support, access to protected funding, and leadership opportunities in research.</li> </ul>

## 18-month organizational action plan

Listed below are 13 organizational commitments and change initiatives for implementation before March 1, 2025. Change initiatives vary in breadth and scope. In some instances, a single “initiative” includes multiple activities to be delivered as part of it.

This list reflects organization-wide commitments that will be tracked, measured, and sponsored by the hospital’s senior management team. However, the list does not reflect the full extent of planning and initiatives to address anti-Black racism at the program or team level. Program and team-specific action plans are currently being developed for this purpose.

Activity	Objective / Target (if applicable)	Strategic Alignment	Executive Accountability
<b><i>To be completed within 1-3 months (by December 1, 2023)</i></b>			
Implement mandatory anti-Black racism e-module for all staff and board of directors. Embed as onboarding requirement for all new employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help create an organization-wide baseline for key definitions, understanding, and competencies to identify anti-Black racism.</li> <li>90 per cent completion by employees.</li> <li>100 per cent completion by board of directors.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy team</b></p> <p><b>Care that’s socially accountable</b></p>	Tracey Millar, vice president, people and culture
Create a process and template for programs/teams to develop own action plans to confront anti-Black racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that, in addition to organization-level action, teams are supported to challenge and avoid occurrences of anti-Black racism at the team-level. At least 50 per cent of hospital programs/teams will report having completed a team-based action plan.</li> </ul>	<b>Healthy team</b>	Entire senior management team
Launch a leadership community of practice to build competencies and skill sets for people managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To create ongoing opportunities for the IDEAA office to lead anti-racist coaching and capacity-building, and to facilitate peer-support among leaders.</li> <li>Recruit for and convene first community of practice before December 1, 2023.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy team</b></p> <p><b>Care that’s transformed by research and education</b></p>	Aman Sium, vice president, experience, transformation and social accountability



Activity	Objective / Target (if applicable)	Strategic Alignment	Executive Accountability
Curate a collection of mental health and wellness resources specific to Black employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure all Black employees have access to external resources, in addition to internal support options.</li> </ul>	Healthy team	Tracey Millar, vice president, people and culture
Continue to promote and evaluate effectiveness of the workplace discrimination, racism and harassment (WDRH) reporting process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To track and act on improvement opportunities identified through ongoing evaluation which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of unique consults with human rights and equity navigator related to the reporting process (collecting for baseline).</li> <li>Percentage of participants who agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with Holland Bloorview’s reporting process (collecting for baseline).</li> <li>Percentage of complainants who agree or strongly agree that they feel comfortable recommending this process to a colleague if they have a concern regarding racism in the workplace (collecting for baseline).</li> </ul> </li> <li>To establish a communications strategy to advance staff knowledge and understanding of the WDRH.</li> </ul>	Healthy team	<p>Aman Sium, vice president, experience, transformation and social accountability</p> <p>Tracey Millar, vice president, people and culture</p>
Establish an internal reporting and investigation pathway for client/family reports of discrimination, racism and/or harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure there are clear policies and procedures, supports, and nuanced accountability mechanisms to respond to client and family allegations of anti-Black racism; this is to be seen as an enhancement or complementary</li> </ul>	Care that’s socially accountable	Aman Sium, vice president, experience, transformation and social accountability

Activity	Objective / Target (if applicable)	Strategic Alignment	Executive Accountability
	to the existing and robust mechanisms responding to <i>all</i> anti-racism allegations.		Tracey Millar, vice president, people and culture
Invite Black employees to form a Black employee resource group (voluntary), complete with organizational funding and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help facilitate a protected space for Black employee peer connection, sharing of experiences, and other benefits identified by the group.</li> </ul>	<b>Healthy team</b>	Aman Sium, vice president, experience, transformation and social accountability
<b>To be completed within 12 months (by August 1, 2024)</b>			
Design and launch an equitable recruitment, retention and promotion strategy specific to Black employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To strengthen fair and transparent hiring and retention practices and opportunities for Black employees to progress.</li> <li>Include socio-demographic data collection at the stages of candidacy, hiring, and exiting the organization.</li> <li>Develop specific hiring targets and baseline measures to track the growth of Black employee representation (minimum 9 per cent representation to align with City of Toronto).</li> <li>Assess employment precarity among Black employees by reviewing number of employees with temporary contracts and length of service time.</li> <li>Review all terminations to address disproportionality.</li> <li>Offer exit interviews to 100 per cent of Black employees leaving the organization, with analysis and trending of reasons for leaving.</li> </ul>	<b>Healthy team</b>	Entire senior management team

Activity	Objective / Target (if applicable)	Strategic Alignment	Executive Accountability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct compensation review for Black employees to address any salary disparities.</li> <li>• Ensure people and culture and hiring teams are racially diverse and include Black employees and/or volunteer representation wherever possible.</li> </ul>		
<p>Develop race-based data governance strategy for the responsible collection, management, and use of Black employee, volunteer and client and family data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify representation gaps with greatest precision possible; to use new data to inform client and family service design and employee supports.</li> <li>• To launch Toronto Region health equity socio-demographic survey in &gt;80 per cent of clinical programs.</li> <li>• To collect new data on employee socio-demographics and proportional representation of Black employees (see above).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy team</b></p> <p><b>Care that's socially accountable</b></p> <p><b>Care that's agile</b></p>	<p>Aman Sium, vice president, experience, transformation and social accountability</p> <p>Tracey Millar, vice president, people and culture</p> <p>Enza Dininio, vice president, corporate performance, digital health innovation</p>
<p>Host 4th annual anti-racism learning series with continued focus on confronting anti-Black racism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect recurring space for shared learning and reflective practice around anti-Black racism; to enhance the organization's capacity to build preventative strategies for anti-Black racism, identify and challenge its occurrence, and enforce standards for accountability.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy team</b></p> <p><b>Care that's transformed by research and education</b></p>	<p>Aman Sium, vice president, experience, transformation and Social accountability</p>

Activity	Objective / Target (if applicable)	Strategic Alignment	Executive Accountability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To launch next series within 2023-2024 fiscal year.</li> <li>To ensure at least one session will focus on anti-Black racism and long-term strategies to build racial equity through employment practices.</li> </ul>		
<b>To be completed within 18 months (by March 1, 2025)</b>			
Assemble an external Black community accountability panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To inform and steer Holland Bloorview’s long-term commitments to confront anti-Black racism.</li> <li>To ensure representation from community partners, clients and families, as well as sector affiliations beyond health care.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy team</b></p> <p><b>Care that’s socially accountable</b></p> <p><b>Care that’s agile</b></p> <p><b>Care that’s transformed by research and education</b></p>	Entire senior management team
Launch an SMT sponsorship program that matches executives with Black employees for (voluntary participation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To leverage SMT’s relative privilege and networks; to provide endorsement and career coaching in support of Black employees’ growth and career progression.</li> </ul>	<b>Healthy team</b>	Entire senior management team
Establish auditing framework for hospital teams to assess their effective prevention, identification of, and mitigations for potential occurrences of anti-Black racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To empower local managers and teams to confront anti-Black racism in their daily work, and at the point of care.</li> <li>To share auditing framework with 100 per cent of hospital programs and teams.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy team</b></p> <p><b>Care that’s socially accountable</b></p>	Entire senior management team

Activity	Objective / Target (if applicable)	Strategic Alignment	Executive Accountability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess use with the aim of implementing in 50 per cent of teams within the first year.</li> </ul>		

If you have questions, concerns or feedback about the action plan please contact the hospital executive responsible for your program/role, or contact Lorraine Thomas, manager, inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility and anti-racism (IDEAA) at [lthomas@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:lthomas@hollandbloorview.ca)