

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 5

Halifax Regional Council
June 28, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: April 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Anti-Black Racism Plan Update - June 2022

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

June 8, 2021 Regional Council motion (Item No. 11.1.10):

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the Anti-Black Racism Framework, as set out in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated April 6, 2021, which will guide the development of a strategy and action plan; and
2. Request that the Chief Administrative Officer provide annual updates to Regional Council on the progress of the plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 38

s. 2 The purpose of this Act is to

- (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respects its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are as set out in Section 7A.

s. 7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

- s. 34(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies, and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

BACKGROUND

In Halifax Regional Municipality, the impacts of anti-Black racism have been brought to light in instances of negative interactions with communities of African descent including: the relocation of the community of Africville, a variety of human rights complaints, and the Wortley report on street checks. In addition to these instances at a corporate level, anti-Black racism remains an everyday reality, with detrimental effects for individuals of African descent within the organization. Over the past years, HRM has renewed its commitment to addressing anti-Black racism through various initiatives and renewed efforts to address anti-Black racism internally and externally.

Halifax Regional Municipality recognizes that discrimination and systemic barriers are present in all facets of society; our organization is not immune to the variety of forms that discrimination takes within our communities and beyond. As an organization, HRM acknowledges the unique and nuanced impacts of anti-Black racism (ABR) as a specific form of racism which is experienced by Black people and people of African descent, across the world. Anti-Black racism is a specific form of racism which reinforces attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and other forms of discrimination directed towards Black people which are rooted in the legacy of enslavement and colonization.

DISCUSSION

This report updates regional council on the status of the Anti-Black Racism Plan and outlines key activities of the Anti-Black Racism Strategy from April 12, 2021-April 01, 2022, stemming from Council's priority and commitment to addressing Anti-Black Racism (ABR), in recognition and acknowledgement of the systemic implications of ABR on HRM communities, as well as within the organization.

In order to develop a comprehensive ABR plan, the ANSAIO team has focused on developing and implementing a community engagement strategy. This has included significant engagement with the African Nova Scotian, African descent communities to get their input on what a good municipal plan should include. See item #2. Based on the feedback from the community and internal consultation it is expected that a plan will be finalized and presented to regional council Q4 2022/23. Listed below are key activities that have been undertaken over the past year.

1. Anti-Black Racism Committees

ABR Steering Committee

An ABR Steering Committee was created to advise on and implement the goals of the ABR Strategy and Action Plan.

Anti-Black Racism Framework Sub-Committee

ABR Framework Sub-Committee is responsible for the development of the ABR Framework. The framework will shape ongoing ABR work across the organization.

Awareness Campaign Sub-Committee

An awareness campaign committee was created in collaboration with Corporate Communications, that will promote ABR initiatives and events across the organization. This has included materials that were circulated throughout business units that identified events and updates related to ABR work.

Administrative Order Sub-Committee

An Administrative Order committee was created to develop an administrative order that will result in the creation of an ABR Committee of Council. This Administrative Order will be known as the African Nova Scotian Advisory Committee Administrative Order.

Anti-Black Racism Corporate Training Development Sub-Committee

With the support of the Steering Committee, the ABR Corporate Training Development Committee is working to develop an HRM Anti-Black Racism corporate training. This is currently in the development stage with the intention of being completed by fall 2022.

2. **Anti-Black Racism Engagement Plan**

An ABR engagement plan was developed through collaboration including but not limited to the ABR Coordinator, ANSAIO Senior Advisor and Corporate Communications Managing Director. The engagement plan outlined effective outreach approaches utilized to raise awareness of the initiative and the development of the ABR strategy and action plan.

Internal and external engagement took place that involved information sessions with HRM employees, external engagement with stakeholders who are connected to the Black community and people of African Descent. Internal sessions comprised of six virtual sessions, began in June of 2021 and completed in July 2021. A recommendation report was shared with the Anti-Black Racism Steering Committee. A total of eight virtual sessions took place with external stakeholders/groups. Additional feedback was also shared in a report and presented to the ABR Steering Committee in August 2021.

A public engagement plan was also designed to provide opportunity to hear from HRM residents. The engagement plan was mapped out across the municipality with emphasis on connecting with the black communities across HRM. A total of eleven sessions scheduled across the municipality; held virtually as a result of ongoing pandemic and restrictions.

A session with ANS youth featured forty-six students attending Dartmouth High school; youth were identified as a target audience in this engagement plan. Sessions were led by an external facilitator. Public engagement officially began in Jan 2022 and was scheduled thru March 2022. A '*What We Heard*' report was developed based on feedback captured during each session. The facilitator's report is included as an attachment to this ABR update.

3. **George Floyd One Year Later**

A panel discussion was held in June 2021 and moderated by the ABR Coordinator deliberating the incident that claimed the life of African American George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25th, 2020. Panelists discussed the incident and its connection to Anti-Black Racism and its impact both on and in society one year later. The session was held for HRM employees and was recorded and is available on the internal intranet. The session utilized four panelists (two males and two female). The panelists included a local activist, a local Black mother, an American professional football coach, and local educator who teaches on the topic of systemic racism.

4. **ABR Grants Program**

An outline for a grant program that is intended to support/fund Anti-Black Racism work and initiatives throughout HRM is being developed. The objective of the grants program is to increase ANS community capacity to address Anti-Black Racism through grassroots projects and initiatives. Applicants must explain/demonstrate how their project will align with at least one of the identified council priorities while also ensuring that this work tackles issues related to ABR throughout Halifax Regional Municipality. Applicants must also demonstrate how the project aligns with at least one of the corporate goals around Anti-Black Racism.

5. **ABR Resource/Library**

The ABR Coordinator identified valuable materials including books, essays, movies, articles, videos, & podcasts that can be utilized by employees in their learning journey to better understand Anti-Black Racism. The materials are available through the D&I/ ANSAIO office.

6. **Anti-Black Racism sessions with HRCE for Professional Development**

The ABR Coordinator and the Community Outreach and Research Coordinator co-facilitated sessions for Millwood High & Sackville High school students and for each respective school's staff for their professional development day. The sessions were aimed to assist HRCE staff to better serve and support African Nova Scotian learners. Sessions covered topics including

microaggressions, biases, racism, white privilege, and allyship. Facilitators also provided an overview of ANSAIO.

7. **Anti-Black Racism Education Series**

The ABR education series was developed and is vital for the organization as we work towards addressing Anti-Black Racism. The ABR education series supports this initiative and provides continued learning opportunities for employees. Workshop series offered and provided an in-depth look into issues related to ABR. The desired outcome was that employees gain a better understanding of how they can be in a position of support to aid in combating Anti-Black Racism. Subject matter experts provided practical and proven lessons, suggestions and solutions that could be applied in the workplace and the community. The series began in January 2022 and continued until March 2022. The sessions were virtual using Microsoft Teams. Sessions included the following topics: Unpacking Anti-Black Racism, The History of African Nova Scotians as told by us, Black Mental Health, White Privilege & Systemic Racism/Allyship. Education and learning opportunities will be ongoing. ANSAIO staff have been receiving boundless positive feedback from employees across the organization as a result of these learning opportunities.

8. **African Nova Scotian Advisory Committee of Regional Council**

Work continues to finalize an Administrative Order focusing on engagement with and service delivery to communities of African descent; consisting of membership from across the Black communities, who will serve to advise the municipality on the impact of municipal policies, programs, and services on the Black community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of the Anti-Black Racism Plan for year one was included in the approved 2021/22 budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is imbedded in the Anti-Black Racism work. Engagement will be on-going.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1. What We Heard Report

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Tamar Brown, Senior Advisor, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO 902.476.3592

HRM ANTI-BLACK RACISM

What We Heard Report 2022

Prepared for: Halifax Regional Municipality (ANSAIO Office)

Prepared by: DeRico Symonds

Contact: www.dericosymonds.ca

Table Contents

Prepared for: Halifax Regional Municipality (ANSAIO Office)	1
Prepared by: DeRico Symonds	1
Contact: www.dericosymonds.ca	1
About the Community Engagement Consultant	3
Project Background & Statement of Work	5
Glossary of Terms.....	8
Methodology & Approach.....	9
Engagement Session Structure	10
Challenges to Engagement	11
What We Heard	14
Beechville	16
Lucasville.....	18
East Dartmouth + Cole Harbor	20
North End Halifax.....	21
Preston Township	23
Sackville	24
Upper Hammonds Plains	26
Youth	29
Conclusion & Recommendations	31
Special Acknowledgements.....	34
Appendices	35
References.....	48

About the Community Engagement Consultant

I would like to introduce myself as a focused and determined candidate to support the work of Halifax Regional Municipalities Anti-Black Racism Coordinator. I am an African Nova Scotian with familial linkage to North Preston, Beechville, Hammonds Plains and Mulgrave Park. I hold a Master of Education Degree in Counselling from Acadia University (2018) and an Undergraduate Degree in Child and Youth Study from Mount Saint Vincent University (2012). I am a natural leader who leads with an action-oriented approach by motivating and inspiring others, while carefully adhering to policy, procedures, and accountabilities.

With 11 years' experience working for HRM, and as the previous Manager of the HRM Youth Advocate and Souls Strong Programs (2016-2021), and one of the co-leads in founding the group of Black HRM employees that lead to the creation of the ABR strategy and Coordinator. I believe that I bring a wealth of knowledge, depth and understanding for the importance of this work.

I will ground this project in 3 principles: Trust, Recognition, and Reparatory Justice. There is a long-standing history of mistrust, between the Black & African Nova Scotian community and the Municipal Government. It is key that this project has someone known in the community, who has established trusted relationships with its members and can be a credible messenger for the HRM ABR work. It is important that this engagement work has a foundational recognition for the past, present, and current tireless work of the members of the Black and African Nova Scotian community. Recognition that this project is possible because of those community members and elders who paved the way and fought many fights that enable this work today. Reparatory justice is critical, as the Black and African Nova Scotian community has experienced and continues to suffer an array of inequities and injustices. This engagement should work to reaffirm trust and validate experiences from the community. This engagement can repair some harm and provide justice for the community upon its completion.

Ensuring Nguzo Saba principles are built into the framework of the engagement and the work is led by, with and for the community. With my background as a counselling therapist, I will bring a trauma informed lens and cultural understanding and provide a therapeutic milieu when hosting these difficult but necessary conversations.

The services performed will meet and or exceed the expectation outlined in the framework. I have written and presented council reports and will ensure that the proposed engagement plan will help to achieve the objectives endorsed by HRM Council. I am connected to many service providers in each community that will be engaged and will ensure the engagement is led in collaboration with the service providers and community members. I have experience creating and implementing promotional campaigns in communities across HRM and will provide strategic knowledge and advice on how to best promote the engagement sessions. Through my work as the Senior Executive Advisor to the deputy minister, with the Provincial Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives in Nova Scotia, I have developed and lead a Provincial wide engagement plan for proposed legislation and will bring that knowledge and experience to this regional engagement initiative.

I will be able to collate the information received from community members and compile a detailed report that captures, honors, and respects the community voices that were engaged. As a Manager with HRM, I have written reports for council, Parks & Recreation Director, and the Federal Government of Canada. Recently, I have written a Diversity & Inclusion report for Phoenix Youth Programs, and the Dalhousie school of Communication Sciences. I also led a large-scale virtual engagement initiative through Justice Canada and the Anti-Racism Secretariat, on the treatment that Black youth in Halifax receive from the Justice system. I am familiar with this work and have a depth of experience in report writing and will bring this service to this engagement process.

I work closely with the Peoples Counselling Clinic and the team of Black Cultural Assessors as an Impact Race and Cultural Assessor. Through the assessments it is important to have a in depth knowledge and understanding of the historical trauma and current realities, faced by the Black and African Nova Scotian communities. It is also important to note that I am an 8th generation African Nova Scotian male, I was born and raised in the Pubs (Bayer's Westwood) public housing community. I too share similar adverse experiences with Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax Regional Police, and their services.

In conclusion, I believe I am bringing the necessary understanding of Anti-Black Racism through lived experience as an 8th generation African Nova Scotian male, a former Manager with HRM and a career of community experience tackling racial injustice, racism, and discrimination.

Project Background & Statement of Work

Facilitator Statement of Work - Halifax Regional Municipality

The Deliverables

Work closely with the Anti-Black Racism (ABR) Program Coordinator to design and implement the Public Engagement activities as outlined in the attached proposed Public Engagement Plan by:

Ensuring that the proposed engagement plan will help achieve the objectives of the council endorsed Framework for an anti-racism strategy and action plan.

Reviewing the list of potential partners and target audience and identify potential gaps and oversight.

Implementing, in partnership with the ABR Program Coordinator, adequate public promotion to bring awareness to the project and invite community members to participate in the engagement sessions. Final approval of all promotions remains with the office of diversity & inclusion/ANSAIO.

Identifying resources and support required for successful public engagement.

Recruiting small group facilitators for in person and online engagement sessions.

Leading and facilitating all community engagement sessions.

Provide a detailed report and analysis of all engagement sessions which will help inform the areas of focus, accompanying action plan and outcomes.

Present the engagement report and analysis in the form of a “what we heard report”, by April 15, 2022.

Provide the engagement report and analysis in the form of a “what we heard report”, to the community and HRM staff, under the guidance and support of the ABR Program Coordinator.

Provide support, if required, in the drafting of the final council report.

Project Background

The Goal of this engagement process will be to allow community members to have a voice in the development of the strategy and action plan – and encourage ownership and participation in its delivery. Community input will help shape the areas of focus for the strategy as well as inform accompanying actions.

Halifax Regional Municipality requested quote from an experienced community facilitator from the African Nova Scotian Community. The facilitator will help lead the Public Engagement phase of the development of a municipal Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan (see the Engagement Plan in the appendix).

Objectives/Critical Path

Facilitated sessions to begin January 2022 and to be completed by the end of February 2022.
Summary reports delivered by the end of March 2022

Requirements

Sessions to be held with accessibility to be top of mind. HRM to arrange accessible facilities, sign language interpretation, CART, accessible parking, on transit bus route.

Constraints

Sessions must start and end on time due to the booking times of Access A Bus for participants. No individual exercises for participants due to a likelihood of persons present who may have low literacy, learning disabilities or low vision. All notes and flipcharts to be given to HRM at the close of the project.

Project Framework

This work will be steered by a 3-principled approach that will ground Trust, Recognition, and Reparatory Justice. There is a long-standing history of mistrust, between the Black and African Nova Scotian community and the Municipal Government of Halifax. It is key that this project has someone known in the community, who has established trusted relationships with its members and can be a credible messenger for the HRM ABR work.

It is important that this engagement work has a foundational recognition for the past, present, and current tireless work of the members of the Black and African Nova Scotian community.

Recognition that this project is possible because of those community members and elders who paved the way and fought many fights that enable this work today. Reparatory justice is critical, as the Black and African Nova Scotian community has experienced and continues to suffer an array of inequities

and injustices. This engagement should work to reaffirm trust and validate experiences by the community. This engagement can guide the municipality as it works to address anti-Black racism.

Thirteen sessions of a maximum of two hours each. Flip charting or scribing of ideas and comments of participants.

Project Objectives

Two tools (summaries) resulting from community engagement sessions to join with other tools to assist in the preparation of an Anti-Black Racism strategy and to provide community suggestions to the business units on possible future initiatives.

Detailed Scope of Services

Facilitation skills with emphasis on facilitation in the African Nova Scotian Community. Written summary reports.

Project Management

Project to be managed by the Anti-Black Racism Coordinator, ANSAIO with support from the ANSAIO Community Engagement Coordinator. The ABR Coordinator and/or designate will participate in all facilitated session.

The commitment to addressing Anti-Black Racism requires many things to be considered and engaging with the Black and African Nova Scotian community will be a reoccurring theme throughout the entire process. Ownership from community is essential to the success of this work and these initiatives. What is captured from the community throughout this work will identify key pillars and priorities that will be targeted in the ABR strategy and action plan.

Glossary of Terms

1. **“HRM”** – Halifax Regional Municipality.
2. **“CEC”** – Community Engagement Consultant (DeRico Symonds)
3. **ANSAIO** – African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office.
4. **ABR Coordinator** – Anti- Black Racism Coordinator (Russel Brooks).

Methodology & Approach

A multifaceted approach to advertising and bringing about awareness of the engagement sessions was used.

- *Drawing on existing community relationships*

Through previous engagement and community activity, the CEC used existing community relationships and knowledge to navigate and identify key organizations, and groups to contact. These organizations helped to spread the word through their community networks on the up-coming engagement sessions.

- *Community Leaders*

Throughout each Black community in HRM there are leaders in the community or those who are well known to the community members. These members in each community supported advertisement effort by sharing amongst their email networks and social media pages.

- *Social Media*

With the challenges of Covid-19 and the restrictions put in place by the provincial government of Nova Scotia. No in person sessions were permitted to happen. Social media was a very effective way of advertising and spreading awareness to the community about these sessions. The mediums used to advertise were, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

- *Halifax Municipal Councilors*

Halifax Municipal Councilors have a wide reach into their respective communities and could bolster the engagement and awareness efforts. Councilor Lindell Smith was very active and supportive of the advertisement efforts. Councilor Smith used his social media as well as his email list to spread awareness within his constituency. No other Municipal Councilors supported the advertisement efforts.

- *ANSAIO Office*

The ABR Coordinator supported by advertising to community members through the ANSAIO list serve.

Engagement Session Structure

The intent of these sessions was to gain feedback from the community in relation to the Halifax Regional Municipalities Anti-Black Racism Strategy. The CEC took a person-centered approach when engaging the community members and ensured the focused stayed on them and their needs as their concerns were being raised.

The session structure is as follow:

- CEC and the ANSAIO staff meet briefly prior to the beginning of each session. This is to ensure we have everything we need and to answer any lingering questions prior to engaging the community. As community members began to enter the virtual space, they are greeted and welcomed into the room.
- To begin each session, the ABR Coordinator starts with a land acknowledgment and an African Nova Scotian affirmation.
- CEC begins by providing a framing for the meeting, context, and the expected outcomes.
- CEC provides a short PowerPoint presentation to community members (See appendix).
- Following this presentation there is a live Q/A and discussion facilitated by CEC.
- Each session would end with closing words from ABR Coordinator and CEC encouraging community to check out www.halifax.ca/abr for further information and updates.

The primary method of feedback collection and community facilitation was Community Kitchen Table Talks. The ideal kitchen table talk would take place in the home, recreation center or space with a small intimate room. The room would ideally have a table and chairs, and community would share a meal and discuss their concerns in an informal fashion. In the absence of the in-person option, the CEC created an informal, intimate space for community members to freely share online.

The aim of kitchen table conversations is to enable dialogue within the community, that is informal and relaxed. Although virtual, this method was effective in creating an informal setting for community members to feel comfortable, relaxed, and free to speak their mind. Kitchen table discussions aim to build and deepen a sense of community and explore the range of opinions on an issue. It fosters community organizing and can stimulate and nurture public debate.

Following the February 3rd engagement session with the Beechville community, members raised the fact that we did not have any grief counsellors online to support the community. The conversations for community members are very challenging and often can be traumatizing or triggering. The community asked HRM to provide post engagement support for any community members who may be experiencing any distress caused by the discussions.

The ABR Coordinator and the CEC brought on Danita Williams. Danita is a certified counselling therapist. Danita Williams is an African Nova Scotian woman with linkages to many historic African Nova Scotian communities in HRM. She is a guidance counsellor with HRCE, an impact race and cultural assessor, as well as a private practitioner. Danita attended every session following February 3rd, she would listen to the conversation and stay online post session without any HRM staff or the CEC present.

Challenges to Engagement

Engagement with the Black communities in HRM presented numerous challenges for the CEC. Many of the challenges that presented themselves were beyond the control of the facilitator and the ANSAIO office. There are no single sources incidents that have led to engagement challenges, however, collectively each minor challenge compounded and created difficult barriers to engagement.

- *Lack of Support From HRM*

Post George Floyd, and the global Black Lives Matter movement, support for the liberation and elevation of Black people began to dwindle. The Halifax Regional Municipality is one of the largest employers in the city of Halifax and they also have enormous reach into many of our communities. HRM has a wide sphere of influence and capability to bolster support and awareness for any initiative, project, or outreach effort should they choose to do so.

The ANSAIO office through the Managing Director and the ABR Coordinator, provided immense support in the creation and implementation of the engagement initiative. However, HRM as a municipal government did not wholistically support the outreach, and advertisement efforts. Social media is a medium that has been proven to reach many people across the world, as well as increased awareness and outreach efforts locally. The social media accounts of HRM did not provide any supportive messages and did not provide any form of advertisement or awareness messaging.

The elected municipal councilors would have been a major support if collectively, they supported the engagement process. Municipal councilors are attached to their respective districts and have tremendous reach and influence from their constituents. The only municipal councilor to reach out to inquire and support the efforts was councilor Lindell Smith. Lindell was very supportive in assisting in advertisement and setting up sessions in district 8. It is important to note that Councilor Lindell Smith is one of two African Nova Scotian councilors of the total 16 municipal councilors in HRM.

Collectively, HRM did not show public support for this process and or aid in the awareness and outreach of the initiative. Individually, the ANSAIO office was very supportive, however, the onus should not continuously fall with ANSAIO simply because the nature of the work is with Black communities.

The CEC believes that HRM should have and could have supported this initiative much better than they have. A few suggestions could be, HRM provides advertisement and messaging through their social media accounts, HRM municipal councilors advertise and attend sessions, and support shown from government officials at the leadership level such as business unit directors, CAO, and the mayor. The recommended level of support is the bare minimum.

- ***COVID-19***

The original timelines for the engagement process were September to December 2021. During this time the public health restrictions in Nova Scotia allowed for in person gatherings, which would have increased the amount of participation in the Black communities. The CEC and the ABR Coordinator were planning sessions in person to take place at recreation centers and community facilities. These sessions would have food and refreshments for community members, and likely would have seen an increase in numbers and participation. For reasons unknown to the CEC, the timelines were moved to January-April 2022. During the adjusted timelines, public health restrictions no longer allowed for in person gatherings.

Due to the timeline adjustment, and the restriction of gatherings, this posed challenges for community buy in and engagement. By this time, the community has been under lock down and public restrictions for nearly two years. In many cases, people were engaging through virtual platforms, and working and attending classes through virtual means. To ask community members to take on additional screen time presented challenges and likely resulted in screen fatigue for members. After working or attending classes daily on screen, and then being asked to attend another online session may have deterred communities away from registering.

- ***Historical Mistrust***

African Nova Scotians in HRM have a long history of racism, and discriminatory practices when it comes to interactions with the municipal government.

For more than 200 years, many African Nova Scotians have been living on land passed down by their ancestors without clear land title. Without clear title, they can't get a mortgage, bequeath, or sell their land, or access housing grants. Many residents in the community have been living on their property for generations, but do not have clear title to their land. This is a legacy of enslavement and broken promises. Currently folks in North Preston do not have adequate access to grocery stores, pharmacies, and amenities other communities closer to the city center enjoy. They are also still confronting land ownership disputes, environmental racism, and greenspace expropriation challenges. These challenges are a legacy of the displacement and deliberate placement of Black people on the outskirts of the city center.

One of the most known government interactions with the Black community is the demolition of the Africville community. Africville was an African Nova Scotian community founded in the mid-19th century, the community was in the North end of Halifax just under the Mackay Bridge. The city of

Halifax demolished the once-prosperous seaside community in the 1960s in what many said was an act of racism (Tattrie, J. 2014, January 27). The Africville residents' homes were demolished throughout the night, and residents went from once owning their homes to now living in public housing communities scattered throughout Halifax (Tattrie, J. 2014, January 27). Former residents and descendants of the Africville community still to this day have not psychologically or financially recovered from such a loss.

Descendants of Africville were not able to benefit from the economic advantages of owning a property on prime real estate in the city of Halifax. This demolition has caused harm, mistrust, and generations of financial wealth loss for the descendants.

The Dr. Scott Wortley report commissioned by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission in 2019 further highlights racist and discriminatory actions by the municipal government. This report provides scathing statistics on the treatment and interaction between police and the Halifax Black community. The report states that Black people in HRM are 6 times more likely to be stopped and checked by police (Wortley, S. 2019, p113)

The incidents previously mentioned and more, have led to the erosion of trust in the municipal government and presented challenges when engaging members of the Black community. During this engagement process, many residents were optimistic that the government will follow through on what they said they will do for the Black communities.

What We Heard

The graph shows the external communities that were engaged and the amount participants that attended each session. The CEC does not have access to internal HRM employees, and therefore was not able to establish connection to set up any sessions. In the engagement plan, the following groups were meant to be engaged: RVEC, ANS Racially Visible Women's Network, and Halifax Association of Black Firefighters. These groups have not been formally engaged in the ABR engagement process. It is possible to ensure their feedback is counted, the ABR Coordinator could arrange sessions with those internal HRM groups.

Session	Date/Time	Number of participants
Halifax North/Central	January 19 th	6
Spryfield	January 24 th	1
Dartmouth North	January 27 th	0
Dartmouth East/Cole Harbor	February 1 st	9
Beechville	February 3 rd	12
Lucasville	February 7 th	10
Upper Hammonds Plains	February 10 th	8
Preston Township	February 23 rd	9
Sackville	February 17 th & March 10 th	9
Youth	March 7 th	45
Total Participants		109

It was difficult for the community to comment specifically about their feelings toward the ABR framework when many of their concerns have gone unaddressed for years. If the community felt as though their concerns were addressed, the focus could simply be on the ABR work that HRM is doing. However, the community focus became on the issues in their community and the concerns they have with HRM.

Through engagement and consultation, many commonalities and themes amongst the Black communities have emerged.

- *Skepticism*

The communities were interested in the direction that HRM is taking regarding Anti-Black racism and the ABR strategy work. However, the most consistent theme is that due to current and historical realities the community does not believe that HRM will do what they said they are going to do. Many communities reported that they have been fighting with HRM for basic services for decades.

- *Community Signage*

The communities raised concerns that without the proper signage nobody will know that they are in a historic Black community. It was important for this to be addressed so that those visiting would be able to have the proper knowledge and history, and that the community recognition would be present. The communities want a sign that reference the name of their community, and a phrase that represents the community and its history.

- ***Accountability***

The community is generally supportive that this work is happening, however, members of the Black community would like to know how HRM will be held accountable if this work does not happen? Many members expressed angst as they are unsure how this would be any different from their previous experiences. With decades of unfulfilled promises, it was challenging for the community to fully support this work as they do not want to add another thing to their list of unfulfilled promises.

- ***Policy Development***

The community would like to see the policy development process with HRM change. The communities are concerned that HRM develops the policy and then consults with the community. The community is hoping to be involved in the development of policies that will affect them. They would like to be involved from the beginning to ensure that their ideas and needs are considered and prioritized.

- ***Representation***

It is very noticeable to the communities that there are not many Black people working for HRM in leadership roles, or roles with positional authority. It is important to members of the community that HRM employees and leadership reflect the diverse communities they serve.

- ***Land Usage & Duty to Consult***

The communities want to be consulted when property and land development will take place. The Black communities have been losing their land, and community identity to large developers who have been putting buildings in or around their communities without consultation.

The communities would like a “duty to consult” policy that is imbedded in HRM policy as well as the municipal charter. The communities feel as though for too long development has been happening in historic Black communities with no level of accountability, care, or recognition for the community. A duty to consult would prioritize the needs of the community and ensure that the community is informed.

----On the following pages you will read comments and pertinent dialogue that are specific to each community that were engaged by the CEC----

Beechville

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
February 3 rd	12

- *All departments and Business Units Involved*

It is important that all business units are involved in the ABR strategy. The community did not want to see all this work fall to the ANSAIO office. The community wants to see a wholistic solution to these issues and more than just the ANSAIO office and Black staff working on issues for the Black community.

The bigger vision for the community is that all staff and all business units in HRM feel a sense of responsibility and obligation to work together to support and address the concerns of the Black community. The community explained that it should not always be on the backs of Black people to address the issues that are affecting the Black communities.

“The real work is in those business units who do not feel responsibility to the black community”

- *Systems Change + Cultural Shift*

The community was happy to see Afrocentric Principles being embedded within the work. However, it was felt that these principles being embedded into a westernized Eurocentric system diluted the power of the principles. The community talked about changing the culture of HRM and having these principles be embedded across all departments and all work that happens within HRM. To truly have lasting change, HRM needs to work on changing the culture within the corporation and move from Eurocentricity to Afrocentricity.

- *Accountability*

The community discussed at length about having this work embedded into the HRM Charter. Members on this call have been doing this work for decades and feel that true change and accountability will happen when things are formally moved into the HRM Charter. This could be another mechanism to ensure accountability for the Black community. The Beechville community is concerned about developers and the lack of accountability, recognition, or consultation with the community prior to development happening.

- ***Duty to Consult***

Following the discussion regarding the HRM Charter, Beechville discussed the concept of “Duty to Consult”. African Nova Scotians being a distinct people of the Province of Nova Scotia, Beechville felt it to be appropriate that HRM enacts a duty to consult mechanism for the Black community. This would be applied at the ideology or discovery phase of developments, initiatives, or ideas are being proposed that could impact the Black communities. HRM would need to consult with representatives of the Black community to ensure the input and voices of its members are considered and included.

- ***Recognition***

Beechville is a historic African Nova Scotian community in HRM. The Beechville community would like to see proper signage and recognition of their community. An elder in the community talked about the segregated schooling experience she had. Black children went to what was called “Beechville School” and white children went to Lake Side Elementary. When segregation ended and the schools became integrated, both schools were demolished, and a new school was created called Beechville Lakeside Consolidated. The newest iteration of this school today is called Ridge Cliff Middle School. The community felt that this school should be named after the historic Black community as it is within the community boundaries. The community felt that this is harmful to their communal identity and stated that all other schools in the area are named after the area but not when it comes to the Beechville community.

“A duty to consult would bind HRM and our communities, they would need to consult with our communities, and it would give HRM better information”

- ***Trauma and Continuous Engagement***

The community is happy to be engaged and have a voice in what is happening. However, where the disappointment lies is when previous recommendations from the community have not been acted upon. It was traumatic for the community to relive their experiences without the guarantee of action and accountability. The community wants to be engaged but does not want lip service and needs their recommendations to be taken seriously and acted upon. They felt that being continuously engaged with no action by HRM is traumatizing.

Lucasville

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
February 7 th	10

- *More Support for Lucasville*

It was important to the community that they receive more support from HRM as well as other Black communities. Lucasville is a small Black community and stated that they need more backing and support. Community members on the call were very emotional discussing these issues as some folks have been fighting for decades for things taken for granted in other communities like adequate bus services. The community feels as though generally they are forgotten about and demand more service, attention, and support from HRM. The community recognizes that development has impeded upon the community, and the fear is that if nobody is supporting Lucasville and speaking up that the historical Black community will be swallowed up amongst the surrounding developments.

The community stated that HRM often talks about supporting the youth. In the Lucasville community, they run a cultural enrichment program and have been running this program for years at no cost. Recently, HRM has sent a bill for \$2,500 and the community is unsure as to why they are now receiving a bill. A community member supports cultural enrichment programs across HRM, and other communities are not receiving any bills.

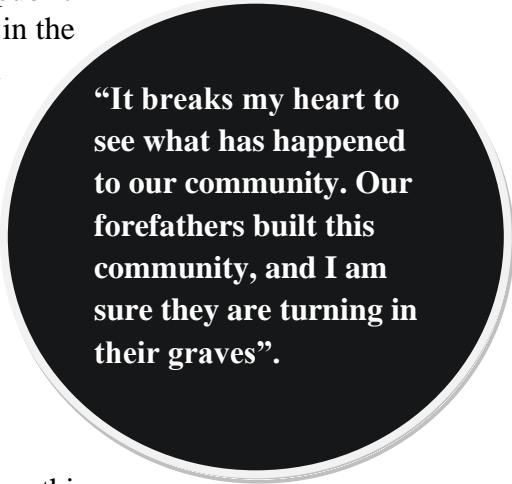
We are a small community and if we don't speak up, we are going to be gone like the other ANS communities.

- *Community Identity*

Being a small community, Lucasville feels as though they need a stronger voice, support and must continuously keep the pressure on. The community mentioned that the sanctity of their community is gone, there is constant development around the community, trucks driving through but little to no development for the Lucasville community itself. Lucasville is a historic Black community, with the gentrification and influx of white residents, Black folks in the community report that there are many overtly racist people residing in the neighbourhood.

- ***Basic Services***

The Lucasville community does not have a Metro Transit bus that runs through Lucasville Road. The community members stated that there is a stop at either end of the road, but the bus does not drive through. The community has also been told that they cannot receive any public housing units, and they do not have any sidewalks. The recreation centre in the community is also underutilized, there is not bus service to the recreation centre as well as no HRM staff supporting the management of the building. The community asks, “*How can we put services in place when we don’t have bus services?*” this discussion also led to summer recreation programming and how it is impossible to run summer camps without a proper bus service. It is unsafe to walk children down the side of the road without sidewalks, and it is impossible to for youth venture outside of the community without a bus stop on the street.



“It breaks my heart to see what has happened to our community. Our forefathers built this community, and I am sure they are turning in their graves”.

- ***Historical Racism***

The community members in Lucasville are tired. They mentioned that everything they have in their community, they had to fight tooth and nail just to get it. They feel as though the community should not have to fight for everything, especially basic services. Historically, the people in Lucasville used the land to bury their dead. They were not able to bury their dead beside the church in the community because it was a “white church”. The Black people had to bury their dead in the back of the church, and when that became full, they then had to bury their dead on the dirt road. The community raised this to refer to how long they have been fighting and to display the overt racism experienced.

East Dartmouth + Cole Harbor

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
February 1 st	9

- ***Policy Development***

The community is concerned about policy development in HRM. The community wants to see Black people consulted at the original conversations that have to do with policy that can affect the Black community. The community is concerned that policies are being developed and then the community is consulted and deem that to be a flaw from the beginning.

The community spoke about the lack of representation at managerial and executive levels in HRM. The community feels that without a new approach to policy development and or a change in HRM leadership, the issues for the Black community will not change. The community feels that those with positional authority to make decisions and develop policy in HRM, generally do not care about the needs of the Black community in HRM.

“Policies are developed in boardrooms that often do not include Black people”

The community feels that Black people are always on the wrong side of the policy.

- ***Employment***

The community felt that HRM does not have adequate representation of Black people employed in leadership roles. The community feels that the only way they can get into roles is through designated positions. The community mentioned that HRM expects its Black employees to be DEI experts or tackle racial issues no matter the role they are in and simply because they are Black.

North End Halifax

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
January 19 th	8
March 16 th	Cancelled due to no registrants

The original session scheduled on January 19th was not representative of the Black community in the North End of Halifax. Although, not fully representative of the Black community, members who were on the call that were of African descent did provide valuable feedback that is reflected in the report.

To seek more representation from the Black community, the outreach efforts were increased, and a second session was scheduled. This session was cancelled, no community members from the Black community in North End Halifax registered for the sessions.

- ***More recognition and visual representation of Black people in HRM rec spaces.***

The community expressed the need to see themselves reflected across all recreation centres. It was clear that the lack of representation amongst recreation centres was important to the community. The community felt that they should feel and be represented not only in the staff make up but also aesthetically through the art, and photos that line the walls in recreation centres.

- ***Diversity in leadership roles***

The Halifax Regional Municipality is one of the largest employers in the city. The community members expressed the need to have more diversity amongst the senior ranks in HRM. It was mentioned that HRM must be representative of the communities they serve. It was integral that HRM begin to diversify its ranks and have more representation in leadership roles. “HRM does not have an issue with attracting Black employees, their issue is keeping them there”

- ***Reporting and updates on ABR to the public should be more frequent***

The community would like to see updates on the progress more frequently, rather than waiting for annual reports to come out through HRM council. It is important that these updates come within a timely and consistent manner, as well as delivered in a variety of ways. It was recommended that these updates are made bi-annually or quarterly. Ways in which community would like to see these delivered are fliers, social media updates and virtual and in person town halls.

- ***Harassment (discrimination) complaints should be investigated by people who are culturally competent, also having supports in place to support the individual who filed the complaint.***

The community felt that it is critical that any harassment complaints that are filed by a Black HRM employee should be completed by someone who is culturally competent and representative of the Black community. The community felt that a white person cannot accurately and adequately investigate a claim of racism, and discrimination.

Community did not think it was culturally appropriate that white people are the ones leading the investigations into complaints on racism and discrimination. The community felt that after the complaint is filed there needs to be competent, and culturally representative support provided.

- ***Trust & Accountability***

The notion of accountability was important during this session. Community members referenced the ABR work and strategy and wondered how ANSAIO/HRM will be accountable to the people and who will hold the municipal government accountable to their commitments. The community wants to see a varying degree of accountability and transparency of this work. The community does not trust the government and wants to ensure the commitments made will be honored and followed through.

- ***Supports for those reintegrating into community after being incarcerated, especially those with mental health issues.***

Not enough support from the Municipal government is provided to Black people who are reintegrating into community from incarceration. The community is aware of some of the efforts but talked about things such as but not limited to community navigators dedicated specifically to Black folks, job training opportunities, and mental health support from HRM.

Preston Township

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
February 23 rd	9

Many questions were asked in the beginning of the session. The following questions were initial questions the community had: *Are you aware of any other anti-racism work or reports that exist? Did you know that the department of education completed an anti-racism module? What historic documents are in play? What power do you or the ABR Coordinator have to ensure there is accountability? What are the timelines?*

- ***Race-Based Data Collection***

The community raised the concern that HRM does not collect race-based or demographic data. This was important for the Preston Township community,

- ***Land Use and Development***

The Preston Township was concerned about the government continuing to encroach onto their land. The community spoke about the land title concern where historically, Jamaican Maroons and Black Loyalists were promised and provided less land than promised, but never provided title to the land given. This created much concern for community members. One member spoke of being a 9th generation African Nova Scotian, and his family raising 17 children on the property.

The community raised concerns about rumors they have been hearing about a new highway that is slated to run through North Preston.

The community feels that they are not being heard and that the entire township must band together to push back against HRM and the developments on heir land. The community feels that they should be able to use Lake Eagle, however they have been hearing rumors that this lake will soon become a provincial lake. This did not sit well with members as they have been prohibited from using this lake for decades. Community mentioned that this rumor came from their municipal councilor for the area.

The community feels very strongly that these decisions should not be made without consultation from the community. The community wants to have agency in the decisions that are going to affect their community and future generations. They feel that policy changes need to take effect to enact a duty to consult when these decisions are being made.

They are making decisions about us without including us.

Sackville

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
February 17 th	7
March 10 th (In-Person)	2

The session on March 10th was in person at the Sackville Sports Stadium. This meeting was facilitated by the CEC and the ABR Coordinator. The meeting consisted of two community members who work in the HRCE school system in the area. Community member feedback for both sessions is captured below.

- ***Being Black in Sackville***

Members of the Black community discussed the fact that for them they feel it is different being black and living in Sackville. There are not many Black people in the community and no recognition of any Black presence in the area. It was mentioned that there is a growing Black presence in the community and that was celebrated and appreciated. The community discussed the conversations they have on how they should present themselves in the community and where they can and cannot go in the Sackville area because it is racist and not safe for Black people. Young Black youth in the Sackville community avoid going to certain places, or parties, this is due to the adults and parents in the community not wanting Black youth around their homes.

- ***Representation***

The young Black youth on the call felt as though they had good representation through their student support workers during their schooling. However, these supports were part-time, and they wished they were able to be around more. More representation in the schools is needed, the community referenced HRM funding support workers that are similar to the Youth Advocate Program, but the difference is that they would work specifically with the Black community and students.

The youth also spoke about being and feeling represented at African heritage month events coordinated by the city. Youth felt that these events should take place outside of African Heritage month and deliberately include more young people.

- ***Increased Exposure***

The community talked about people in Sackville not knowing about things like the Black Cultural Centre. There is an immediate need to not only increase Black representation in the schools but have more opportunities to be exposed to Black communities, African culture, and the rich African Nova Scotian history. The community suggested that Metro Transit donate buses to take children, youth, and community members to the Black cultural centre.

- ***The Role of White People***

Not all members on the call were representative of the Black community, those who were not shared their opinion and openness to learn. The members mentioned that white privilege and generational

trauma are real, important, and integral to the work that is happening. Community members discussed the topic of white privilege and stated, “I’m an old white guy who benefited from white privilege”, this recognition and admittance was important for those from the Black community on the call. The white community members continued to mention the importance of recognition, understanding and continuance to learn, reflect on history and finding a new path forward.

Upper Hammonds Plains

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
February 10 th , 2022	8

- *“What is going to be different?”*

The Upper Hammonds Plains (UHP) community was very skeptical of this process as they have not had an overly positive experience working with HRM. Below is a quote from one of the community members.

“I am looking at how is this going to be any different. 90% of the time nobody even makes those recommendations work out for our community. We are doing the same thing and how are we going to make this actionable? They are not very reliable. UHP has a terrible relationship with HRM”.

The above quote was in relation to HRM following through with the proposed ABR strategy. The community of UHP demands better for their community. The tenacity, knowledge, and passion they bring to their community is very admirable. This conversation was very emotional, and community elders in the session cried and teared up as they talked about the inaction by HRM and the way they feel they have been treated. The community has stated that they do not feel that they have had adequate representation through their elected officials, the community has been in litigation with HRM, and have had periods without clean drinking water.

“We are just tired of fighting. If you sleep for a moment HRM will do you bad.”

The community has been fighting for basic services for many years. They feel that they must continue to keep the pressure on HRM, or they will be wronged. UHP being on the outskirts of the city center, the community felt as though they do not receive the attention they deserve and feel left out.

- ***ABR Strategy & Outcomes***

The community is happy to hear that a strategy is in the works but again they are skeptical of the outcomes and process. This is due to their history of trying to work with HRM. The community states that this strategy needs to have clear outcomes, and they wonder if the community will be able to use the strategy in some way. The main question that has arisen in this regard is *“Can the community use this in some way?”*. The community raised the concern of the lens being an equity lens, rather than just an ABR lens. UHP felt that this would be more inclusive and provide opportunity for everyone to benefit.

- **Land Use and Development**

UHP being a historic Black community, they are very concerned about the disregard for their land, how it is used and the lack of care for their community. Community members referenced interactions with their local councillor and HRM staff and felt them to be very adversarial and one-sided and in favour of HRM. In 1981, a group of community members met with HRM to change the zoning in the area to general use. This zoning would allow the community to continue to evolve more mills and junkyards so that community members could continue to prosper, not knowing the future developers would take advantage of this zoning and start to develop in their community. Since 1981, there has been no representative from HRM to come back to the community to ask how this zoning was working for the community, thus it continued. The community never had the opportunity to develop due to financial concerns, systemic racism and not having the resources to expand. The current zoning structure still does not benefit the community in any way. The community is asking for a requirement for developers to consult with the community before building in their communities. The community is demanding that if developments are over a certain size, then the community must be consulted prior to development. The community feels that the general use zoning is solely benefitting developers. They feel that community members often do not have the financial capital for general use land, and developers take advantage of the opportunity to profit in the community. HRM recently sent a survey to ANS residents in the community asking their opinion on the zoning and whether the community wanted to see changes. The community of UHP is hoping HRM prioritizes this work based on the survey results they received.

“General use zoning benefits the private developer and is hurting the community”

The community suggested that non-profit organizations in the community should have the opportunity to develop the land for use in their community. The community is hoping that HRM would be open to policy and zoning changes that would benefit the community, and new policy changes will rely on HRM being open to something different.

The community stated that they have not benefitted from any development. Currently, in the UHP community, there is a new building, and it is renting for \$1800 - \$2,250 for a two-bedroom apartment. The community was never told who the developer was and suddenly, the property was being built. At the time of the consultation, the building was up for sale for \$4.5 million, this worries the community because they are unsure if this will raise property taxes in the area. There is also a lot for sale on ‘Dockview Lane’ for \$925,000 that has been pre-approved for 60 2-bedroom units.

The community has auto salvage yards alongside two residents’ homes in the community. The home that is in close vicinity to the junkyard has 5 children living there, and these children cannot go into their back yard to play and are continuously disrupted by late-night tows that come to the community to the business at all times of the night.

“Aint nobody putting a junk yard next to homes in Bedford”

- **Pockwock Falls**

The community mentions that at Pockwock Falls there is no parking and no garbage bins. On any given weekend, there are hundreds of people from all over HRM who visit Pockwock Falls. The community is tired of

cleaning up garbage and fighting for basic things on a trail that other communities are afforded automatically. They would appreciate having community personnel that they are able to receive regular updates on where things are with the requests that are made. Pockwock Falls is rich in history and is located on Kemptown Rd. In the 1800s, this road was constructed and was once part of the Old Annapolis Road which was used to get from Halifax to Annapolis Royal and connected several mills and lumber camps. The community would like to see this landmark marked as a historic place with a monument acknowledging its rich history.

- *Lack of Transit Services*

The last stop for the UHP community is in front of the white community. The last stop for a Metro Transit bus is at 2200 Hammonds Plains Road. The bus does not drive through the UHP community and is a 1-hour walk for most residents to get to the nearest bus stop. The young people in the community feel as though this is a hindrance to employment as well as interaction with other young people across HRM. They are not able to adequately access transit services for jobs and to build friendships in other communities because of the inadequate bus services. The community is asking for consultation and better access and service for their community. A trial run for Metro Transit to stop at a central place in UHP would be sufficient. The first recommendation is to recognize that Metro Transit does not enter this black community.

Youth

Meeting Dates	Number of Participants
March 7 th	45

This session was completed in person at Dartmouth High. This session was made possible through the support of Ashley “Doobie” Taylor, the African Nova Scotian Student Support Worker in the school. The Dartmouth High Students are representative of many communities such as Preston Township, North End Dartmouth, and Cole Harbor.

Black youth feel that there needs to be more representation of Black people in all areas, places, and spaces. They feel as though there are not enough people that look like them and they do not see enough representation. They feel as though they are forced to exist in majority white spaces. They feel as though they need white people who are not scared of Black people and have more training and understanding of Black history. There needs to be more events, celebrations, and opportunities to learn about Black people and their contributions. White people need to attend these celebrations and learnings.

Youth feel that they need more access to support in the communities that they live in, eliminating the need for long distance travel to simply access support, services, and activities. The supports that are being accessed are not reflective of the community. Things such as guidance counselors, social workers, youth workers, should look like the youth or at least be from the communities they are serving. Young people would also like to see designated positions for Black youth, this would help to increase representation and career path aspirations.

The youth stated that they are reluctant to reach out for support for many reasons. One being that the support is not reflective of them and their community, and because they are not, they feel as though white people view them as a burden when they seek support.

A very important point raised by the youth was to ensure we have more support for Black parents, especially the younger parents. Youth feel that more support is needed to help navigate the education system and as well provide the best support possible for their children.

- ***The Education System***

Black youth would like to see the curriculum change. The current curriculum is not reflective of the current and historical realities Black people face. The youth feel that they are learning under a Eurocentric framework and do not have much opportunity to learn about their culture and Afrocentricity. They feel as though the schools need more than just an African Nova Scotian Student support Worker due to the increasing need for support and services amongst Black students. Black students feel that the acknowledgment and celebration of Black people must transcend the month of February.

Youth are interested in more specified training programs and apprenticeship being built directly into the curriculum. This would enable youth to have a jumpstart in their career path and training, upon finishing high school the system would ensure youth better positioned to enter the work force or

continue their education. They also want the curriculum to support them in learning about the varying levels of government, what they do and how they function. Youth are interested in becoming more civically engaged and having a better understanding of how their governments function.

- *Law Enforcement*

The youth talked about law enforcement and the need for more training. Specifically, the youth wanted law enforcement to have more training on safe ways to engage with Black youth. They also spoke about law enforcement treating them as human first and not a Black criminal.

Conclusion & Recommendations

It is clear through this engagement process that HRM has a lot of work to do with the Black community to rebuild trust and support. The recommendations below are based upon the community engagement feedback as well as my experience in community and knowledge of working for HRM.

The CEC has provided a detailed list of recommendations below.

- ***Accountability***

There have been many instances in recent history that the Black community in HRM has made specific demands of HRM. It appears that there is no authority or level of accountability when work does not happen. It is important for ongoing community relations, and transparency that HRM staff are held accountable when commitments and tasks are not completed.

HRM much have specific policies that will hold those in leadership roles accountable when issues of Anti-Black racism surface. It is important for leadership to demonstrate action when these issues are brought forward.

Policy

Specific policies must be developed to support issues of anti-black racism. Currently, HRM only has a harassment policy. There is a stark difference between harassment and racism, and I believe it to be of critical importance that a distinction is made and a new policy is developed that specifically speaks to anti-black racism. This policy could be created in collaboration with the ABR coordinator and the ANSAIO office.

Culture Shift

Internally, HRM is riddled with white supremacy. When one hears this term, they may think of the “KKK”, that is not the reference I am asserting. Most employees that work for HRM are those of European descent. Within the culture of HRM, “cis-straight and white” are seen as the standard and “norm”. Policies, procedures, and practices internal to HRM are based on the ideals of cis-straight white people with the implicit and explicit exclusion of anyone else.

This exclusion in many cases may not have been intentional. However, when individuals from diverse backgrounds are not included into the policy making, the chances of those from diverse backgrounds being excluded increases exponentially. The culture in HRM is toxic for Black people and needs to be taken seriously and corrected expeditiously.

As mentioned in community engagement sessions, HRM does not have an issue attracting Black employees, the issue is retaining them. It is critical that HRM address this issue and move to change

the culture of the organization. Changing policy and shifting culture within the corporation has the potential to impact those who feel excluded and create sustained change.

Interview past HRM employees

There have been some exceptional Black employees who have left HRM. All of which have made public, and private claims of racism and discrimination that they have experienced at HRM. These employees have left HRM and have become CEO's, experts and leaders in their fields, senior officials in governments, business and industry leaders and more. During their time at HRM, these employees have had negative experiences and were not able to realize their full potential under an oppressive system.

I believe it would be highly beneficial for HRM to speak with past employees. I would only recommend this if HRM has the necessary anti-black racism strategy in place, the framework to support these previous employees should they require mental health support post conversation, and the sincere willingness to move the culture of municipal government forward in positive direction. Previous Black employees must not be engaged for entertainment, but for a serious commitment of the eradication of anti-black racism.

- ***EFAP Supports for Black Employees***

It is important that Black employees can speak to someone who would understand their experience. The EFAP support should be able to provide proper support for Black employees, and the service be able to appropriately address and support the concerns. An EFAP program is meant to be in place to provide support and be inclusive to all employees in HRM. If the current EFAP program in place is not able to meet and support the needs of Black HRM employees, then the service must be re-evaluated.

- ***Dedicated Complaints Process***

When Black employees in experience Anti-Black racism, it is important that the individual they are speaking to have knowledge and understanding of the issue. It is recommended that HRM evaluate its complaints mechanisms for Black employees, and if the service is not available internal to HRM than the service be supplemented externally.

- ***Mandatory Training***

It is recommended that HRM adopt training and education on Anti-Black Racism into their corporate training calendar. It is important that HRM employees have a baseline understanding and knowledge of ABR and its impacts. This training and education would be mandatory for all internal employees and be included in the onboarding process for new employees. I believe it to be imperative that anti-black racism training become a mandatory occurrence for all new and existing employees. It is important to create a baseline of knowledge and understanding of these issues for the corporation

- *Duty to Consult*

The Black communities in HRM are concerned about the lack of consultation when property developers come into their community and begin to build and gentrify their communities. It is highly recommended that HRM institute into the municipal charter that historic Black communities must be consulted prior to any commercial or residential developments happen.

- *Adequately Resource the ANSAIO Office*

The ANSAIO office was created out of the Africville apology. Currently, this office does not have the proper structure to adequately fulfil the growing responsibilities. It is recommended that the ANSAIO office be elevated to become a fully operational business unit with an adequate budget, staffing, and resources to properly perform their duties. The office currently does an exceptional job, however, as ABR becomes more prevalent and the knowledge base increases, ANSAIO must be properly equipped.

Adequate resources may include but not limited to:

- An operating budget comparable to other business units in HRM.
- Creation of a business unit director position and elevating the ABR Coordinator.
- More ANSAIO personnel dedicated to outreach and community engagement.

----- **END OF REPORT** -----

Special Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Russel Brooks, the Anti-Black Racism Coordinator for his dedication and support throughout the engagement process. Russel was willing to be amenable to the changing schedule at a moments notice, as well as dedicate any amount of time required to support me with this project. It is important that Russel Brooks receives the required support he needs to fulfil such a monumental workload. As you have read throughout this report, many Black employees have left HRM, and it is important that this report be acknowledged and acted upon with careful consideration.

I would also like to thank Tracey Jones-Grant for her leadership, guidance, and support during the beginning of the project. The ANSAIO office was a major support in making this processes a success.

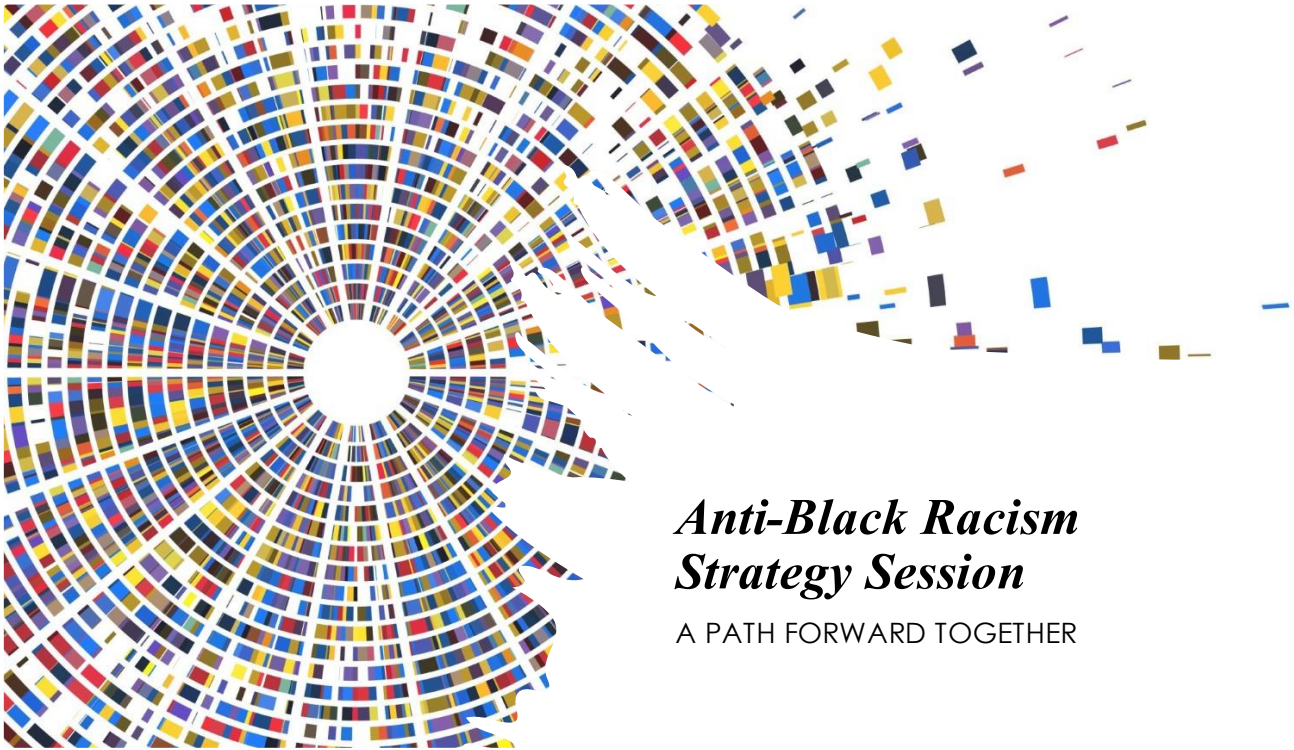
I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Black communities for continuing to show up and participate in the engagement process. It is the heart of the community that continues to push the status quo for change. Without the community this process would not be possible. The community deserves all of the recognition and praise for the recommendations and information provided in this report.

Appendices

Appendix A: Engagement Posters



Appendix B : ABR Engagement PPT Slides



What is the ANSAIO Office?



Provides leadership, strategic direction, policy advice and expertise on matters concerning the ANS community to all parts of the organization



Strengthens the delivery of municipal services to ANS Communities



Guides HRM's engagement with the ANS community

- In the fall of 2019, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) asked for the development of an Anti-Black Racism Working Group, supported by the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), to identify recommendations to help create a safer and more inclusive workplace.
- In early 2020, the Working Group provided its recommendation report to the CAO. The CAO then engaged with the Working Group to review its recommendations and determine the path forward
- In mid-2020, as the global health pandemic intersected with the Black Lives Matter movement, Regional Council asked for the development of an anti-Black racism action plan in support of the Proclamation of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024.



Background



What is Anti-Black Racism?

- Anti-Black racism encompasses perennial prejudice, discriminatory attitudes, negative beliefs, stereotyping and other forms of discrimination, overt or covert, directed at people of African ancestry all around the world.
- This form of racism is uniquely rooted in the history of enslavement and colonization.

What is Anti-Black Racism?

In Halifax Regional Municipality, the impacts of anti-Black racism have been brought to light in instances of negative interactions with communities of African descent including but not limited to:

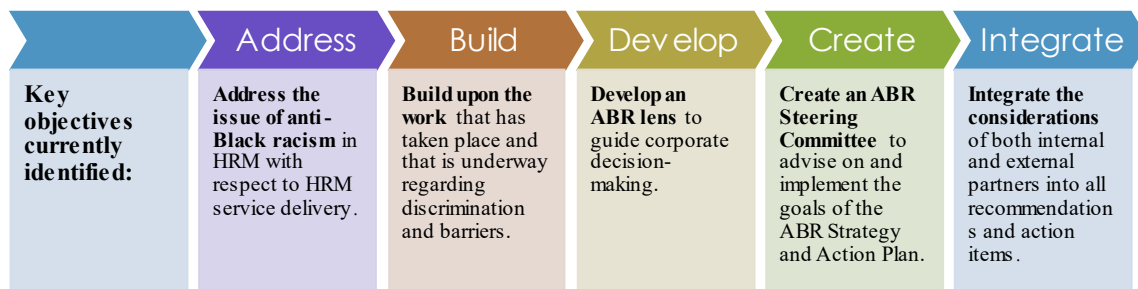
The relocation of the community of Africville

A variety of human rights complaints and most recently, the Wortley report on Street Checks.

HRM is taking tangible steps to systemically address anti-Black racism internally for the employees and externally for the citizens they serve.

6

Anti-Black Racism Strategy



7

Key Components of the ABR Framework

This Framework serves as roadmap for the development of the municipality's Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan. As a foundational document, it provides an outline for the required components and supporting work required to create an ABR Strategy and Action Plan, including the critical role of engaging stakeholders to inform next steps.

Background: The Strategy must acknowledge the history and reality of people of African descent and connect the experience of anti-Black racism to the legacies of enslavement and colonization

Key Considerations: Acknowledgment the dynamic relationship of colonial settlers and indigenous people and how that continues to shape race relations
 o History of migration of black people in the HRM
 o Demographic analysis
 o Legacy of enslavement and colonization
 o Manifestations of anti-Black racism
 o History of relationship between people of African descent and HRM.

Purpose/Vision and Principles: (1) Clear purpose guided by Afrocentric principles (2) Set a vision statement with specific goals (3) Nguzo Saba guiding Principles
 o Two overarching themes of Sankofa and Ubuntu (discussed above)

Nguzo Saba Principles

Umoja (Unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani (Faith): To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.



Anti-Black Racism Strategy

This engagement process will allow community members to have a voice in the development of the strategy and action plan – and encourage ownership and participation in its delivery. Community input will help shape the areas of focus for the strategy as well as inform accompanying actions.

There are several ways we are gathering feedback:

- (1) In person sessions
- (2) By email to ANSAIO@halifax.ca

For further information on the AntiBlack Racism Strategy and action plan please visit:
www.Halifax.ca/abr



What are your thoughts?

- Based on the summary of the strategy, please share your feedback and thoughts.
- What are we missing?
- What needs to be included?

Appendix C: ABR Engagement Youth PPT.



Introduction + Framing



RUSSEL + AJ
INTRODUCTION.



WHY ARE WE HERE?

What is the ANSAIO Office?



Provides leadership, strategic direction, policy advice and expertise on matters concerning the ANS community to all parts of the organization



Strengthens the delivery of municipal services to ANS Communities



Guides HRM's engagement with the ANS community

What is an Anti-Black Racism Strategy?

A strategy is a road map that will specifically demonstrate how HRM will achieve the goals within the Anti-Black Racism work.

This strategy will be specifically focused on "Anti-Black Racism"

How will this impact you?

- This strategy will directly impact you.
- The voices of young people in this work is key to being successful.
- You are the future + the right now.



What is Anti-Black Racism?

Anti-Black racism encompasses perennial prejudice, discriminatory attitudes, negative beliefs, stereotyping and other forms of discrimination, overt or covert, directed at people of African ancestry all around the world.

This form of racism is uniquely rooted in the history of enslavement and colonization.

What is Anti-Black Racism?

In Halifax Regional Municipality, the impacts of anti-Black racism have been brought to light in instances of negative interactions with communities of African descent including but not limited to:

The relocation of the community of Africville

A variety of human rights complaints and most recently, the Wortley report on Street Checks.

HRM is taking tangible steps to systemically address anti-Black racism internally for the employees and externally for the citizens they serve.

7

What are Municipal Government Services?

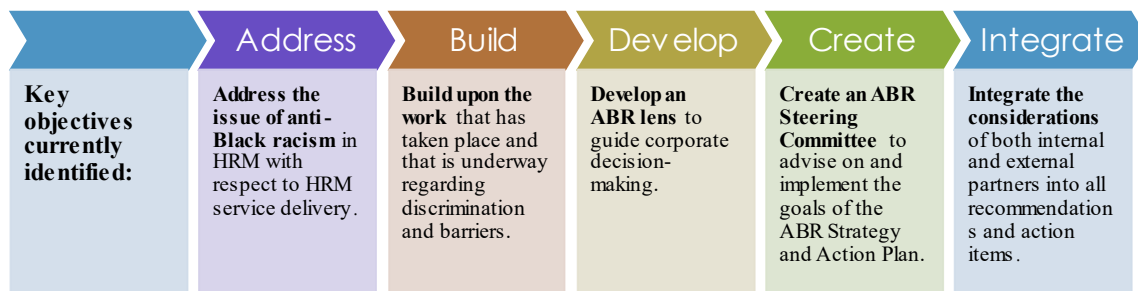
Municipalities governments generally take responsibility for parks and recreation services, police and fire departments, transportation services (Taxi + Metro transit), and public works (streets, sewers, snow removal, signage etc).

Services you may use/have experience with as a young person in Halifax may be Afterschool recreation programs, policing services, fire departments, metro transit and taxi services.

- In the fall of 2019, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) asked for the development of an Anti-Black Racism Working Group, supported by the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), to identify recommendations to help create a safer and more inclusive workplace.
- In early 2020, the Working Group provided its recommendation report to the CAO. The CAO then engaged with the Working Group to review its recommendations and determine the path forward
- In mid-2020, as the global health pandemic intersected with the Black Lives Matter movement, Regional Council asked for the development of an anti-Black racism action plan in support of the Proclamation of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024.

Background

Anti-Black Racism Strategy



Key Components of the ABR Framework

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How can you continue to engage?

- For further information on the Anti-Black Racism Strategy and action plan please visit: www.Halifax.ca/abr
- Stay connected to our office and continue to share you voice and concerns.
- Email: ANSAIO@halifax.ca , brooksr@halifax.ca
simmona@halifax.ca

What are your thoughts?

- Based on the summary of the strategy , please share your feedback and thoughts.
- What are we missing?
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Appendix D: HRM ABR Endorsed Framework

The ABR framework endorsed by council and more can be found here: www.halifax.ca/abr

Clickable link: [Framework for Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan Development - Jun 8/21 Regional Council | Halifax.ca](#)

References

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