

Meeting Notes
UN Decade for People of African Descent Push Coalition
Introductory Meeting with the Department of Canadian Heritage
September 17, 2019, 1:15pm – 2:20pm

Attendees from Canadian Heritage: Isabelle Mondou, Associate Deputy Minister; Lisa Marie Inman, Director General, Multiculturalism, Charles Slowey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community and Identity

Attendees from UNDPAD Push Coalition: Richard Sharpe, UNDPAD Push Coalition; Pascale C. Annual, Art therapist, ethnotherapy consultant; Tyler Boyce, Max Ottawa; El Jones, Poet, Teacher, Activist; Alexa Potashnik, Black Space Winnipeg; Floydeen Charles-Fridal, Caribbean African Canadian Social Services

Purpose of the meeting: The meeting was called by the UNDPAD Push Coalition to share concerns related to the absence of any focus on Black Canadians in the recently announced National Anti-Racism Strategy developed by the Multiculturalism Program at the Department of Canadian Heritage. Representing a diverse and regional cross section of the African diaspora in Canada, UNDPAD Push Coalition representatives shared their perspectives with regards to the need for an anti-black racism focus to work coming out of the PCH Anti-Racism Secretariat.

Introductory Remarks:

Richard Sharpe, UNDPAD Push Coalition

- Anti Black racism needs to be addressed within the context of Canadian Heritage's Anti Racism Strategy
- The Anti-Racism Strategy should dedicate a fixed sum of money for the Black community to rollout initiatives directly related to eradicating Anti-Black racism in Canada.
- The Anti-Racism Secretariat should regard Black people as a distinct group as mentioned in the UNDPAD report to Canada as well as by numerous federal government committees, federal departments.
- The Anti-Racism Secretariat must engage with community members who are from the African diaspora, including the UNDPAD Push Coalition, to address anti-Black racism in Canada.

Tyler Boyce, Max Ottawa

- Anti Black racism permeates various public spheres within Canadian society including justice, education, health, employment.
- These areas intersect and have devastating impacts on Black lives.
- Policy needs to be implemented in order to change the systems that cause the injustices and Canadian Heritage, through its programs, can influence policy to make these changes happen.

Pascale C. Annual, Art therapist, ethnotherapy consultant

- Activist and clinical work mainly within Black and Indigenous communities and has expertise with issues such as intersectorial identity, migration, language(s), and transgenerational impacts.
- It's not about capacity building because the capacity already exists within the Black Community. It's about *Capacity Bridging* (equitable sharing of knowledge, resources, influence and networks).

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- Engagement between community and Canadian Heritage on Anti Black racism and how the Department aims to address it from its origins in enslavement and colonization and contemporary impact on identity and mental health.

Alexa Potashnik, Black Space Winnipeg

- Creates safe spaces for Winnipeg's black community through events and community based initiatives, promotes diversity and inclusion and challenges anti Black racism through grassroots activism
- Doesn't have faith in politicians or government to do the work necessary to remedy the issues impacting Black Canadians

El Jones, Poet, Teacher, Activist

- Anti Black racism left out of Canada's history as though it's something that only existed in or because of the United States
- Due to the issues Black Canadians face, they do much of the work to have policy enacted or revised but don't see the benefits of their efforts as their issues and resolutions get watered down or erased from the actual policy implemented
- Black people are often the objects of policy, though not explicitly mentioned within the policy enacted (ie cannabis laws directed at Black people without being mentioned)
- Government, politicians and policy pit indigenous issues and Black issues against each other and create an environment whereby policy only focuses on one at the expense of the other
- Funding mechanisms exclude Black people, Black women in particular, through the established criteria, how calls for proposals are sent, the kind of application expected and so on. The development and administration of the process is gendered and classist.

Floydeen Charles-Fridal, Caribbean African Canadian Social Services

- Works within social services and witnesses the impacts of Anti Black racism on community which she serves
- Within the Anti Racism Strategy need to have initiatives directly related to Anti Black racism
- Removing Black people from the current visible minority category and recognized as a distinct group was mentioned during consultations with Canadian Heritage prior to the release of the Strategy

Isabelle Mondou, Associate Deputy Minister

- Data is an important component of their strategy.
- There is still time to collaborate. A new director is in place and the plan is to focus on engagement.
- Had few resources to consult more broadly during consultation phase leading to creation of the Anti Racism Strategy
- Her team will put those around the table located in the regions in touch with regional contacts from Canadian Heritage so both are aware of the work being done.
- Much of the Department's work goes over and above the focus of the Anti Racism Secretariat and Strategy ie Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program
- Rania El Mugammar, Artist, Anti Oppression Consultant and Liberation Educator, will be coming to provide anti oppression training for some employees and executives.

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- They plan on completing work that is internal and external to government.
- The work goes beyond the 3-yr cycle of the anti racism strategy, therefore over the next two years its important to focus on the things that will have the greatest impact.

Key Messages shared by the UNDPAD Push Coalition:

1. Federal funds should be allocated to the address anti-black racism within the context of the UNDPAD.
2. From a policy perspective, people of African descent should be considered as a distinct group requiring positive measures to address generational institutional anti-black racism in Canada.
3. Black community organizations want to be legitimately engaged in the development and roll out of the anti-racism strategy. We are currently excluded from the department's work on an issue that impacts our daily lives.

Next Steps:

- New director of the Anti-Racism Directorate to organize a meeting with the UNDPAD Push Coalition.
- Associate Deputy Minister's office to provide UNDPAD Push Coalition with PCH regional contacts.