

# *Midwifery Education Program*

## *Programme de formation des sages-femmes*

### **Ontario Consortium**

#### **The Midwifery Education Consortium in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter**

While the world mourns the loss of George Floyd and continued violence against Black people, the MEP stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and those standing against anti-Black racism.

While the world is focused on the United States right now, we must remember and acknowledge Canada's own history of slavery and continued inequity towards Black people whereby Black people continue to have disproportionate rates of poverty, incarceration and poorer health outcomes. We acknowledge the issues facing Black peoples and families that exist within Canada, as well as the United States and that these are deeply rooted in Canada's colonial history, resulting in hundreds of years of systemic racism and intergenerational trauma.

We also acknowledge that this is all occurring while the world is dealing with a pandemic unseen in over a century. It is important for us to also acknowledge the disproportionate effect COVID-19 has had on Black communities. While Black Americans constitute only 13% of the population, they have contributed to one third of the COVID-19 mortality rate. Black Americans are three times more likely to both be infected and to die of COVID-19. It is also worth noting that there is a dearth of race-based statistics in Canada – which perpetuates systems of inequity by overlooking the problem and thereby being unable to address solutions.

We stand in solidarity with other organizations that are declaring this as a public health crisis

As stated eloquently in a recent statement by the Association of Ontario Midwives, “we know that for Black communities in particular, the intergenerational, personal and communal experiences of racism carry a profound emotional, physical and psychological toll” (Williams). As the Ontario Midwifery Consortium, we also stand in solidarity and support of our Black students and midwives, many of whom are alumni of the consortium. We recognize that some of us have families – partners, sons, daughters, aunties, uncles who are racialized and are experiencing increased vulnerability in these times. For those of us who have family who work and make their livelihood in the U.S., this anxiety may be heightened.

As recently demonstrated by the recent AOM study, we must also acknowledge that there have been many of instances of racism within the MEP, particularly lived by Black students. We make a commitment to take leadership on this issue and are working towards changing. We commit to moving forward in the following ways:

- Creating modules for midwife preceptors on anti-racism training, including a specific focus on anti-Black racism and critical reflection of white privilege
- Committing to ongoing antiracism training for midwifery faculty

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- Continuing to engage with students about experiences of racism within the MEP
- Developing clear pathways for complaints where student concerns related to racism are followed up
- Infusing anti-racism into midwifery curriculum, including content specific to anti-Black racism
- Engaging students in ongoing anti-racism training and events (e.g. movie nights, book clubs, guest speakers etc.)
- Creating and consortium wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee that advises MEP directors – focused on racism and anti-Black racism
- Integrating anti-racist perspectives into discussions on policy making bodies, including specific attention to anti-Black racism
- Encouraging Black representation on policy and decision-making bodies – including those outside of midwifery and within pregnancy related care
- Taking leadership in including race-based data in our research
- Taking leadership in encouraging race-based research and data collection
- Building capacity within midwifery by mentoring racialized midwives and students, and Black midwives and students, as Research Assistants, Course Tutors, TAs, GAs, and collaboration on research projects
- Invitation of more Black scholars and experts as guest speakers within midwifery education
- Creating safe spaces for BIPOC students to share their experiences and build community

Finally, we understand this work in rigorous and ongoing. As leaders in midwifery education, we see it as part of our commitment to teaching excellence to strive towards the goals above and create a more inclusive environment for all our students. Midwives have always been trailblazers with a commitment to reproductive and social justice. We hope to set an example of excellence in anti-black racism and how it is addressed within health care education.

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