

May 2009  
Queen's Diversity, Anti-Racism and Equity (D.A.R.E.) Report

*Introduction*

In December of 2008 the Offices of the Principal and the Vice Principal Academic struck a special panel on issues of diversity, anti-racism and equity at Queen's, henceforth referred to as D.A.R.E. The panel consulted with a number of university students, staff and faculty members in six focus groups, two open hearings and two university-wide town halls. Through fostering constructive dialogue whilst documenting the experiences of groups and individuals, D.A.R.E's mandate was "to identify successes, failures, and unresolved issues in the university's various approaches to dealing with these issues over time and make both long term and short term recommendations to the university."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in our deliberations we decided it would be remiss if we did not point out this study builds on previous efforts to collect information on the climate at Queen's. No attempt is made here to supplant or invalidate these previously fine efforts. Our findings and our recommendations largely mirror those of three previous major reports; the 1991 Study "Towards Diversity and Equity at Queen's: A Strategy for Change, Final Report of the Principals Advisory Committee on Race Relations" (commonly referred to as the PAC Report); a second report commissioned 12 years later "Understanding the Experiences of Visible Minority and Aboriginal Faculty Members at Queen's University

---

<sup>1</sup> Queen's University Diversity, Anti-Racism and Equity Panel: Terms of Reference. *Queen's University Gazette*, January 12, 2009

(commonly referred to as the Henry Report); and lastly a follow up to the Henry Report penned by the Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC) “Senate Educational Committee Response to the Report on ‘Understanding the Experiences of Visible Minority and Aboriginal Faculty Members at Queen’s University.’” In light of this long history of assessing the climate of this university, participants frequently asked why the university had decided to commission yet another report in light of the many recommendations it as already received, few of which have been implemented over the past 18 years.

This report is not a “scientific” study, but the results of a special inquiry into a series of social, cultural, and intellectual problems that have plagued our campus for far too long. While we collectively affirm the accuracy of our findings we acknowledge that the majority of participants in this process have been engaged in diversity, equity and anti-racism work on this campus in a variety of roles. Despite our best efforts, we found it very difficult to combat the all too pervasive view on our campus that diversity issues were the primary concern of equity seeking groups. We feel that this pervasive attitude at Queen’s is a symptom of the nature of the climate on our campus with respect to issues of diversity, anti-racism and equity. We are also aware, sadly, that many of the most marginalized members of our community did not feel empowered or safe to speak with us under any conditions or circumstances.

We present this report during a very difficult time in Queen’s history of intergroup relations on campus. We have weathered a number of well documented serious racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents over the past 18 months. There have also been serious divisions amongst student leadership and the

student body at large with regard to how to best deal with these issues, invoking an impassioned if at times uncivil debate which at least upon one occasion degenerated into physical violence.

In addition, the university's recent attempt to implement an 'Intergroup Dialogue' program in its student residences met with a great deal of controversy in the national media and the blogosphere. These incidents and the very public controversies they have engendered, have further contributed to a climate of fear and unease around anti-racism, equity and diversity issues. We found that while students, staff and faculty felt relatively secure discussing these issues in the small and safe confines of the focus groups and the hearings, the response to the town halls were tepid at best as a grand total of 10 people were in attendance in both combined. The community at large is unwilling, unable, and fearful of discussing these issues in open public forums. This is an area of grave concern. Participants were reluctant to disclose their experiences and share their thoughts on potential strategies the university might pursue without strict assurance that their identities would be fiercely protected by the panel.

This report is divided into two sections. The first documents the general experiences and perceptions of participants with regard to issues of diversity, anti-racism and equity at Queen's. Focus group participants and those who participated in the hearings were asked to reflect upon the university's climate and their specific experiences, intergroup programs and curriculum, resources, support and the effectiveness of diversity initiatives on campus.

The second part of this report presents both short and long term recommendations and potential strategies for the administration in addressing these issues. This section will

draw heavily from the feedback of the participants in D.A.R.E.'s forums, but also significantly from the expertise, thoughts and insights of the members of the panel who facilitated these discussions. A subsequent version of this report will append excerpts from the transcripts in order to affirm and honour the voices of those who unselfishly gave of their time to provide us with the insights necessary to draft this report.

*Part I: Participants' Perceptions and Experiences of Racism Equity and 'Diversity' at Queen's*

*(i) General Campus Climate and Resources for Diversity Anti-Racism and Equity*

In oral testimony and written submissions there was consensus Queen's has not fostered a welcoming climate for minority faculty, staff or students. There was not unanimity on this issue. A handful of our participants from both equity and non-equity seeking groups felt that Queen's was a welcoming campus and that the university had worked hard to foster a sense of inclusion, particularly in comparison to earlier eras.

Most participants, however, did not describe Queen's campus climate as welcoming nor accepting of equity seeking groups. They pointed to the efforts of the Human Rights Office, the University Registrar and the support services offered by Student Affairs in residences and in the cultural centers under its purview such as the Ban Righ Centre and Four Directions as units where diversity equity and inclusion were fostered. Participants generally agreed student organizations such as the Queen's University Coalition Against Racial and Ethnic Discrimination (QCRED) and the Queen's University Muslim Student's Association (QUMSA), had done much of the

heavily lifting on campus to foster a more inclusive climate. Many participants expressed the view that the university's leaders do not understand how to achieve this nor were they able to see, name or understand "racism" and the lack of equity on our campus. Many participants also felt that too much of this work had been left up to students and student leaders. (see recommendations below). Nonetheless, most participants agreed that these initiatives represented a few well intentioned efforts which had had limited success improving the overall climate of the university. They felt that these efforts were necessarily limited because Queen's University, both subtly and overtly, has fostered a campus climate where cultural homogeneity is valued over cosmopolitanism. The administration's efforts to improve the campus climate were either unknown or deemed ineffective by our participants.

Participants also commonly expressed concerns about the university's 'branding' campaigns on our websites and promotional material which rely too heavily on a rather superficial and static rendering of 'Scottishness' based on the iconography of plaid, tartan, kilts etc.<sup>2</sup> While some of our participants acknowledged that this university, like all universities, is justified in celebrating the heritage of its founders, they also generally felt that Queen's' exclusive fixation with these images does little to embrace the future of an institution that may well have trouble attracting the students of the future, many of

---

<sup>2</sup> This is an idea of primordial 'Scottishness' that many scholars of Scotland routinely problematize as overly simplistic and bordering on stereotypical. The kilt was the invention of a member of the English gentry—one Thomas Rawlinson-- and worn principally amongst Highlanders. Lowlanders adopted the kilt much later. Similarly tartan, only became widely associated with Scottishness in the nineteenth century and Scottish national and diasporic symbol aided by Queen Victoria's promotion of the image of the "Scot as a Highlander", a bulwark of British Empire. The Gaelic language was also one of many traditional languages spoken by the Scots. See Oxford University Press blog <http://blog.oup.com/2009/01/kilts/> and Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History* (Yale University Press, 2008).

whom will be from large Canadian urban centres undergoing rapid demographic changes due to long term trends in immigration and settlement. Paradoxically, many of our participants noted promotional material which did attempt to feature ‘diversity’ at Queen’s did so rather crudely through tokenistic representations of ‘visible’ minorities, suggesting a degree of racial heterogeneity that does not exist on the campus.

*(ii) Student Orientation*

Participants consistently identified the importance of Orientation Week for setting the tone for the campus climate. While we acknowledge the importance of Orientation Week for helping students to form friendships and form attachments to their new university, in our conversations it became startlingly clear that Orientation Week was a profoundly alienating experience for many members of the student body. The centrality of alcohol in events both during that week and at other times was identified as an aspect of student life from which many students felt excluded, as was the homogeneity of Queen’s student leadership. One member of a focus group astutely remarked that students’ first week of orientation instilled values of insularity and tribalism within students that could take years to overcome if success was at all possible.

*(iii) Safety and Accessibility on and off Campus*

Safety was a concern that resonated throughout the participants’ comments. The issue of safety was represented in two ways. First we noted that safety emerged as a concern amongst those who did not feel safe airing their concerns about very sensitive and often public discussion about issues of social inclusion, diversity and equity on

campus. Some participants expressed their unease at broaching these topics for fear of being labeled intolerant or even racist. Yet others felt unsafe challenging racism, sexism, ableism and classism that is often expressed by individuals in positions of leadership at the university. Non-unionized staff and untenured faculty members in particular feared reprisals for speaking out against these attitudes.

As or more troubling, participants frequently expressed concerns about the lack of physical safety on campus. On several occasions we heard from primarily racialized and gay and lesbian students and faculty who had experienced verbal threats or physical intimidation. One of the most alarming disclosures were from Muslim students who told us they did not feel free to go about the campus and the wider city unless accompanied by peers. They had, in essence, created an informal peer support network to ensure that none amongst them was vulnerable to physical attack and to ensure that none among them stood alone in the face of verbal or physical assault.

It is evident that our campus also has much work to do on the accessibility front. While looming federal legislation will compel the university to more seriously deliberate on these issues in its strategic planning—both in terms of the curriculum and its physical plant--the university's track record is poor, particularly at the level of policy formation and implementation amongst senior university officials. University leaders, most of whom are able bodied white males (see also point vii), lack an "accessibility lens". This has had profound implications upon how decisions get made on this campus with often devastating effects upon those who are differently abled. We do note, however, that the Vice Principal of Human Resources was singled out for praise in his willingness to engage with these issues. One participant noted with a sense of irony that even previous

attempts to study anti-racism and inclusion at Queen's neglected to focus on the issue of accessibility even in terms of the composition of their committees or the very sites where they conducted their business. This too is a criticism that can be justifiably directed towards the D.A.R.E panel.

*(iv) International Students: Strategic Importance and Unique Needs*

Queen's prides itself on its attempts to internationalize both its curriculum and its student body. There have been quite a few internationalization initiatives launched over the history of the institution including the International Student's Centre and an executive administrative position in the office of the V.P. Academic. In a CBC Radio interview conducted the morning after the official announcement of his appointment, our Principal designate specifically cited increased recruitment of international students as an important piece in the university's ongoing attempts to address its image as an institution that is unwelcoming to people of diverse backgrounds. It is the view of this panel that while such efforts and sentiments are laudable, the rhetoric of internationalization has fallen far short of its promise at the expense of our foreign students.

International students bear the brunt of this disconnect between the rhetoric and practice of internationalization at Queen's. For while they have been appropriated as a symbol—a panacea of sorts—for addressing issues of intolerance at Queen's, their unique needs and perspectives have not been taken into account by the university's leadership, nor have the unique difficulties they face in pursuing an education in a small Ontario city primarily oriented towards domestic students. In the course of our deliberations, the panel has been made aware of a number of challenges faced by foreign

students, particularly at the graduate level: cultural alienation, the university's poor attempts at communicating the expectations of our academic culture, an insensitivity to the extenuating circumstances facing international students, and an attendant rigidity and insensitivity in both creating and implementing academic policies and procedure. This ranges from resistance to re-scheduling major tests that occur on religious holidays to hostility towards knowledge that has been gained outside of a Canadian context. As a result, it is clear that many international students suffer severe levels of isolation, loss of confidence, alienation, anxiety and depression, including in some cases frequent suicidal ideation. While there are counseling services available to these students and while many take advantage of them, many suffer silently until they reach a crisis of mental health, often jeopardizing their studies. It is true, however, that a disproportionate number of the students who encounter difficulty and seek out SGPS student advisors and Dispute Resolution are foreign (and racial minority) students. The situation of these students is alarming and demands our increased attention.

*(v) Teaching, Learning and the Curriculum*

Participants alerted us to a range of issues concerning teaching, learning and the curriculum during the life of the panel. Two participants, both of whom were students in professional faculties, noted the lack of importance their mentors placed upon these issues in their respective fields; their professors placed more emphasis on more practical matters deemed to be of immediate relevance for entry into the profession. Others pointed to the lack of flexibility inherent in the design of their programs and the tremendous

hours that had to be devoted to core subjects. We also heard concerns about the tendency for programs to tokenize diversity issues by cramming them into a single module attended by hundreds of students.

We found that many of the issues concerning teaching learning and curriculum are crystallized in the theme of classroom dynamics that delimit the possibility of embracing diversity and anti-racism in our classrooms and in the wider university community. Many visible minority students—particularly foreign students who speak so called “accented English”—found that they were often given less responsibility in group assignments or found it difficult to find classmates who were willing to work with them. Other participants noted that in the course of class discussions professors were often quick to tokenize students from various social identities, looking to them to “validate” the material. Perhaps even more troubling were the stories brought to our attention in which professors were unwilling or unable to broach issues of diversity and inclusion in their classrooms at all and often censored students who attempted to do so or worse, subjected them to inappropriate and/ or abusive remarks. Minority professors were often treated with disrespect based on their accent and appearance. They were also frequently accused of bias when they attempted to bring diverse perspectives into the classroom.

*(vi) Lack of Accountability, Clarity and Leadership*

Again and again this panel was told that leadership on issues of inclusion, diversity and anti-racism were lacking at Queen’s, starting with the reality that there is no common institutional understanding of the overused and under-theorized term “diversity.” Many participants also lamented the lack of institutional accountability around these issues.

Who, they asked, is ultimately responsible for implementing the recommendations that the university has solicited from various bodies from the early 1990s?

Closely related to the issue of accountability is the university's lack of a strategic vision or direction. There is a common perception amongst our participants that Queen's is perpetually in a "reactive" mode in dealing with issues of diversity and inclusion and too slow to respond to incidents of intolerance. Nor do we effectively communicate these incidents to the broader community. The university's vision is for creating an inclusive campus over the next five, ten or twenty-five years is not clear. Lastly there was a call for both a more diverse senior leadership and a university leadership with the capacity to govern the university through a diversity lens.

### *Part II: Recommendations*

The panel is well aware that the university is now in the midst of a serious budgetary crisis. We have therefore divided our recommendations into two parts. The first consists of recommendations we feel the university should be able to immediately implement. The second is a longer term vision for the university once it has fiscally righted itself in approximately three years according to budget projections

#### *(i) Short Term Recommendations*

a) First and foremost the Principal and Vice Principals of Queen's University must publicly and unequivocally commit this institution to implementing the recommendations

that it has solicited from various committees over the past 18 years. It is time to move beyond studying the climate of the university and the experiences of faculty, staff and students. We believe that the time of collecting data should end. It is now time to act on these recommendations, with an eye towards crafting a strategic plan with a timeline and assignment of responsibility to all members of the senior officers and their reports for carrying through each part.

*(b)* The university should move to create a university wide council on diversity anti-racism and equity comprised of the Principal, deans and equity chairs and diversity/equity student leaders. This committee should be quickly convened in times of urgency for consultation by senior leadership. More importantly, the committee's purpose will be to oversee the implementation of recommendations of the PAC report, the Henry Report the Norton Report, The QUFA/Breslauer Employment Systems Review and the D.A.R.E report.

*c)* Queen's must make the theme of diversity prominent on its website, the first point of contact most people have with us. The current mention of diversity is inadequate and our claims of being internationally recognized for diversity are frankly audacious. Arriving at a common institutional understanding of what diversity means is key to making it integral to the University's academic mission. We need to state, unequivocally, that diversity is synonymous with and integral to our pursuit of excellence and central to our academic mission.

*d)* Senior officers of the university and deans need to take more responsibility for ensuring that racialized faculty feel welcomed and settled in our community by making personal contact with them 2-3 times over the course of their first year of appointment. The Office of the Principal should move to immediately host an annual luncheon for new and pre-tenured racialized faculty as well as bi-monthly teas to be hosted in Richardson Hall. The importance of such small gestures should not be dismissed.

*e)* The university should immediately implement an inclusive space program such as the one developed by the Human Rights Office in collaboration with QCRED.

*f)* The university should immediately support a peer mentoring program for marginalized students as well as increased counseling support. Undergraduate and graduate international students must be given top priority. Such a program could occur in partnership with student groups.

*g)* As part of its efforts to build upon and to substantiate the important symbolic gesture of renaming the Policy Studies Building in honour of Roberts Sutherland, the university should further honour him by funding 50 undergraduate bursaries worth \$2,000 for underrepresented students at Queen's. This must be made a top priority of our advancement office and its outreach to alumni and friends.

*h)* A \$25,000 fund should be established for students and student groups on an annual basis who want to pursue anti-racist and anti-oppression programming and initiatives to

be administered by the Office of the VP Academic and vetted jointly by the Rector, the AMS Social Affairs commissioner, the SPGS Equity Commissioner, the Diversity Advisor to the VP Academic and the Assistant Dean of Diversity Programs and Community Development, Student Affairs.

*i)* The university should fund the new Journal of Critical Race Inquiry, an initiative of the Human Rights Office, to the tune of \$5,000 per annum as part of its base operating funding rather than “soft money” or discretionary funds.

*j)* In coordination with interested student groups, the university should support a series of brown bag seminars featuring talks on issues of anti-racism, anti-oppression and diversity. This can be modeled along the lines of the AMS Academic Affairs Commission Last Lecture on Earth, or the Ban Righ Centre’s lunchtime lecture series.

*k)* The university must ensure that all student leaders have access to diversity training and that diverse perspectives are represented in our all important Orientation Week events. Orientation Week also gives the university a singular opportunity to introduce students to issues of anti-racism, anti-oppression and diversity. We encourage creative programs that will engage students rather than bore or alienate them (eg. comedy or theatre). The Office of Student Affairs, the Human Rights Office and the AMS Social Issues Commission can work to train student leaders in and out of residences. Substantial progress can be made in three years at which time expanded efforts could be funded by the university.

l) University leadership must work in partnership with QUFA to raise awareness about the importance of sensitivity to issues of diversity and inclusion and fairness in the classroom. We propose a joint awareness campaign, enlisting the support of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Health Counseling and Disability Services. The panel recommends recent initiatives by Health, Counseling and Disability Services and the School of Graduate studies in the form of presentations on the needs and issues of international graduate students be extended to undergraduate chairs and administrative positions.

*(ii) Long Term Recommendations*

(a) The university must actively recruit and retain racialized and other faculty from underrepresented groups as well as faculty with an expertise in mounting courses and producing scholarship in anti-racist and anti-oppression work. The QNS program should be reinstated and one of its core mandates—cultivating a diverse professoriate—should be restored. The university should also provide support for faculty from underrepresented groups in the form of peer support networks.

(b) Increased targeted recruitment of students from underrepresented groups, particularly Aboriginal students and urban outer city youth with funding support for those from families earning less than \$50,000 per annum.

(c) All Senior Officers of the University, Deans department heads and staff must receive mandatory equity training. Competences in these areas should also be a central criterion for anyone aspiring to a senior leadership position at Queen's.

(d) Queen's must create report and reward structures at all levels of the administration, from department heads to the Vice Principals that require progress on issues of diversity and inclusion. All members of the senior administration, and the deans should be required to show that they have endeavored to pursue the goals of inclusion and diversity as part of their annual reports.

(e) The university needs to actively support the diversification of the curriculum. Queen's needs more programs such as the Aboriginal Teachers Education Program (ATEP) as well as other academic programs that enrich the curriculum with non-Western perspectives and knowledge. We need to revisit course exclusions and prerequisites that limit the existing number of courses students can take. The university must be careful to recognize the continued importance of programs such as the Native Studies teachable in French education or the study of Francophonie in French Studies. Budget cuts must be carefully implemented to ensure the survival of such programs.

(f) The university should ensure that all students are required to take a required course on themes of social justice or social difference in order to fulfill the requirement of all undergraduate degree programs at Queen's. This objective can be reached in a number of

ways. The university could offer incentives and rewards in the form of development grants for instructors and or programs/departments to design new curriculum (courses, concentrations, degree requirements ect) as well as re-design current core and introductory courses as well as for the implementation of extracurricular academic activities like lecture series/research workshops/sponsored reading groups/seminars on relevant themes. Rewards for successful curricular reform and innovative diversification should be developed including rewards/recognition for individuals and programs or priority in faculty appointments. Alternatively, the university could create a General Educational Requirement (GER) for all students at Queen's consisting of one full course to be completed in their first year. The GER will give students exposure to issues on social difference and social justice. We envision that a class of 4000 incoming students could be divided into 20 classes of 200 students. The GER program should be staffed by a small core of dedicated faculty (tenure or non tenure stream) and supplemented by teaching fellows and short-term contract faculty.

(g) The university should implement a Transitional Year Program to allow greater access to students with non-traditional academic and social backgrounds the opportunity to study at Queen's university. The program should consist of a seminar program open to 400 first year students with 10 different seminars taught by professors or senior graduate students focused on areas in the arts and sciences.

(h) The Human Rights Office needs much more financial support as well as an expanded capacity to actively intervene in conflicts and sanction those found of wrongdoing. The

Office should also be unmoored from the Department of Human Resources given the potential for conflicts of interest.

### *Conclusion*

This university faces a number of challenges in fostering an inclusive environment. Queen's reputation is already damaged among racialized secondary school students and others who, according to many of D.A.R.E.'s participants, are frequently advised to avoid Queen's as a prospective university. The reputation of our university will surely continue to suffer if we fail to expeditiously tackle this problem. The D.A.R.E. panel urges the senior officers of Queen's University to act upon the numerous recommendations it has solicited over the past 18 years and in so doing continue to affirm its commitment to providing a working environment in which employees and students are able to realize their full potential as members of our community. Queen's University must proactively renew its commitment to non-discrimination and equity and implement a comprehensive strategy for doing so.

Sincerely,

Dr. Barrington Walker

Associate Professor of History and Diversity  
Advisor to the Vice Principal (Academic) and  
Chair of D.A.R.E.

Ms. Arig Girgah

Assistant Dean (Student Affairs) of Diversity  
Programs and Community Development

Dr. Arunima Khanna

Cross Cultural Counsellor/ Advisor, Student Affairs

Leora Jackson

Rector

Dr. Adnan Husain

Associate Professor of History  
Chair of the Senate Educational Equity Committee  
(SEEC)

Dr. Cynthia Levine-Rasky

Associate Professor of Sociology