



Report on the Black Justice Consultative Roundtable

Theme: *Improving Access to Justice for Black Communities in Eastern Ontario: Building Partnerships, Sharing Perspectives, and Advancing Solutions*

Date: July 30, 2026

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Venue: Impact Hub, 123 Slater Street, 7th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario

Executive Summary

The Black Justice Consultative Roundtable was convened on July 30, 2026, by Jaku Konbit under the Black Justice Navigator Program. The event brought together approximately 50 participants, including representatives from Justice Canada, local police services, legal aid providers, community organizations, justice professionals, and Black community members from across Eastern Ontario.

Participating organizations included Elizabeth Fry Society, John Howard Society, Somali Centre for Family Services, Renfrew County Legal Aid, and other community-based organizations working to improve access to justice and social supports for Black individuals and families.

The roundtable served as a forum for dialogue, partnership building, and collaborative problem-solving focused on systemic barriers affecting Black communities within the justice system. The consultation concluded with an interactive stakeholder workshop and breakout discussions that generated practical recommendations for improving access to justice and strengthening collaboration between justice institutions and Black-serving organizations.

The recommendations presented in this report reflect the collective views of participants and are intended to inform future policy, programming, and partnership initiatives aimed at advancing Black justice in Canada.

Background

The Black Justice Consultative Roundtable was organized under the theme *Improving Access to Justice for Black Communities in Eastern Ontario: Building Partnerships, Sharing Perspectives, and Advancing Solutions*. The agenda included opening remarks, a community access-to-justice case study, a keynote presentation on the role of the judiciary and legal professionals, breakout group discussions, and a plenary report-back session.

The event was designed to create a collaborative space where justice stakeholders and community organizations could identify barriers experienced by Black clients and develop shared strategies to improve access to justice.

Objectives

The roundtable sought to:

- Increase awareness of systemic barriers faced by Black communities in the justice system;
- Identify practical strategies for improving access to justice;
- Strengthen partnerships across Eastern Ontario; and
- Develop stakeholder-informed recommendations to guide future action.

Participation

Approximately 50 participants attended the consultation. Representation included:

- Justice Canada
- Local police services
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- John Howard Society
- Somali Centre for Family Services
- Renfrew County Legal Aid
- Black community organizations
- Legal and justice professionals
- Community advocates and service providers

The diversity of participants contributed to a broad and constructive discussion on both community experiences and institutional responses.

Proceedings Summary

Opening Session

The roundtable opened with welcoming remarks from Jaku Konbit leadership, emphasizing the importance of community-led justice initiatives and sustained collaboration with government and justice institutions.

Community Access to Justice Presentation

The Black Justice Navigator Program team highlighted community-based navigation services that support Black individuals and families in accessing justice-related resources and overcoming systemic barriers. The presentation also referenced client experiences and survey findings from individuals involved in the justice system.

Keynote Address

The keynote presentation focused on the role of judges, lawyers, and justice institutions in promoting fairness, inclusion, public confidence, and meaningful access to justice for Black communities.

Breakout Discussions

Participants were divided into facilitated groups to discuss strategies for collaboration between justice institutions and community organizations and to develop recommendations for improving access to justice for Black communities in Eastern Ontario.

Key Barriers Identified

Participants identified several recurring barriers affecting Black clients:

- Limited awareness of legal rights, procedures, and available services;
- Distrust of justice institutions resulting from experiences of racism and discrimination;
- Financial barriers to obtaining legal representation;
- Inadequate culturally responsive services;
- Fragmented referral pathways between justice institutions and community organizations;
- Insufficient mental health, housing, employment, and reintegration supports;
- Lack of Black representation within justice institutions; and
- Geographic barriers affecting residents of rural and smaller Eastern Ontario communities.

Stakeholder Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the workshop and breakout discussions.

1. Strengthen Community–Justice Partnerships

Participants recommended establishing formal collaboration mechanisms between justice institutions and Black-serving organizations through:

- Regular joint meetings and information-sharing forums;
- Community liaison structures involving police, legal aid, and Black organizations;
- Coordinated referral protocols; and

- Shared outreach initiatives targeting underserved communities.

2. Expand Community-Based Justice Navigation Services

Stakeholders emphasized the need to increase investment in culturally responsive justice navigation programs that can assist Black clients with:

- Understanding legal processes;
- Accessing legal aid and court supports;
- Navigating probation, parole, and reintegration systems; and
- Connecting to housing, employment, education, and mental health services.

3. Improve Cultural Competency and Anti-Racism Training

Participants called for mandatory and ongoing training for justice professionals, including police officers, court staff, lawyers, probation officers, and service providers, focused on:

- Anti-Black racism;
- Cultural humility;
- Trauma-informed practice;
- Implicit bias; and
- Effective engagement with Black communities.

Training should be developed in partnership with Black community organizations and individuals with lived experience.

4. Increase Access to Legal Information and Early Intervention

Participants recommended expanding community legal education through workshops, multilingual resources, school-based outreach, and digital information tools. Early intervention services should be strengthened to help individuals resolve legal issues before they escalate.

5. Improve Affordability of Legal Services

Stakeholders recommended enhanced legal aid eligibility and outreach, expanded duty counsel and community legal clinic services, and targeted legal support initiatives for Black individuals facing criminal, family, immigration, housing, and employment-related legal issues.

6. Enhance Accountability and Data Collection

Participants stressed the importance of collecting and publicly reporting disaggregated race-based data across the justice system to identify disparities, monitor outcomes, and evaluate progress on equity commitments.

7. Support Reintegration and Prevention

Recommendations included stronger employment, apprenticeship, mentorship, and entrepreneurship programs for justice-involved Black individuals; expanded housing and mental health supports; and greater investment in youth prevention initiatives and community-led diversion programs.

8. Increase Black Representation in the Justice System

Participants encouraged recruitment, retention, mentorship, and leadership development strategies to increase the representation of Black professionals within policing, legal services, courts, corrections, and justice administration.

Emerging Priorities

During the report-back session, participants identified three immediate priorities:

- Continued annual consultation forums to monitor progress and maintain stakeholder engagement.

Next Steps

Jaku Konbit will continue to convene future consultations focused on implementation and evaluation.

Conclusion

The Black Justice Consultative Roundtable demonstrated a strong commitment among community organizations, justice institutions, and government representatives to work collaboratively to address systemic barriers affecting Black communities in Eastern Ontario. The participation of over 50 stakeholders from Justice Canada, police services, legal aid providers, and community organizations underscored the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

The consultation produced practical, community-informed recommendations that emphasize partnership, cultural responsiveness, accountability, early intervention, and reintegration support. Participants agreed that meaningful progress will require sustained collaboration, dedicated resources, and ongoing engagement with Black communities.

The roundtable represents an important step toward building a more equitable, inclusive, and accessible justice system for Black communities in Eastern Ontario and contributes to broader efforts to advance Black justice in Canada.