



# OFFICE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

**Annual Update  
2023/2024**



Public Engagement



## **Message from Lisa Browne, Vice President, (Advancement and External Relations)**

With a renewed version of Memorial's Public Engagement Framework on the way, I am excited to continue the ongoing conversation about the special role of Memorial within this province. As we remember the past and as we look ahead, this university's deep connections to Newfoundland and Labrador are as clear as ever.

This is particularly true as we look forward to Memorial's 100th anniversary in 2025. Our slogan—Looking Back, Launching Forth—alludes to the continued impact of this institution.

While it is impossible to predict exactly where we will find ourselves in the future, I know that our meaningful relationships with the people and organizations of Newfoundland and Labrador, and around the world, will remain central to our reason for being."



## A Message from the Office of Public Engagement Team

It's been a busy year for the Office of Public Engagement!

After the launch of our evaluation of the Public Engagement Framework early in 2023, we began a listening tour of Memorial, meeting one-on-one with deans and directors to share our results and to hear how public engagement is shaping research and teaching & learning within their units.

From there, we developed a plan for a Public Engagement Framework renewal process. That work was guided by a steering committee made up of students, faculty, staff and public partners, each with their own specific expertise related to public engagement and collaboration.

We've had the pleasure of speaking with a large and diverse group of people from across the province (and beyond.) They had plenty of thoughts about why public engagement matters, the barriers that are making it more difficult to do, and ideas for what can be done to help support and increase public engagement at Memorial.

With our input phase complete, and a new draft of the Framework out for public comment, we are looking forward to finalizing the document, with a planned launch in the Fall.

Of course, we couldn't have completed this project without the help and involvement of so many committed and engaged people inside and outside Memorial: for that, we are truly thankful!

# About us

Memorial's Office of Public Engagement (OPE) is a pan-university unit that is the steward of Memorial's Public Engagement Framework, championing public engagement across the institution, and supporting the engaged work of Memorial's students, faculty, staff, and public partners.

We offer funding that aids collaboration between Memorial and the public, including community groups, not-for-profit organizations, industry and industry associations, governments and others.

OPE also provides regular public engagement education and training opportunities, including Engage Memorial virtual panels, and The Tandem newsletter. The Office also coordinates a number of public engagement related groups including the Expert Working Group on Public Engagement and the Memorial University Public Engagement Support Community of Practice.

Additionally, OPE leads Memorial's Cold Oceans and Northern Initiative, which coordinates and communicates Memorial's strength in cold ocean and Northern research, teaching and learning, and public engagement.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Penny Morrill, Department of Earth Science

# Public Engagement Funds and Awards, 2023/2024

The Office of Public Engagement administers five different funding and awards programs, each with a distinct purpose:

- Quick Start Fund for Public Engagement is a low barrier support to help develop new partnerships: up to \$2,500 each.
- The Public Engagement Accelerator Fund can help to take an existing partnership to the next level: up to \$10,000.
- The Catalyst Conference Fund is there to help organizers build meaningful public engagement opportunities into events and conferences: up to \$5,000.
- The Public Engagement Postdoctoral Fellowship is a chance for a new scholar to develop public engagement expertise through a focused project: up to \$25,000 (cost-shared with a faculty or department.)
- The President's Award for Public Engagement Partnerships is Memorial's highest honour for public engagement, and is awarded to an exceptional partnership between Memorial and a public collaborator: \$5,000.

All funding applications must include both a Memorial applicant and a public partner, and are adjudicated by committees consisting of students, faculty, staff, and members of the public.

***In 2023/2024, the Office of Public Engagement distributed \$337,563.33 to support 50 projects through our funding and awards programs. Over 100 Memorial students, faculty, and staff, and more than 100 public partners received support for their collaborations.***

# 2023/2024 Project Highlights

We funded projects across all kinds of faculties, disciplines, and locations through our funding programs this year.

## Highlights include:

Being a new mother can be overwhelming, especially you're already dealing with other challenges like housing instability or substance abuse disorder. This program helps develop strong, healthy relationships between moms and their babies. [Anne Drover \(Faculty of Medicine \(Pediatrics\)\)](#) and [Jeannie Piercey \(Choices for Youth\)](#)

This project is for the bird-watchers, fostering connections to nature. Beginner birdwatchers were guided through free online bird survey and identification courses by trained ornithologists, fostering an appreciation for the local environment by showcasing the many exciting bird species present in participants' backyards. [Ian Warkentin \(School of Science and the Environment, Grenfell\)](#) and [Kelsey Butler \(Birds Canada\)](#)

Seafarers, including fishermen, cruise staff, and shipping crews often work far from the physical and emotional supports of home. This partnership is looking to help by offering services and working towards a seafarer's welfare centre. [Desai Shan \(Faculty of Medicine, Community Health and Humanities\)](#) and [Judith Altree \(Mission to Seafarers Canada\)](#)

What does "home" mean when you're far away? This initiative taught photography to newcomer participants. Through photos, participants explore what "home" means to them, and spark important conversations across communities. [Peter Ride \(School of Fine Arts, Grenfell\)](#) and [David Smallwood \(Rotary Arts Centre\)](#)

"OPE funding has allowed me to engage in important dialogues. For me the most recent funding award allowed me bring an Indigenous artist together with individuals at the Faculty of Nursing to discuss how to engage in important work with Indigenous communities moving forward." Dr. Erica (Samms) Hurley, Faculty of Nursing



The Healing Relations project included an art showcase and presentation exploring healing and nursing through an Indigenous lens. Dr. Erica Hurley, with the Faculty of Nursing, collaborated with artist Jennifer (Frost) Lowe. "Jennifer wanted my stethoscope, as an Indigenous nurse, to be the foundation for the piece whereby she tells the story of health/healing/care before and after settlers arrived to our Indigenous land," said Dr. Hurley. "She also leaves us with great thoughts and insights into nursing's role moving forward with our communities."

# The Public Engagement Framework Renewal: Our Process

The Public Engagement Framework is a core guiding strategy for Memorial University, and provides direction for everything that we do at the Office of Public Engagement.

When we began the Public Engagement Framework Renewal Process early in 2023, we knew it was not just an opportunity to have deep conversations about the future of public engagement at Memorial, but also about what Memorial students, faculty, staff, and public partners need from us.

Over the course of the process, we spoke with people across Newfoundland and Labrador, both inside and outside Memorial.

Here's what that looked like:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A comprehensive evaluation of the success of the first phase of the PE Framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversations with all deans and PE-related directors and leaders to help understand unit-level challenges and opportunities related to PE</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dialogue sessions for students, faculty, and staff held at St. John's, Marine Institute, Signal Hill, Grenfell and Labrador campuses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A session for publicly engaged students (undergraduate and graduate)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public dialogue sessions for members of the public and Memorial's existing community/public partners in St. John's, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley – Goose Bay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-on-1 meetings with existing and prospective community/public partners (some requested by partners through public call and others specifically selected based on organization type/location in province. Groups included community, NGOs, industry, governments, Indigenous organizations, etc.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Sessions with Memorial's Community Hubs and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual surveys for Memorial respondents (students, faculty and staff) and external respondents</li> </ul>



# The Public Engagement Framework Renewal: What We Heard

During our conversations at Memorial, and with our public partners, there were certain themes that came up over and over.

## Recognizing and Valuing PE

For faculty, the lack of consistent valuing of PE within promotion and tenure processes was the most cited barrier to PE. We also heard about the need for better recognition in other contexts, including hiring, teaching allocations and staff recognition within Memorial, but also appropriate compensation and acknowledgement of the work of public partners.

## Creating Connections

This is a big institution and it can be difficult to know who to talk to, and how to get things done, even within Memorial, let alone from the outside. There is a need for more partnership brokering mechanisms at Memorial (perhaps a single point of entry, or some manner of hub site) along greater opportunities to develop relationships “naturally”, especially in-person.

## Respectful, PE-responsive policies and processes

It was noted by internal and external people that some of the processes for administering the work of public engagement were not necessarily developed with public engagement in mind. It may be that small shifts could make these systems better able to address the unique needs of publicly engaged research and teaching & learning.

## Sharing lessons, results, and opportunities

There is a desire for more deeply engaged knowledge mobilization after work is done. Public partners want results shared in ways that are useful and accessible. We also heard that members of the public would like to understand PE opportunities at Memorial better: what is going on and how can they be involved?

We've made a point of addressing each of these challenges in the new draft of the Framework.

Anyone with an interest in Memorial is invited to share input on the draft, until May 31st. After that, we'll take a look at the input that has been shared, and incorporate it into the draft as appropriate

For more about what happens next with the renewed Framework, please see the next page.

# Looking ahead



## What's next for public engagement at Memorial?

This year has been dominated by the Public Engagement Framework Renewal Process, and as we move into 2024/2025, that focus will continue. We expect to bring the renewed Framework to the academic Senate and the Board of Regents. Once it has been finalized, we'll host a launch, including an Engage Memorial panel that will explore the next 10 years of Public Engagement at Memorial.

We'll also be considering what the Office of Public Engagement can do to advance the goals and objectives of the renewed Framework. This will likely include some new programming, as well as tweaks to existing work to better address the things that we learned through the renewal dialogue.

There are already a couple of new activities in development, including a Memorial-wide public engagement symposium (tentatively planned for May, 2025) and a new community of practice for Memorial's Public Engagement support units.

We'll also be re-launching our Engage Memorial virtual panel sessions and the Tandem, our e-newsletter, which were on hold during the renewal process.

Additionally, there are also new new developments in our cold oceans and northern work: along with a very useful new website, we are also operating a thriving LinkedIn account and have just launched a new cold oceans and northern focused newsletter that share stories, opportunities, photos and events all related to this area of strength at Memorial.

As we move from a planning phase into implementation, we want to, once again, thank all of the people who have participated and supported the Public Engagement Renewal Process. Public Engagement at Memorial is strong, and that strength is rooted in the people and partnerships that sustain it.

Here's to a new year, and a new Public Engagement Framework!

Sincerely  
The Office of Public Engagement Team