



# EDI REPORT 2020-21

**Algoma**  
UNIVERSITY



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Located on the site of the former Shingwauk Residential School, Algoma University (AU) offers a unique, historically rich setting for cross-cultural learning, where Anishinaabe (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), domestic, and international students and faculty (representing 50+ countries from around the world) learn from and with each other in a spirit of friendship and respect.

This history informs the transformational efforts to move Canada's priority of healing and reconciliation forward. As we grow in size and diversity, AU strives to foster a welcoming, safe and inclusive, learning, teaching, and working environment where all students, faculty and staff are represented, and respected.

In 2008, the Ontario provincial government passed the Algoma University Act, which established AU as an independent degree-granting institution. The Act stipulates that the University has a Special Mission to:

1. be a teaching-oriented University that provides programs in liberal arts and sciences and professional programs, primarily at the undergraduate level, with a particular focus on the needs of Northern Ontario; and to
2. cultivate cross-cultural learning between Aboriginal communities and other communities, in keeping with the history of AU and its geographic site.



## Institutional commitment

Commitments to embed EDI in AU's decision-making systems and structures require intentional, reflective actions and dialogue by the senior management team. To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the President and Vice-Chancellor and her Senior Executive team hold accountability through the signing of a governance mechanism, AU's EDI Project Charter and more recently, through its [2021-23 Strategic Plan Extension](#), where EDI is a stand alone objective.

The President and Vice-Chancellor has championed AU's commitment to EDI in multiple ways, including supporting the nomination, selection and appointment of a Canada Research Chair in Healing and Reconciliation in 2018, the creation of an EDI team comprised of an EDI Manager, EDI Academic Lead and Nyaagaaniid (meaning 'leader' in Anishinaabemowin), has responsibility for Student Success university-wide, and for Anishinaabe Initiatives.

*“AU's commitment to diversity at the Senior Executive level and the Director/Manager levels of leadership across the organization has resulted in hiring the first EDI Officer (externally-funded, initial seven-month term expanded into a permanent EDI Manager position); and the appointment of a three-year EDI Academic Lead (funded internally through course releases). Additionally, a new vice-president position was created and was filled in January 2021. This position, called Nyaagaaniid (meaning 'leader' in Anishinaabemowin), has responsibility for Student Success university-wide, and for Anishinaabe Initiatives. There is clearly a strong commitment to positions that will prioritize and bring expertise to EDI work at AU.”*

Asima Vezina, President and Vice-Chancellor

As an institution moving towards healing, reconciliation and creating safety, AU has moved to a more robust EDI portfolio spearheaded by the President's Office. It builds on external commitments such as the [New Principles on Indigenous Education](#), leading to [AU's response to the TRC's Calls to Action](#) in 2015 and [Honouring Our Commitments](#). The endorsement of other important commitments to EDI ([Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Dimensions Charter](#) and [Universities Canada's Principles on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)) have shaped AU's institutional strategy to address barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Clearly, acknowledging that racism and discrimination exist and affect underrepresented groups - URGs (women, Indigenous, Black and other racialized persons, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQQIPA+ persons) in disproportionate, distinct and complex ways, is only the beginning.







This report provides a high level summary of specific actions aimed at undoing systemic and institutional discrimination with public transparency and accountability to reflect the rich diversity of all employees and students. To ensure AU's three campuses embed EDI in all high-level documents and decision-making procedures and policies, the EDI Committee, under the EDI Manager and Academic Lead's leadership and reporting to the VP Nyaagaaniid, have prioritized the following:

1. Advance actions identified by the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) such as collecting data, completing an environmental scan to understand AU's current EDI climate and redefining institutional excellence based on EDI metrics.
2. Develop an evidence-based, comprehensive three-year EDI strategy and action plan that includes the creation, maintenance and coordination of a series of policies actions-including training initiatives and annual events on campus-engaging all relevant stakeholders in partnership, contributing to its goals.



## Equity Diversity and Inclusion Committee groups (EDIC)

In order to address Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at AU, the President's EDI committee was expanded with the EDI Manager taking on the chair role. In addition, the President's EDI committee has been expanded to include URGs from the student and employee bodies. This continues to help inform EDI work on all AU's three campuses. AU's EDI Charter, and the EDI Committee's **Terms of Reference** will provide the foundational framework in the creation of the EDI strategy and action plan. AU is committed to advancing the principles and practices of EDI in all its systems and structures.

The EDIC is comprised of 5 working committees and their objectives are:

**AU's Special Mission:** To demonstrate actions outlined in AU's [Truth and Reconciliation commitment \(TRC\)](#) to our Special Mission in working with Anishinaabe and other Canadian communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, regionally and nationally, with affinitive ties to the site, and to achieve the true realization of Shingwauk's Vision of the Teaching Wigwam.

**Accessibility, Policies and Procedures:** To provide an EDI lens for all HR updated policies as per [PEQAB](#) requirements.

**EDI Education Awareness and Events:** To identify training needs and organize events across the institution to include in the 2020/2023 EDI Action Plan. This includes developing in house training if and where possible.

**Anti-Racism and Discrimination:** The Anti-Racism Working Groups were formed to examine ways in which AU can better address institutional systemic racism. Below are the groups:

- Anti-Black Racism
- Anti-Indigenous Racism
- Anti-Asian Racism
- Anti-Islamophobia
- Anti-2SLGBTQQIPA+ Discrimination

**Canada Research Chairs Program:** To help in the development of Algoma University's Action Plan to adhere to the EDI requirements of the [Canada Research Chairs Program](#). Additional details on the committees, objectives and accomplishments are available on AU EDI [website](#).



Below is a summary of what EDIC has accomplished in the course of the year:

- Creation of an AU EDI Charter as a governance framework developed to demonstrate institutional commitments and acquisition of EDI responsibilities across all decision-making offices at AU. This helped align EDI since it was not an identified stand-alone strategic priority in the past. The Project Charter reflects actionable items identified by the EDIC and highlighted the need for EDI data collection.
- Creation of AU's EDI Mandate in collaboration with the EDIC to ensure AU leadership is "accountable for developing specific, measurable and sustainable actions to counter systemic barriers, explicit and unconscious biases, and inequities as illustrated in our EDI Objectives." This goes beyond our current Human Rights Framework to signal the need to not just comply with the law, but also address racism as well as inequities.
- Development of a Project Charter in conjunction with the drafts for AU Institutional EDI Action Plan and the Canada Research Chairs Action Plan.
- Development of the Request for Proposals for a third party to conduct an EDI climate study was completed. [Higher Education Strategy Associates](#) (HESA) has been hired to begin comprehensive research that will include an environmental scan, an employment systems review and a comprehensive review.
- The EDI team developed and submitted an NSERC Grant application to cover costs for foundational EDI work.
- Development of Self-identification questionnaire for AU students and employees
- In addition to the above, the AU Communications Strategy has focussed on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion priorities such as:
  - ★ Developing a university-wide EDI communications plan to visibilize EDI work and values internally and externally through a dedicated EDI website. This objective promotes EDI to the AU community across all campuses through: ongoing events and institutional statements addressing pressing issues impacting the well being of the communities we serve, reporting EDI objectives and outcomes; promoting EDI efforts to stakeholders and the public
  - ★ Disseminating EDI information via emails, AU weekly newsletter and other social media avenues.





- Worked on development of EDI as a standalone priority in the [AU 2021-2023 Strategic Plan Extension](#). This was approved by the Board of Governors at their June 24th meeting.
- EDI presentations to various stakeholders:
  - ★ Senior Executive
  - ★ Anishinaabe Peoples' Council (APC)
  - ★ Local Executive committee of Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)
  - ★ Research Advisory Committee (RAC)
  - ★ Algoma Leadership Team (ALT)
- EDI related external meetings such as:
  - ★ University Canada's sessions to help refine the Indigenous Education Principles
  - ★ University's Canada's session on Tri-Council and Canada Research Chairs' Program (CRCP)
  - ★ [National Dialogues and Action](#) for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities
  - ★ [National Forum on Anti-Asian Racism](#)
  - ★ Council of Ontario Universities
  - ★ Meetings with EDI professionals in the university sector
- The Education, awareness and training activities completed this year included:
  - ★ Cultural Safety Learning Program: The six-module program was developed by diversity experts from Simon Fraser University and has been adapted by Algoma University faculty and staff to meet the needs of the AU community. The first cohort of 132 students and 42 employees started the program Feb. 1, 2021 and all who completed earned an EDI certificate. The CSLP provided basic, theoretical grounds and practical tips on how to develop Cultural Safety to effectively work and interact in diverse teams by respecting, valuing, and understanding individuals' strengths and differences. The EDI Manager, EDI academic lead and the coordinator of Experiential Learning and International Affairs facilitated the student and employee groups. The CSLP will be continuing in the fall. Please stay tuned for further details.



- ★ Other prioritized ongoing EDI Educational awareness and initiatives to improve the campus climate include:
  - Indigenization and Decolonization Education and Awareness sessions
  - Anti-Black Racism Education and Awareness Dialogue
  - Education and Awareness on Queer 101 sessions
  - Anti-Asian Education and Awareness
  - Anti-Islamophobia Education and Awareness
- Policies and Procedures: We have worked with the Vice President Finance and Operations (VPFO) and across different units to provide an EDI lens on key policies such as: [Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Program](#) and [Code of Conduct-Respectful Workplace Policy](#); [Ceremonial Use of Sacred Medicines](#). EDI work has also included ensuring participation of Equity deserving representatives on all AU committees and revised the [commitment to equal opportunity diversity statement](#) on job postings to encourage equity deserving groups to apply.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge the [EDI committee members](#) who have generously committed their knowledge, expertise and lived experiences throughout the year. For that we would like to say a big sounding miigwech! Thank you so much! Your voices and contributions to EDI work at Algoma University is much appreciated. We are grateful that you chose to invest and contribute to advance EDI at AU. We look forward to continuing this work in the next 2021-2022 academic year.

**EDI Working Group Members:**

Asima Vezina	Dr. Michael Graydon	Janette Wallace
Mary Wabano-McKay	Emilene Dumoulin	Yuka Yamada
Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada	Angela Trudeau	Iman Sohail
Dr. Donna Rogers	Eunjung Riauka	Jeremy Preira
Jane Omollo	Lisl Schoner-Saunders	Sharzad Mohammed
Krista McCracken	Dr. Laura Wyper	Kay Kim
Ali Pearson	Brittany Paat	Shahrukh Khan
Chantal Larmond	Dawn White	Balpinder Kaur
Maddy Bifano	Darren Vaughan	Dr. Andrew Judge
Liz Webkamigad	Rebekah Gwynn	Dr. Paulette Steeves
Dr. Teniayo Araba	Gilbert Totime	Dr. Isabel Molina
Dr. Sheila Gruner	Jamal Muckett-Sobers	Dr. Nirosha Murugan
Dr. Olabanji Akinola	Kareem Roberts	Dr. Catherine Fahey
Dr. Deborah Woodman	Joanne Azevedo	





The background of the page features a dense pattern of fern leaves. The color of the ferns transitions from a warm orange-red at the top to a bright yellow-green in the middle, and finally to a light blue at the bottom. At the very bottom of the page, there is a row of colorful, stylized hands reaching upwards, each hand rendered in a different color like orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple.

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