

Algoma  
UNIVERSITY



Equity  
Diversity  
&  
Inclusion 

  
2021/22

ANNUAL  
REPORT



▶ TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Land Acknowledgement
- 4 Algoma University EDI Commitments
- 6 Institutional Commitments
- 7 The EDI Climate Study
- 8 EDI Education and training: An Imperative
- 10 Decolonization and Indigenization
- 11 Foster EDI in Research, Teaching and Learning
- 13 Commitment to incorporating EDI into policies, processes and procedures
- 14 Equity Diversity and Inclusion Committee groups (EDIC)
- 15 Communications
- 16 Scarborough Charter
- 17 EDI Working Group Members



## ▶ LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Algoma University respectfully acknowledges that its three campuses are located on the inherent and treaty lands of First Nations and within traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples inhabited and cared for this land, and continue to do so today.

The **Sault Ste. Marie campus** is located in an area known as Baawaating on sacred lands set aside for education as envisioned by Chief Shingwauk for our children and for those as yet unborn. Located in Robinson-Huron Treaty territory, this land is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek, specifically the Garden River and Batchewana First Nations, as well as Métis People. Sault Ste. Marie is also home to several urban Indigenous peoples.

*We also acknowledge that;*

The **Brampton campus** is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. In particular we acknowledge the territory of the Anishinabeg particularly the, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Ojibway/Chippewa peoples; the land that is home to the Métis; and most recently, the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation who are direct descendants of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

*We also acknowledge that;*

The **Timmins campus** is located on Treaty #9 territory, also known as the James Bay Treaty. It is the traditional territory of the Ojibwe/Chippewa, including the Mattagami First Nation, as well as the Mushkegowuk (Cree), Algonquin, and Métis Peoples.

## ▶ ALGOMA UNIVERSITY EDI COMMITMENTS

*This annual report is an opportunity to report back to the community on progress made in the past one year.*

Algoma University (AU) acknowledges the histories that many Indigenous Nations hold in areas around our campuses, especially the Sault Ste. Marie campus which is located on the site of a former residential school.

Given this context, AU recognizes its responsibility in reflecting upon its history and stories to teach the truth about residential schools in Canada, while moving forward with Chief Shingwauk's vision for cross-cultural learning and teaching on this site. This vision provides the basis for AU's Special Mission, confirmed in the 2008 Algoma University Act, which is to:

- *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*
- *Cultivate cross-cultural learning between Aboriginal communities and other communities, in keeping with the history of Algoma University College and its geographic site.*

This Special Mission clearly establishes AU's commitment to promoting EDI by serving Northern Ontario – a region traditionally under-served by higher education institutions – and through strong engagement with Indigenous communities. This commitment to Indigenous communities was further entrenched by AU's 2006 Covenant with the Shingwauk Education Trust, which includes support for the Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig (SKG) Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Education – an Indigenous Institute.

The above history, coupled with more recent efforts to address the systemic inequities that disproportionately impact equity-deserving groups, informs the transformational efforts to move Canada's priority of EDI from a decolonizing lens to move healing and reconciliation forward for all. As we grow in size and diversity, AU strives to foster a welcoming, safe and inclusive learning, teaching, and working environment where domestic, and international students and faculty (representing 50+ countries from around the world across its three campuses) learn from and with each other in a spirit of friendship and respect.

In order to address the diverse needs of a growing organization, AU has committed since 2015 to a number of external commitments that have shaped where we are today:

- *[The New Principles on Indigenous Education \(Universities Canada\) \(2015\)](#)*
- *[The Principles on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(Universities Canada\) \(2017\)](#)*
- *[The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Dimensions Charter \(the Government of Canada\) \(2019\)](#)*
- *[The Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education \(2021\)](#)*

It is important to note that [Honouring Our Commitment](#) to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action are a direct response to the 2015 New Principles on Indigenous Education that strengthens our responsibility to fulfill Chief Shingwauk's vision of a teaching *wigwam* as well as our treaty relationships.

*Photo right: Diwali celebrations on  
Brampton campus in November 2021*



## ▶ INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS

By signing and endorsing all the aforementioned charters, AU signaled its commitment to increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion, undoing systemic racism and advancing educational opportunities for Indigenous students as part of a larger reconciliation effort.

More specifically, the [2021-2023 Strategic Plan Extension](#) reveals how Algoma University operationalized its institution-wide EDI [Charter](#) by creating an EDI standalone objective:

*“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: EDI values are embedded across the organization to fulfill Algoma University’s commitment to undoing systemic and institutional discrimination and to be publicly transparent and accountable.”*

This objective has three primary aims: (1) to develop an EDI institutional accountability framework; (2) to foster EDI in research, teaching, and learning; and (3) to commit to incorporating EDI into policies, processes, and procedures. Through this strategic action, AU intends to develop targeted, measurable, and sustainable initiatives to address systemic barriers, explicit and unconscious biases, and inequities that disproportionately impact members of equity-deserving groups.

Additionally, the framing principles for the [2021-2026 Academic Strategic Plan](#) include the Special Mission and Indigenization, Cross-Cultural Learning and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The next steps will focus on the creation of an Indigenous research policy and Indigenization framework led by Indigenous scholars and community.



## ▶ THE EDI CLIMATE STUDY

In July 2021, Algoma University contracted Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) to conduct the institution's first Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Climate Study. The study aims to generate a demographic profile of the employee and student populations, to identify inequities in employment and student success, and to propose steps to remedy these inequities.

During the first phase of its work, HESA interviewed 15 institutional representatives in EDI related leadership roles, exploring high-level questions to help HESA understand the context of EDI at Algoma University. HESA also conducted a literature review and environmental scan that explored factors behind inequities in admission and retention/attrition, as well as employment practices, across Canadian higher education institutions to place Algoma University's challenges and efforts in context.

In the second phase of its work, HESA conducted a mix of interviews and discussion groups. Seventy-eight individual interviews engaged employees (32), students (28), and community partners (18). The faculty and staff included senior executives, academic leadership, directors/managers, the research group, and union and board members, as well as other persons actively involved in admissions and retention efforts, or human resources processes and policies. HESA also facilitated listening sessions with the Equity, Diversity, and

Inclusion Committee (EDIC) working groups, consulting nine people in total. Additionally, HESA collected data through diversity and experience surveys of employees and students. These surveys measured the demographic composition of Algoma University's employee and student populations and gauged their perceptions of the EDI climate. In the end, 212 employees and 417 students responded to the surveys, for respective response rates of 47% and 12%.

In the final phase of its work, HESA provided a complete report in June 2022 of its research findings and offered recommendations to help Algoma University develop an evidence-based EDI action plan that will include accountability frameworks, the review and revision of relevant policies, and the development of new policies and processes. Algoma University has embarked on its EDI journey with a host of different issues and there remains considerable work to be done.

An executive summary and key findings of the study will be shared publicly on the AU website. This study also sets the stage for AU to continue to work with HESA to develop an evidence based institutional EDI strategy and multi-year action plan that will provide AU with thematic directions and measurable actions to gauge its progress in achieving institutional excellence based on EDI metrics.

## ▶ EDI EDUCATION AND TRAINING: AN IMPERATIVE

**The Cultural Safety Learning Program (CSLP)** program offers Algoma University community members the opportunity to develop and improve on the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Since its launch in 2021, 250+ students and employees have registered for the CSLP. Registration for CSLP is at the beginning of each Semester.

As part of Algoma University's ongoing EDI training, and to increase capacity, EDI In collaboration with the Director of Professional and Continuing Education is working on the Train the Trainer cultural safety learning program (CSLP) delivery and continuous improvement.

**The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI):** As an *Employer Partner* with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, all AU students, faculty and staff with an AU email have access to *CCDI webinars, knowledge repository* and *community of practice events*. This is part of Algoma University's ongoing commitments to advance the conversation on promising practices, education and awareness of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Each month CCDI featured two webinars focusing on various aspects of EDI training such as: EDI fundamentals; the science of unconscious bias; history of race and racism in Canada, anti-Black racism, inclusive recruitment, hiring and retention, anti-Asian racism; Indigenous inclusion with employers, creating safe spaces for 2LGBTQQIPA+, strategies for creating a neurodiverse organization, intersectionality in the workplace; and microaggression training among others.



*Photo left:  
Transgender Day of Visibility  
March 2022*

*Photo right:  
Anti-Black Racism Training  
September 2021*

Below is a summary of July 2021- May 2022 AU CCDI participation statistics:

### Algoma University CCDI 2021-2022 Participation Statistics



**Ongoing EDI LinkedIn and short courses available throughout the year:** LinkedIn Learning is a digital library of over 6,000 courses covering a wide range of topics which includes EDI training. It is self-paced and accessible, available 24/7 from your desktop or mobile device. Login with AU `username@algonau.ca` and password: [www.linkedin.com/learning](https://www.linkedin.com/learning)

*Photo right: Pride Flag Raising event held on Sault Ste. Marie campus June 2022.*



## ► DECOLONIZATION AND INDIGENIZATION

**April 2022 launch of the Social Innovation Lab to advance reconciliation and Indigenization efforts:** Supported by the McConnell Foundation, the stewardship team partnered on a series of seven workshops to advance reconciliation efforts in the postsecondary sector by engaging diverse actors from across AU to strengthen intra-institutional relationships and collectively address the ways in which AU can decolonize. A two-day session held on May 30-31 and one held on June 24, 2022 focused on beginning to create solutions or prototypes that will serve as the foundation for an institutional decolonization strategy and ongoing work. The Anishinaabe Academic Resource Centre will lead and advance the Indigenization efforts by providing wrap-around support to students, increasing access to academic and cultural resources, including increasing access to elders in the classroom.

**Mukwa Waakaa'igan project:** Mukwa Waakaa'igan is a considerable capital build and national centre to Algoma University providing space to teach the truth, a space for cross-cultural learning, healing and reconciliation. The space will centre indigenous knowledge and welcome other national and international cultural and spiritual teachings as part of our commitment to creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive place for cross-cultural sharing, teaching, learning and healing. Mukwa Waakaa'igan will provide culturally reflective, formal and informal learning spaces that are designed with accessibility, flexibility and fluidity in mind to foster an environment of collaboration and engagement.

**EDI and the Board of Governors:** Since presentations made on November 3, 2021 and March 31, 2022 by the IEDI Academic Lead and Manager, the Board of Governors has been moving forward with its commitments to EDI through a number of actions. The Nominating and Governance Committee has engaged members of the EDI Committee to receive recommendations for the development of EDI language for its governing documents, policies and procedures. Additionally, advancements in EDI training and development of its members have been recommended by the Nominating and Governance Committee as it works to develop a plan with the goal of enabling the Board to be able to lead in this capacity.



## ▶ FOSTER EDI IN RESEARCH, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Algoma University is committed to continuing and maintaining institutional efforts to ensure that Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is embedded across the organization's systems, structures and functions to fulfill AU's commitment to undoing systemic and institutional discrimination and to be publicly transparent and accountable. Early this year, the Research Office facilitated the submission of AU's EDI Stipend grant application. The EDI office successfully obtained \$50,000 to advance the public accountability and transparency requirements of the [Canada Research Chairs Program](#). This includes developing institutional [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan](#). With the support of this funding, we have extended our contract with Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) to support the development and finalization of:

- A tri-campus EDI Strategy and multi-year Action Plan to support EDI requirements of the Canada Research Chairs program
- Collaborative creation of EDI framework guide and resources for individual units to tailor and implement EDI strategies and actions to advance the University's Special Mission rooted in and informed by EDI principles
- A comprehensive review of work to embed EDI in prioritized AU policies and processes

The EDI Strategy and action plan is a continuation of and a response to the recommendations from HESA's EDI Climate Research study findings of 2021-2022 and further cements Algoma's commitment to its Special Mission in cross cultural learning and commitments to Reconciliation. The strategy needs to be flexible and reflect a commitment to ongoing mutual cross-cultural learning. In concrete terms, and as part of the process, HESA will:

- Identify actions AU can take to promote the Special Mission through the lens of EDI
- Identify tangible indicators of progress in EDI in collaboration with the Algoma University team (including specific data and metrics) which are linked to points in the Action Plan
- If important data points are not already available, create a new data collection tool such as a pulse survey
- Conduct consultations with members of the community

Algoma University expects that this project and scope of work will begin in July 2022 and will be completed in 12 months.

**Embedding EDI at the Senate level:** The Algoma University Senate passed a motion to create an Indigenization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (IEDI) Ad Hoc Committee on February 1, 2022. The objective of this committee is to develop an IEDI framework to enable revision of the Senate By-Laws from an IEDI lens. This work is pending at the moment as we wait for by-law updates recognizing the newly formed faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, Business and Economics and Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies (FCCS). Senate approval of a new Faculty of Cross Cultural Studies (FCCS) at the April 1 Senate meeting, signals AU's commitment to invest in academic spaces where students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds, without exclusion, intentionally work across disciplines and explicitly in responding to the TRC Calls to Action and IEDI with strategic focus in curricula, policies, research, cross-cultural teaching and learning, community partnerships, health, land stewardship, and governance.

**Embedding EDI in the Research Advisory Committee (RAC):** The RAC recommended changes to their Terms of Reference to include Algoma University's EDI Mandate to foster a welcoming environment on our campuses. The RAC commits to make informed decisions based on EDI best practices including Tri-Agency efforts to increase equity, diversity and inclusion as well as the Canada Research Chairs program (CRCP). RAC members are required to complete the Tri-Agency's Unconscious Bias Training Module and submit a certificate of completion to the Office of Research. The RAC also added a position to the committee to include a faculty representative with a good understanding of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Both of these recommendations were approved by the Senate.

In January, the RAC and the Office of Research and Innovation began their work to create the Strategic Plan for Research and Creative Works 2022-2027. EDI will be a framing principal for the entire plan and it will be embedded in each section. The plan is expected to be finalized in August and will be approved by the Senate and Board of Governors at the September meetings.

Algoma University Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) staff union has added a position to its executive titled VP, Equity, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression. This demonstrates continued commitment to EDI.

## ▶ COMMITMENT TO INCORPORATING EDI INTO POLICIES, PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

**Policies and Processes:** Since 2021, the EDI Office has worked with the Vice President Finance and Operations (VPFO) and across different units to provide an EDI lens on key policies and processes such as: Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Program and Code of Conduct-Respectful Workplace Policy; Ceremonial Use of Sacred Medicines and I-EDI Guidelines for Policy Development and the revision of the commitment to equal opportunity diversity statement on job postings to encourage equity deserving groups to apply. We continue to prioritize embedding EDI in AU's policies and processes in an effort to reduce barriers and inequities embedded in our systems and structures.

**Summer student position:** The EDI Office successfully hired its first summer student, Mary Ogenyi (She/Her) as an administrative assistant to the EDI Manager.

*Photo right: 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering at the Rapids Pow Wow held on Sault Ste. Marie campus, June 2022.*



## ▶ EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE GROUPS (EDIC)

The five Anti-Racism Working Groups were formed to examine ways in which AU can better address institutional systemic racism. The groups include: Anti-Indigenous Racism; Anti-Black Racism; Anti-Asian Racism; Anti-Islamophobia and Anti-2SLGBTQQIPA+ Discrimination. These groups have continued to lead and champion and provide ongoing training, education and awareness throughout the year such as:

- Indigenization and Decolonization Education and Awareness sessions
- Education and Awareness by the 2SLGBTQQIPA+ community:
- Anti-Black Racism Education and Awareness Dialogue for AU leadership attended by 20 AU members
- Anti-Asian Education and Awareness
- Anti-Islamophobia Education and Awareness

Below is a summary of we accomplished in the course of the year:

**Guest speaker series during the annual report period:** The EDIC Working Groups coordinated and hosted over 27 events, reaching over 800 people! Topics discussed included: exploring Racism Towards Indigenous Peoples and Critical Considerations for Indigenous Resurgence and Indigenizing the Academy: Queer 101 Sessions, Sexual Identity Training, Anti-Black Racism Dialogue and Education Awareness for Algoma Leadership, Anti-Asian Racism, and Theorizing Transnational Blackness, Indigeneity and Colonial Histories in Canada amongst many others.

Other EDI related training provided by the People and Culture Office included:

- Accessibility Training: All AU employees are required to complete and have up-to-date Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training
- Upstander Training
- Sexual Violence Training



## ► COMMUNICATIONS

- Continuous creation of communications content for relevant memos and social media visibility
- Updates to the EDI website with ongoing training and events
- Content development and contribution to the President's bi weekly newsletter
- Continuous EDI presentations to various stakeholders:
  - Senior Executive
  - Algoma University Leadership Table (ALT)
  - Anishinaabe Peoples' Council (APC)
  - Local Executive committee of Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)
  - Research Advisory Committee (RAC)
  - Algoma Leadership Team (ALT)
  - Faculties
  - Board of Governors
  - AU students, faculty and staff (two town halls to update on EDI Climate Study)
- Advances in addressing 2SLGBTQQIPA+ issues such as
  - Installation of permanent signage for universal washrooms
  - Updating signage on doors with pronouns
  - Email signature templates inclusive of pronouns
  - Inclusion of pronouns on virtual platforms (Google and LinkedIn)
  - Ongoing EDI education and training in inclusive pedagogy and awareness including commitment to support and promote the important work of [Pride at Work Canada](#)
- Engage with external partners on EDI best practices involved participating in stakeholder meetings with:
  - 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 other EDI professionals in the post-secondary sector

## ▶ SCARBOROUGH CHARTER

November 2021, Algoma University joined other institutions in its commitment to endorse the [Scarborough Charter](#) on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education. The signing of the Scarborough Charter is a significant advance and outcome of the National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities. It is the result of a series of national forums focused on addressing equity and inclusion in Canadian post-secondary education organized by the University of Toronto in collaboration with other Canadian universities. See statement below from AU President:

“We acknowledge that anti-Black racism requires strategic directions such as those in the charter to foster a welcoming environment where Black excellence is intrinsic to reaching institutional excellence.”

[Algoma University President Asima Vezina](#)



*Photo left:  
Algoma University commits  
to Scarborough Charter*

*Photo right: 2022 Black  
History Month Keynote  
Speaker, Dr. David Nanang*



## ▶ EDI WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

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 2022-2023 academic year.

**Mary Wabano-McKay** (She/Her)

Vice-President Nyaagaaniid, Anishinaabe Initiatives, Equity and Student Success

**Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada** (She/Her)

Associate Professor, Sociology and EDI Academic Lead

**Jane Omollo** (She/Her)

EDI Manager

**Krista McCracken** (They/Them)

Researcher/Curator, Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre

**Ali Pearson** (They/Them)

PhD Student Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work University of Toronto and Algoma Alumni

**Aryn Lesage** (She/Her)

Academic Success Advisor

**Kareem Roberts** (He/Him)

Part time faculty, School of Business and Economics

**Iman Sohail** (She/Her)

Student Accounts, Awards and Scholarship Officer, Lead of Anti- Islamophobia Working Group and member of Anti-Asian Racism Working Group

**Jeremy Pereira** (He/Him)

Office Assistant, School of Business and Economics

**Sharzad Mohammed** (He/Him)

Enrolment Specialist

**Marisa Stopes** (She/Her)

Executive Assistant to VP - Nyaagaaniid

**Megan Parlowe** (She/Her)

Communications Officer

**Melissa Agawa** (She/Her)

Anishinaabe Cultural and Social Program Coordinator

**Rainbow Assiniwai** (She/Her)

Former Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students Association (SASA) President and SASA Student Representative

**Maddy Bifano** (She/They)

Community Access Assistant, Experiential Learning / Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre

**Dr. Dionisio Nyaga** (He/Him)

Assistant Professor, School of Social Work and Lead of Anti-Black Racism Working Group

*Continued on page 18...*

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**Dr. Sheila Gruner** (She/Her)  
Chair, Faculty of Social Sciences  
Associate Professor, Community Economic  
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Assistant Professor, Sociology/  
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Former Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students  
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Continuing Education Center, Lead of  
Anti-Asian Racism Working Group

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Equity Centre Program Coordinator,  
Algoma University Students' Union (AUSU)

**Rebekah Gwynn** (They/Them)  
Former Algoma University Students' Union  
President and Recording Secretary for  
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Former Coordinator, Global Engagement  
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**Brittany Paat** (She/Her)  
Academic Support Officer

**Darren Vaughan** (He/Him)  
Regulated International Student  
Immigration Advisor (RISIA), Student  
Success Advisor

**Kanchan Sarker** ( He/Him)  
Assistant Professor, Sociology

**Gilbert Totime** (He/Him)  
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**Jamal Muckett-Sobers** (He/Him)  
Manager, Brampton Operations

**Dillon Jayesingha** (He/She/They)  
EDIC 2SLGBTQQIPA+ member

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**Shanice Diab-Cox** (She/Her)  
Student Life Coordinator, Brampton



### **The Significance of the Hummingbird**

The hummingbird is a spirit animal and a symbol of diversity, resiliency, endurance and independence. They flap their wings 20-80 times per second visiting around 1,000 flowers a day. Despite their small size, they can fly great distances as well as fly backwards and upside down. They are the only bird that can truly fly in the same spot with ease, choosing to hover over their food rather than landing. As a result, they have come to represent agility and adaptability. There are over 350 species of these beautiful creatures presented in a rainbow of colours. They represent joy, hope and optimism. Other traits they symbolize include healing, good luck, sweetness, beauty and freedom. For these reasons, those leading the EDI initiatives at Algoma University feel a strong connection with this image.

### **The Thunderbird**

The Thunderbird represents the heart of the Algoma University brand.

Its thunder, lightning and rain cleanses and gives power to the earth and its people.



Adopted in the early 1970's from the pictographs within the Agawa Bay region of Lake Superior, it symbolizes our collective hope as we emerge from a dark past into a brighter future for all - learning from and with each other.

This report has been compiled by  
Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada, the EDI Academic Lead and Jane Omollo, EDI Manager.



# Algoma

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