Cape Breton University

BETTER TOGETHER

Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion in the Workplace

We acknowledge that Cape Breton University is situated in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) and Passamaquoddy People first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Cape Breton University

Section 1:

Message From CBU Executive

From its foundation, Cape Breton University has demonstrated a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in its dedication to building close relationships with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities; offering high-quality, accessible education; advancing innovative research; and encouraging a multicultural future for Cape Breton Island. "Better Together," CBU's Workplace EDI Action Plan, provides opportunities to strengthen this commitment by dedicating resources to reviewing and revising policies and developing EDI training opportunities to establish a university culture of equity and inclusion that supports all CBU employees.

We thank the Working Group and Advisory Committee for consulting broadly with employees and incorporating their feedback into successive draft documents. This work has resulted in a plan that identifies key priorities, actions, and indicators for achieving our EDI goals. We envision "Better Together" as a living document that will evolve as actions in the plan are implemented and CBU continues its ongoing work of becoming a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive institution.

Thank you to all CBU employees who have proven through their efforts that we are and always will be better together.

Section 2:

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Preamble

In April 2019 CBU embarked on an initiative to make our university a more, equitable, diverse and inclusive place to work and learn. The Better Together vision is one of a CBU culture that champions equity and diversity and provides an inclusive place to work, study and research. We recognize that a more equitable, diverse and inclusive university environment is one where academic excellence thrives. A central goal of our initiative was critical self-reflection to better understand our employees' experiences of equity, diversity, and inclusion. These insights would inform an Action Plan to guide our EDI initiative going forward. This critical examination included an inclusivity assessment conducted by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. The resulting report indicated there is a belief among employees that CBU is committed and supportive of EDI but that there are shortcomings in our institution's ability to support and foster diversity and inclusion.

Following the distribution of the Assessment Report, employees were invited to participate in an EDI Action Plan advisory group. In addition, employees were invited to join the working group that would develop the plan. This Working Group was assembled to do two things: to listen to members of the CBU workforce to determine a sense of what was working well and not working well; and to ask for suggestions on the kinds of changes the institution could make to improve this workplace. The group hosted numerous collaborative sessions with employees across campus to get further input on opportunities to support EDI initiatives and challenges to address for such initiatives to be successful.

Through this process, the Working Group learned a great deal about how members of the CBU workforce experience this organization as a workplace and a culture. They worked to understand when and how CBU employees feel valued, safe, secure, significant, and supported by a sense of belonging. We also learned when they do not feel some or all of these.

The working group then used the information that had been presented through the assessment report and gathered through the collaborative sessions to develop and write Cape Breton University's first EDI Action Plan.

The Action Plan includes strategies for both immediate and long-term interventions aimed at transforming CBU into a working environment that is physically and psychologically safe, accessible, and inclusive for all within its workforce.

Orienting Principles:

Key principles underpin this Action Plan. Although presented individually, these principles are interconnected and equally important.

Intersectionality is a principle that calls us to recognize that the categories of privilege and marginalization operating in our everyday realities are not themselves discrete or unique in their experience or their application. While we might speak of race, class, gender, sex, ability, sexual orientation, etc. as categories of privilege and marginalization we must consider how these categories intersect in people's lived realities. We cannot treat one as necessarily more significant than another as if there were some sort of hierarchy of marginalization. We must also recognize that these categories can operate as forms of privilege that mediate their marginalizing effects.

Decolonization is a principle that is embedded in the Calls to Action from the Truth & Reconciliation Commission. Decolonization calls us to recognize the operations of colonialism in the structures, practices, processes, and culture of institutions in general and of CBU. We use this principle to help us highlight the kinds of practices and processes grounded in Eurocentric and colonial assumptions and language. Once we illuminate the operations of colonial privilege and become more aware of the ways that this privilege marginalizes Indigenous knowledge and knowers, we can understand how these practices and processes foster exclusive and alienating environments. The result cannot be appropriation, but the building of environments that encourage employees to build inclusive and balanced approaches to education and policy. We also learned that Indigenous rights are constitutional, and the institutional commitments include constitutional, aboriginal and treaty rights, charter rights, human rights, and human dignity.

Accountability is the thread in this weave of key principles. We need mechanisms to assess if and when the strategies we are recommending are having the desired effects. Articulating a set of strategies or goals does not in and of itself ensure that they will be implemented or that their implementation will be supported on an ongoing basis.

We recognize that we have much work to do. We also recognize there is a willingness to listen, learn, and support one another. CBU will embark on this Action Plan with the urgency it deserves. Implementing this plan will help create a culture at Cape Breton University that fosters engagement with difficult conversations, recognizes and acknowledges the operations of privilege, creates space for people to make mistakes and learn from them, and encourages all of us to speak and act in ways that ensure everyone's wellbeing and sense of belonging.

To paraphrase Maya Angelou, stepping onto a brand-new path is difficult, but not more difficult than following a path that is not nourishing to the whole being. We can be Better Together, but only if we are willing to Be better, together.

Section 3:

Definitions

Source: Canadian Human Rights via Scott Thomas and "Igniting Change: Final Report and Recommendations" by the Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (AC-EDID)

Equity / Equitable
Equity refers to achieving parity in policy, process, and outcomes for historically and/or currently underrepresented and/or marginalized people and groups while accounting for diversity. It considers power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes, in three principal areas:
• Representational equity: the proportional participation at all levels of an institution;
• Resource equity: the distribution of resources to close equity gaps; and
• Equity-mindedness: the demonstration of an awareness of, and willingness to, address equity issues.

In the university context, equity requires the creation of opportunities for historically, persistently, or systemically marginalized populations of students, staff, and faculty to have equal access to education, programs, and growth opportunities that are capable of closing achievement gaps. This requires recognizing that not everyone is starting from the same place or history, and that deliberate measures to remove barriers to opportunities may be needed to ensure fair processes and outcomes

Decolonization
The principles, processes, and practices of decolonization are fundamental to a more equitable, diverse, enlightened, and inclusive institutional community. The sustainable future of higher education requires confronting and unsettling the impact of colonial histories, ideologies, experiences, and legacies on disciplines, archives, canons, curricula, methodologies, and pedagogies, as well as structures of governance, institutional design, cultures, symbols, and ceremonies. Decolonization is a necessary and ongoing process of unlearning, uncovering, and transforming legacies of colonialism, as well as utilizing the educational and knowledge systems available to relearn and rebuild the social, cultural, and linguistic foundations that were lost, or eroded through colonization.

Diversity

Differences in the lived experiences and perspectives of people that may include race, ethnicity, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, class, and/or socio-economic situations.

Diversity is a concept meant to convey the existence of difference. Each person's unique combination of differences contributes to their experiences in ways that can be both positive and negative. Diversity is not a spectrum or a measure. One person cannot be more diverse than another. Diversity is created when people who are different from one another come together, and includes everyone in the room.

Inclusion

Inclusion is an active, intentional, and continuous process to address inequities in power and privilege, and build a respectful and diverse community that ensures welcoming spaces and opportunities to flourish for all.

It is important to note that inclusion and Indigenization/Decolonization are two seemingly related concepts with distinct histories, contexts, and frames of reference. It cannot be assumed inclusion is a substitute for Indigenization/Decolonization.

Inherent Human Dignity

Inherent human dignity is a foundational concept of human rights. Principles, commitments, and actions to transform inequities in structures, processes, policies, and outcomes must be based on the recognition and affirmation of the inherent dignity of all peoples. Without the recognition of inherent human dignity of all peoples, actions to change will fall short.

Section 4:

Priorities & Actions

Priority 1: LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We heard that… CBU should ensure there are governance structures that demonstrate the continued commitment to EDI through stewardship, accountability and support (including conflict resolution). To nurture a culture where leaders are asking questions and listening. And where a speak-up culture is valued.

Action 1.1 **Establish a mentorship program for CBU Executive Committee members.**
- Guide and coach CBU's leadership team to build their understanding of, and accountability to, equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism in the context of workplace culture
- Nurture their commitment to identify and implement actions to support EDI, antiracism, and decolonization
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Until the recommendation on governance is made (Action 1.2), the initiative will continue to operate under the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, reporting to the Associate Vice President, Academic and Research.

Action 1.2 **Establish a Task Force to explore and make recommendations on a governance structure and accountability framework for the actions laid out in this Plan.**
- Propose a structure that is lean and responsive, entails minimal bureaucracy, and is attuned to issues that people are facing.
- Consider an Ombudsperson role at CBU.
- Identify and consult with other offices and committees whose work overlaps with EDI, including but not limited to CBU's Accessibility Committee, Jennifer Keeping Centre, Human Resources Office, Sexual Violence Policy Review Committee, Unama'ki College, and the Community United for Black Education Committee.
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Recommendations will be made to CBU Executive Committee

Action 1.3   Dedicate resources to steward Year 1 of the Actions outlined in this Plan.

- Provide dedicated resources to ensure all activities for the first year of this plan are fulfilled.
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Until the recommendation on governance is made (Action 1.2), the initiative will continue to operate under the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, reporting to the Associate Vice President, Academic and Research.

Action 1.4   Create a system that provides clarity regarding the appropriate university personnel and resources to consult for information and support.

- Create a comprehensive Org Chart or Employee Directory that clearly and consistently identifies 'who does what' within the university. This will allow employees to know who to talk to regarding accessing EDID resources and also details a reporting structure for any issues.
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 1.5   Establish accountability for EDI by incorporating diversity and inclusion components into job descriptions for leaders, directors, and managers.

- Emphasize the importance of the position in shaping culture (the intention is not to change duties).
- Consider resources made available through Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 1.6   Provide the Board of Governors and Senate with education and support to develop a joint commitment to EDI.

- Provide an opportunity for these governing bodies to learn about ways in which they can steward CBU's commitment to an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace. An example of another university's work in this area can be found at **here**.
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Office of the Vice-President Academic & Provost

Priority 2: PLANNING AND POLICY

We heard that… CBU should have hiring policies, processes, and clear guidelines/training for all search committees (and accountability of committee members). We heard that… CBU needs clarity with respect to conflict management processes and procedures to ensure that people feel safe and supported when reporting conflict situations.

Action 2.1 **Implement a system to collect demographic data of all that will provide a point-in-time snapshot of CBU's diversity profile.**
- Identify gaps and provide a benchmark for future assessment that aligns with CBU's Strategic Enrolment (SEM) process.
- Develop a Diversity and Equity Assessment and Planning tool (DEAP) in partnership with the University's Human Rights Office to assist faculties and their departments or divisions to better understand working environments and climate relating to equity and diversity, and how to plan for needed adjustments. Consider DEAP, a program used by some other universities.
- Utilize an Equity diagnostic tool to:
- Understand under-representation of staff, faculty, and students
- Assess how well individual departments or units are doing to promote equity and diversity
- Provide an opportunity to reflect on areas in need of improvement using the Diversity Score Card assessment template
- Garner support for any improvements needed to further departmental or faculty commitments to equity and diversity
- Develop an Action Plan and timeline for improvement
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 2.2 **Review and revise the Respectful Campus Policy (May 2016) to reflect CBU's commitment to EDI.**
- Add language and procedures to support transparent reporting and resolution of EDI-related issues.
- Address processes for dealing with conflict resolution
- Add a transparent reporting component to the policy that includes how instances are reported and who is responsible for resolving EDI issues.
- Revise the Respectful Campus Policy so that it reflects CBU's commitment to approaching conflict resolution from a decolonizing perspective.
- Ensure that the Respectful Campus Policy provides guidance on addressing micro-aggressions and supporting a speak-up culture.
- Provide training and education to all employees about the Respectful Campus Policy and related subject matter.
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Office of Human Rights and Diversity

Action 2.3 **Revise the Pregnancy & Parental/Adoption Leave Policy and Procedures (Policy 4.02 January 2018).**
- Enhance benefits during pregnancy and parental leaves of absence to align with EDI priorities and strengthen CBU's ability to attract and retain talented and engaged employees
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources, Office of Human Rights and Diversity

Action 2.4 **Ensure that all training for Managers and Leaders incorporates EDI education (Unconscious Bias, Bystander Training, best practices for inclusion, etc.) and develop a transparent process for selecting employees for these training opportunities.**
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 2.5 **Adopt a Name and Pronoun Policy.**
- Create a Name and Pronoun Policy that reinforces the importance of all individuals being referred to by the name and/or pronoun with which they identify.
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Office of Human Rights and Diversity

Action 2.6 **Develop a strategy for revising existing job descriptions, assessment strategies, and promotion processes that can provide equitable access to all.**
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Priority 3: TRAINING, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

We heard that… CBU should provide ongoing opportunities for everyone to learn about how each person's actions can impact our EDI goals. Learning is foundational to having a workplace where everyone is and feels valued. Everyone needs to have opportunities to engage in discussion, to learn from mistakes without fear of repercussion (psychological safety).

Action 3.1 **Create a strategic EDI communications plan that guides communication activities so that all employees know about education and training opportunities, where to find current policies, and who to go to for support.**
- Work with the Department of Human Resources as they strive to implement associated actions (for example, Action 1.4).
- Completion: Year 1-3
- Accountability: Department of Marketing and Communications

Action 3.2 **Phase 1 of creating CBU's EDI Learning Program: Host a series of conversations about equity, diversity, inclusion that will be archived and made available for all employees to learn about foundational EDI concepts. These would include but are not limited to antiracism, anti-oppression and anti-colonialism knowledge, awareness and training. Ally training should also be a priority.**
- Create the foundational material for the creation of an EDI learning program (Action 3.3).
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Office of Research and Graduate Studies

Action 3.3 **Phase 2 of creating CBU's EDI Learning Program: Create a Task Force to develop and launch a comprehensive EDI Learning Program that aims to provide foundational knowledge about equity, diversity and inclusion. During the development stages, input will be sought from faculty and staff who wish to offer guidance/expertise.**
- Consult Transforming Practice: Learning Equity, Learning Excellence curriculum that contains learning modules designed for both faculty and professional staff in Nova Scotia post-secondary institutions. These modules were created with the goal that each learning institution would find a way to make this their own.
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Office of Research and Graduate Studies

Action 3.4 **Phase 3 of creating CBU's EDI Learning Program: Establish a process for ongoing and targeted training to address issues and proactively share best practices across all departments and units. Provide tools and resources for practical application.**
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 3.5 **Develop conflict management, mediation, and resolution training for CBU managers and employees.**
- Align with the review and education of CBU's Respectful Campus Policy and Procedures (Action 2.2)
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 3.6 **Adapt the existing Bystander Program which includes a wide-range approach to supporting "speak-up" culture and provide opportunities for all employees to participate. Ally Training must also be provided.**
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Action 3.7 **Deliver, on a regular basis, a short mental health literacy learning program for all employees to increase awareness of mental illness and episodic disabilities.**
- Align with mental health and wellness initiatives already underway at CBU
- Recognize physical and mental health as overlapping and intersecting experiences and goals
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Department of Health & Counselling Services

Priority 4: ACCESSIBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY TO ACHIEVE ACCOMMODATION FOR SUCCESS

We heard that… CBU should support a workplace culture where differences are valued, without stigma or repercussions; where it is understood that individuals have different needs.

Action 4.1   **Ensure CBU meets its obligation under the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act to establish its first Accessibility Plan.**
- Align with the provincial mandate under the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act to remove barriers for persons with disabilities in accessing the built environment, delivery and receipt of goods and services, information and communication, education, employment, and transportation.
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: President's Office

Action 4.2   **Create an Accommodation Policy and Procedures to promote accessibility and flexibility.**
- Develop education for employees that explains the need for and benefit of an accommodation policy and reduces stigma around requests for accommodation.
- Create a plan for CBU to address its commitment to supporting Indigenous aboriginal and treaty and human rights.
- Assess employees' awareness of, and confidence requesting and using accommodation and work-flexibility supports and
- Provide training for managers on how to manage accommodation support requests.
- Completion: Year 2
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources

Priority 5: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

We heard that… CBU/we should focus on recruitment and retention of underrepresented (equity-deserving) groups. This requires data-informed EDI planning and decision making to monitor gaps and action to support underrepresented groups.

Action 5.1 **CBU in collaboration with the bargaining units and consultation with non-union employees will create a working group to identify guidelines and best practices that support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonizing/Indigenizing. Special attention should be given to recruitment, hiring, and probation, promotion, and tenure that support EDI and decolonization. Such practices will:**
- Uphold values of transparency and accountability
- Seek under-represented groups proactively
- Incorporate EDI-informed interpretations of vague language such as "best candidate," "fit," "excellence," "service," and "unusual circumstances"
- Recognize and reward Indigenous ways of knowing
- Recognize wide-ranging contributions to scholarship
- Value contributions to community and social life
- Seek input from those who served on the Accessibility Committee, EDI Advisory Committee, and those working towards Decolonizing and Indigenizing Completion: Years 1-3 (subject to collective bargaining processes)
- Accountability: President's Office

Action 5.2 **Form a Task Force of Senate to recommend strategies to develop decolonizing and EDI-focused academic programming that aligns with the SEM process.**
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: Senate

Action 5.3 **Establish an EDI Award to recognize members of the CBU community for their efforts to promote an inclusive and equitable workplace culture.**
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Until the recommendation on governance is made (Action 1.2), the initiative will operate under the Department of Human Resources

Action 5.4 **Ensure CBU meets its commitments as outlined in the MOU with the Community United for Black Education (January 2020).**

The MOU identifies three actions that are specifically related to address diversity and inclusion in the workplace. These are:

- CBU through its work on equity, diversity and inclusion will create policies that ensure African Canadians, and African Nova Scotians can self-identify (commitment 9.1).
- CBU will seek to hire, in key student services related positions and other positions throughout the University, people of African Nova Scotian descent to create opportunities for current and potential students to connect in a meaningful way with individuals from their community (commitment 9.2).
- CBU recognizes the object of diversifying the faculty and staff of CBU to be more representative of our community (commitment 9.3).
- Completion: Year 3 (renewal of the MOU in 2025)
- Accountability: CUBE Working Group

Action 5.5 **Build a Culture of Accountability to EDID**

- Further to "Priority 2: Planning and Policy", review and revise policies to remove colonial language and incorporate language that creates opportunities for reconciliation.
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources, Office of Human Rights and Diversity
- Further to Action 2.6, create a Joint Committee composed of representatives from Human Resources and respective unions to initiate discussions aimed at decolonizing job descriptions and recognizing contributions such as in-community service in hiring, tenure, and promotion processes.
- Completion: Year 1
- Accountability: Department of Human Resources
- Establish a culture of diversity, inclusion, and commitment to reconciliation in designating and recognizing holidays, and in creating workplace rules and relational ethics that align with TRC Calls to Action.
- Completion: Years 1-3
- Accountability: President's Office; Office of Human Rights and Diversity, Marketing and Communications
- Establish transparent, inclusive, and accountable policies for committee formation to ensure Indigenous and equity deserving groups are adequately represented.
- Completion: Year 3
- Accountability: Senate, Respective Schools and CBU Departments