

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT - CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS PROGRAM



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Institution:	Athabasca University
Reporting period:	April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026

As of the 2024-25 reporting period, reporting on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) progress is now completed through the annual *Institutional Report* (Section 3). As such, **Section 3** (this section) of the Institutional Report must be posted to the institution's public website.

3. EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Research demonstrates that achieving an equitable, diverse, and inclusive work environment leads to increased excellence, innovation, and impact. A diversity of experiences, perspectives, and voices is fundamental to achieving excellent research.

3. a) Key institutional actions in support of EDI in the CRCP

Share up to three key EDI actions related to the CRCP that were undertaken by the institution during the reporting period as well as their impact.

Key EDI action #1

- Describe the key action that was undertaken. (Maximum 1500 characters)

Recruitment of talent. Our current search for a Tier 2 CRC (SSHRC) will help Athabasca University (AU) recruit a researcher of international quality in a field in which AU has long-standing leadership. For the search, we have included language that ensures that the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are embedded as part of the process to evaluate applicants. AU currently exceeds its EDI targets, and we anticipate that a successful search will contribute to achieving or exceeding those defined for December 2027.

- Did this action relate to an objective named in your CRCP EDI Action Plan?

X Yes. Briefly describe the related objective. (Maximum 500 characters)

The framework for the search process aligns closely with the three overarching objectives of our EDI Action Plan by promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion for traditionally minoritized groups; improving CRC recruitment and retention processes to increase representation; and fostering meaningful, culturally safe research environments that support participant partnership and shared decision-making throughout the research process.

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☐ No

- Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period. (Maximum 1500 characters)

We are in the middle of the search process, but we have established a diverse and multidisciplinary committee to support the recruitment process. All members of this committee have received EDI training and will apply those principles when reviewing applications and making recommendations. Besides this, the institutional CRCP EDI Action Plan has contributed to building a supportive and inclusive research environment at AU.

- Describe any challenges encountered in undertaking this action, and any mitigation strategies that were employed. (Maximum 1500 characters)

In 2024, we held a similar search for a Tier 2 CRC (SSHRC), which was unsuccessful. The main reason for the lack of success was that the selected candidate accepted an offer from another institution. To ensure the success of the current search, we expanded the scope to capture international applicants, as well, and we retained

- Was funding from the CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion used for this action?

☐ Yes

☒ No

Key EDI action #2.

- Describe the key action that was undertaken. (Maximum 1500 characters)

Led by Dr. Candy Khan, Athabasca University's AVP-EDI, Athabasca University launched a 25-session EDI training series for staff and students in March 2025. The initiative was completed in July 2025. Delivered by All Things Equitable Inc., the program focused on EDI foundations, unconscious bias, microaggressions, inclusive leadership, and allyship.

- Did this action relate to an objective named in your CRCP EDI Action Plan?

☒ Yes. Briefly describe the related objective. (Maximum 500 characters)

This initiative contributes to the achievement of two overarching goals from our EDI Action

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Plan: ensuring an equitable and inclusive research environment for traditionally minoritized groups and establishing meaningful and culturally safe research environments in which the participants partner in decision-making during research. Making this opportunity available to students and staff contributed to building stronger communities.

☐ No

- Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period. (Maximum 1500 characters)

The expected outcomes from this initiative were: (1) sharing a streamlined and unified approach to EDI, and (2) empowering researchers in EDI. The initiative sought to enhance awareness and equip AU's research community with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively embed EDI principles within their research processes and activities.

- Describe any challenges encountered in undertaking this action, and any mitigation strategies that were employed. (Maximum 1500 characters)

This initiative encountered two primary challenges: ensuring the training content was relevant to Athabasca University's unique context and making the sessions accessible to a broad and diverse audience. To address the first challenge, we partnered with All Things Equitable Inc., an organization with extensive expertise in equity-focused programming and strong community engagement. To enhance accessibility, each session was offered five times, providing participants with flexible scheduling options and maximizing opportunities for participation.

- Was funding from the CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion used for this action?

☒ Yes

☐ No

3. b) CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Rate the importance the CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion has had on your institution in making progress in implementing measures to address systemic barriers:

- ☐ Not important
☐ Somewhat important

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- ☐ Important
- ☒ **Very important**
- ☐ Do not know
- ☐ Not applicable

3. c) Other EDI initiatives

Provide an example of an EDI initiative underway at the institution – that is broader than those tied to the CRCP that is expected to address systemic barriers and foster an equitable, diverse and inclusive research environment.

For example, are there projects underway that underscore the importance of EDI to research excellence? Is there additional training being offered to the faculty at large? Are there initiatives to improve the campus climate? Please provide hyperlinks where relevant in the box below. URLs should include https://. Note that collecting this information is a requirement of the 2019 Addendum to the 2006 Canadian Human Rights Settlement Agreement (clause 39.e) and provides context for the work the institution is doing in addressing barriers for the CRCP. (Maximum 2000 characters)

Nuksahtowin (Meeting Place) is Athabasca University's Indigenous gathering place and a welcoming resource for Indigenous students, communities, and allies. Established in 2001, it supports the recognition, preservation, and advancement of Indigenous knowledge, education, and oral traditions while fostering connections among learners, scholars, Elders, and communities. Guided by principles of reconciliation and Indigenous inclusion, Nuksahtowin promotes Indigenous ways of knowing across the university through courses, learning opportunities, and resources focused on language, culture, governance, law, and community development. It also serves as a hub for knowledge sharing, providing access to Indigenous-focused research resources, stories, events, and community-engaged learning opportunities.

Led by Priscilla Campeau, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Conciliation, and supported by Dr. Maria Campbell, Elder in Residence, Nuksahtowin has influenced the development of academic programs such as the Indigenous Business Major within the Bachelor of Commerce and the University Certificate in Indigenous Community, Economic Development and Planning. Both programs are offered through AU's AACSB-accredited Faculty of Business, reflecting the university's commitment to academic excellence and Indigenous engagement.

Through its initiatives, Nuksahtowin supports Indigenous student success, research, and scholarly engagement while advancing respectful relationships grounded in wahkohtowin (kinship and

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interconnectedness). It also creates opportunities for reflection, cultural understanding, and community engagement, ensuring that Indigenous voices, histories, and knowledge systems remain integral to Athabasca University's teaching, learning, and research environments.

End of Section 3 excerpt.