INSTITUTIONAL REPORT - CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS PROGRAM

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

Institution:	Athabasca University
Reporting period:	April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025

As of the 2024-25 reporting period, reporting on EDI progress is now completed through the annual *Institutional Report* (Section 3). As such, **Section 3** 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.

1. 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.
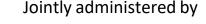
Key EDI action #1

- Describe the key action that was undertaken.

> (Maximum 1500 characters)
> Recruitment of talented researchers in accordance with our EDI Action Plan is paramount for Athabasca University. During the reporting period, we successfully nominated and onboarded a Canada Research Chair in Resurgent Methodologies for Indigenous Health. Our most recent CRC is both an accomplished researcher and a trusted leader of an Indigenous community; their research program significantly expands our knowledge on Traditional Healing practices, focusing on addressing significant gaps in Indigenous health research. Of particular relevance will be their work with the community to resolve the historic inadequate engagement of health research with land and settler colonialism, and to provide guidance and solutions to the urgent need for Indigenous-led governance and data management.

- Did this action relate to an objective named in your CRCP EDI Action Plan?
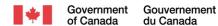
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▮ Yes. Briefly describe the related objective.

> (Maximum 500 characters)
> The recruitment of our most recent CRC directly supports the three overarching objectives in our EDI Action Plan, by ensuring an equitable and inclusive research environment for traditionally minoritized groups, enhancing the recruitment and retention processes for the CRC program to increase representation of traditionally minoritized groups, and establishing meaningful and culturally safe research environments in which the participants partner in decision-making during research.

☐ No

- Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period.

> (Maximum 1500 characters)
> We successfully nominated and recruited a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Resurgent Methodologies for Indigenous Health (CIHR). This new CRC is also the Co-Director of the Anishinaabe Kendaasiwin Institute (AKI) at Lakehead University and has a significant trajectory in the public and non-profit sectors. The research program led by this new CRC will be instrumental to our understanding of Indigenous knowledge and its implementation through Traditional Healing.

- Describe any challenges encountered in undertaking this action, and any mitigation strategies that were employed.

> (Maximum 1500 characters)
> Recruitment of this CRC required that the successful candidate be able to foster and expand their relations with the local Indigenous communities they worked with, which implied maintaining residence in another province. Given the relevance that this research program has to AU, the university made the decision to accommodate this request, made possible also through the functional hybrid work arrangements available at AU.

- Was funding from the CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion used for this action?
  ☐ Yes
  ▮ No

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☐ Select if you want to enter **Key EDI action #2**. [If selected, a set of questions identical to those for key action #1 is shown]

[If the above check-box is selected, a check-box for a third Key EDI action is shown]

- Describe the key action that was undertaken.

> (Maximum 1500 characters)
> Athabasca University, with the direct oversight by our new Associate Vice-President, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (AVP-EDI), Dr. Candy Khan, implemented a series of training sessions on EDI for staff and students, under "Foundations for Good Workplaces". The series of twenty-five one-hour team training sessions, delivered by the consulting firm All Things Equitable Inc., started in March 2025 and will continue throughout spring and summer 2025. The topics for the series included foundations for EDI, 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 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 contribute to building stronger communities.
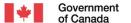
  ☐ No

- Describe outcomes and impacts this action supported during the reporting period.

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> (Maximum 1500 characters)
> The expected outcomes from this initiative are: (1) sharing a streamlined and unified approach to EDI. The initiative will lead to a more integrated and collaborative approach between AU's CRC EDI program and the newly established university EDI Office, led by the AVP-EDI. This will ensure better support, oversight, and alignment of EDI initiatives across the institution.
> (2) Empowering researchers in EDI. The initiative aims 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.
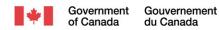
> (Maximum 1500 characters)
> The implementation of this initiative faced two key challenges: ensuring the content delivered was relevant to Athabasca University and its community and making the sessions accessible to a diverse group of participants. To address the first challenge, we engaged All Things Equitable Inc., a vendor with strong community rapport and expertise in equity-focused programming. To overcome the second, we requested that each session be offered at five different times, allowing attendees to choose the option that best fit their schedules and increasing overall accessibility.

- Was funding from the CRCP Stipend for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion used for this action?
  - ☒ Yes
  - ☐ No

- ☐ Select if you want to enter **Key EDI action #3**. [If selected, a set of questions identical to those for key action #1 or 2 is shown]

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:

[One selection possible]
- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Important

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■ 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.

One of the CRCP's expected results is to make the best possible use of research resources through institutional strategic planning.

(Maximum 2000 characters)

Nukskahtowin (Meeting Place) is a key initiative at Athabasca University designed to provide meaningful access to Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Through Nukskahtowin, students and staff can engage with courses and resources covering a wide range of topics relevant to Indigenous communities, including language, culture, governance, and law.

Led by Priscilla Campeau, Associate Vice President, Indigenous Conciliation, and supported by Dr. Maria Campbell, Elder in Residence, Nukskahtowin has helped shape academic offerings 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 housed in AU's AACSB-accredited Faculty of Business, reflecting a commitment to academic excellence and Indigenous inclusion.

Beyond academic programming, Nukskahtowin serves as a gateway to a rich array of research resources, including specialized libraries, databases, and tools developed by and for Indigenous peoples. Among these are innovative programs in Indigenous technology and language preservation, supporting both scholarly inquiry and community engagement.

End of Section 3 excerpt.

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