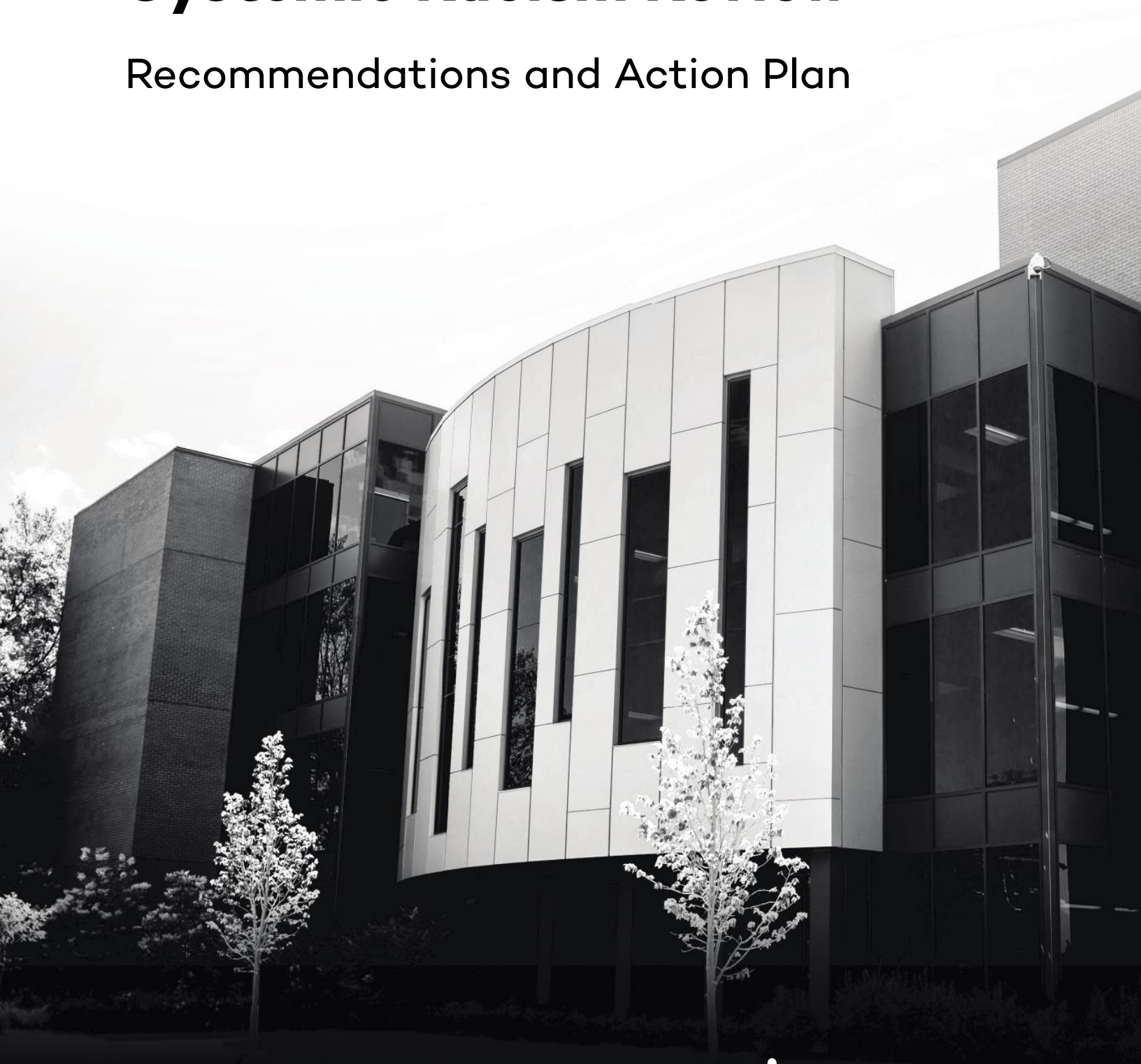


Report to College Community: Systemic Racism Review

Recommendations and Action Plan



November 2019

A Review of College Policy, Procedure and Practice to Address Calls to Action

This review was a worthwhile venture in that it identified areas for improvement within our institution, some of which were either already in progress or under development. Working with DiversiPro, we were able to use our collective knowledge to take the recommendations made within the policy, procedure and practice reviews and tailor a generic Lens document that meets the needs of our Indigenous students and employees, as well as those community members who participate on the Negahneewin Council. Staff from the Centre for Policy and Research in Indigenous Learning (CPRIL) were instrumental in ensuring that the northwestern Ontario Indigenous context was highlighted and acknowledged in this important work.

Confederation College has a historic presence in the City of Thunder Bay, and has a unique role in creating positive societal changes for the Indigenous peoples of northwestern Ontario as a recognized leader in Indigenous learning. We are guided by the vision of the Negahneewin Council. Among our aspirational goals is to navigate relationships that reveal the truth and build towards reconciliation that informs the success of our learners and is responsive to the training and development needs of communities and employers.

In 2018, Confederation College engaged with DiversiPro to identify how systemic racism had manifested within the organization as a part of our commitment to address the Calls to Action identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The work was structured into three parts: a review of policy and procedure, a review of practices, and the development of a Lens by which to develop and review policy and practice going forward. The purpose of the review was to identify areas of concern and to decolonize our work and learning spaces, to build bonds of trust and to establish mutually respectful, healthy relationships with students, employees, Indigenous partners and others in the wider community.

The plan was ambitious and had numerous challenges along the way including a very tight timeframe and unexpected changes to the steering committee. DiversiPro is an institution established by individuals with an extraordinary knowledge base in equity and human rights. While this knowledge base was critical to the project, the missing component was specific knowledge with respect to Indigenous peoples and their history within Canada and specifically, in northwestern Ontario. CPRIL was key to this project as they provided specific Indigenous knowledge to ensure that our reality in northwestern Ontario was reflected.

As a part of our commitment to address the findings and recommendations in the report, the College has invested \$150,000 per year for three years to fund the actions required to begin the important work of decolonizing the College. This funding will pay for the salary of the new Equity and Human Rights Advisor as well as many of the initiatives identified below. The Equity and Human Rights Advisor will be instrumental in the realization of the actions and commitments below.

There is a lot of content within the report that we feel that we need to address further. We will use the information provided and review our current actions and priorities to further inform our actions going forward.

This report summarizes the recommendations received from DiversiPro and identifies specific actions already taken or planned to address each recommendation.

Recommendations from Policy and Procedure Review

The policy and procedure review identified 12 recommendations. They are outlined below, along with our Confederation College response.

Recommendation #1 – Indigenous Equity and Decolonization Committee

“The College should create a Decolonization Committee comprised of representatives of all College sectors – all unions and management to play a leadership role. These participants must include Indigenous participants. This committee should operate in harmony to drive the College’s decolonization and anti-racism agenda. It would be responsible for creative ideas and solutions to create, maintain, and sustain a healthy work and learning environment and establish mutually healthy and respectful relationships amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.”

We accept this recommendation and will be creating this committee as a time-limited working group to develop a work plan to achieve the recommendations received. This committee will review all reports received and will consult with Indigenous students and employees to recommend the best course of action. This committee will be comprised of College management as well as students and employees. This committee will begin in January and conclude in March.

Recommendation #2 – Education and Capacity Building

“Design a curriculum for ongoing training for all faculty and staff that seeks to challenge and change the race ideology/dialogue and to create understanding and awareness of bias, inclusion and equity at Confederation College.”

We launched the “4 Seasons of Reconciliation” training program for all full- and part-time employees in the spring and are happy to report that 93% of full-time employees have completed the training. Some of these employees are on leaves of absence and will be required to complete the training upon their return to work. We are currently working on a strategy to ensure that all part-time employees also complete the training. Additionally, we have offered a series of professional development opportunities through the Negahneewin Education Strategy.

Recommendation #3 – Launch the DEI Lens

“Prepare a Policy and Protocol on usage of the new Diversity, Equity and Indigenous Lens.”

The Lens as presented by DiversiPro required substantial work to ensure it would be effective in our context. The document was overhauled over the summer months and will be ready for launch in January. Train the trainer sessions will be held, along with familiarization sessions for all employees. This will also be shared with our partners in the City of Thunder Bay Anti-Racism Accord.

Recommendation #4 – Human Rights Webpage

“Develop a webpage that will house the Lens and other human rights program materials.”

This is under development and will be launched in 2020.

Recommendation #5 – Accountability

“Revise the Vision, Mission and Goals statements promptly, to be launched when the College President announces the new strategic direction on decolonization and human rights.”

We are currently working to update our strategic plan, which will have an emphasis on Indigenous education and decolonization.

Recommendation #6 – Decolonization Policy

“Create a new decolonization (anti-racism) policy to explain the current focus on these issues.”

Our Anti-Racism policy has been developed and all constituent groups were consulted. The final version includes a policy statement, a comprehensive procedure that includes alternative dispute resolution strategies (including an option for a traditional healing circle), definitions, as well as a companion guide that is written in plain language to ensure accessibility for all.

Recommendation #7 – Data Collection: Policy, Procedures and Protocol for Data Collection

“Leadership and employee groups should reflect the demographics of the student clientele being served. In order to facilitate this, we recommend that demographic data be collected in accordance with the Regulatory Framework – Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism.”

This will be a priority in 2020, as we move the decolonization agenda forward.

Recommendation #8 – Social Media Policy

“A Social Media Policy should be created and linked with inappropriate use of College IT Resources and Student and/or Staff Code of Conduct.”

This is under development.

Recommendation #9 – Indigenous Students in Distress

“Develop a Policy on Indigenous Students in Distress/Suicide Deterrence.”

Recommendation to be reviewed further between the Equity and Human Rights Advisor, the Ombudsperson, the Learning Resources Division and the Academic Policy Committee.

Recommendation #10 – Create a Separate Policy on Respect

“Link this new policy to the various codes of conduct that already exist.”

This recommendation will be reviewed once the Anti-Racism Policy is introduced to the College community. We are unsure if the creation of more policy will be helpful to move this agenda forward. Rather, existing policies and processes will be reviewed to ensure that respect, inclusion and decolonization are reflected.

Recommendation #11 – Diversity and Inclusion

“Create a new diversity and inclusion policy (or include under the revised Human Resources Hiring and Promotion policy), that focuses on hiring processes that support the demographics of the student clientele being served by the College.”

As above, this recommendation will be reviewed once the Anti-Racism Policy is introduced to the College community to determine the most appropriate course of action.

Recommendation #12 – Human Rights

“Revise the Human Rights and Anti-harassment policy.”

This policy will be reviewed and revised to reflect the principles introduced in the Anti-Racism Policy.

Recommendations from Practice Review

The practice review identified 12 recommendations, some of which are related or similar to the ones identified above. The review was completed by meeting with students, employees and contractors including the following departments:

- Academic Deans and Chairs
- Accounting and Finance Managers
- Bookstore
- Campus Living Centre
- Counselling and Health Services Staff
- Employee Groups (OPSEU and OCASA)
- Facilities Services
- HR and Payroll
- Library and Testing Centre
- Marketing and Communications
- Regional Managers
- Registrar Department
- Sodexo
- Student Services
- SUCCI Board and Employees

Unfortunately, due to issues with flights, the consultants were late to arrive to the College, which resulted in many of the students who had planned to attend the session having to leave. We tried to follow up by sending a survey the following week but it did not have a good response rate. We have since been informed that surveys are not the best way to reach Indigenous students.

Recommendation #1

“That the College implement some structured opportunities for dialogue on difficult topics, such as racism, anti-Indigenous racism and inclusion, among members of the College community; and that the Human Resources Department and the Ombuds Office work together to develop a process whereby these constructive discussions can occur on a regular basis.”

The Negahneewin Education Strategy was created for exactly this reason. The strategy, championed by the Centre for Policy and Research in Indigenous Learning and supported by Organizational Effectiveness is comprised of pillars to ensure opportunities for ongoing learning and development for Confederation College employees. The groundwork was laid for this recommendation as a result of the implementation of mandatory training for all employees designed to provide a baseline of knowledge with respect to a more inclusive historical context of Canadian history. The 4 Seasons of Reconciliation training program includes nine modules covering topics such as treaties, the Indian Act and the creation and legacy of residential schools. We know that this program has been effective because our employees are now asking for more training and attending professional development sessions in greater numbers than ever before. We will be providing further opportunities on an ongoing basis going forward.

With respect to working with the Ombuds office, this has occurred for a number of years and the relationship has been strengthened through the connection established between the Ombudsperson and the new Equity and Human Rights Advisor. These two individuals have begun meeting to discuss the overlap and complementary nature of their roles and to provide advice and resources on a reciprocal basis.

Recommendation #2

“That the College, through the Office of the President, clearly articulate its expectations of staff, students and faculty in achieving its mission of creating a learning and working environment that acknowledges the rich history of Indigenous peoples and hold individuals accountable for upholding these values.”

The foundation to address this recommendation lies with the current strategic plan that specifically identifies strategies to increase supports to Indigenous peoples within our College community. We are currently in the process of creating our new strategic plan, which proposes to commit to strengthening Indigenous inclusion by integrating Indigenous knowledge as a distinct strategic pillar.

The President has committed the College to the priority of implementing all 7 Indigenous Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and developing and implementing mandatory training in this regard. She publically stated over the past year that this is a priority for our College and has supported mandatory training in this regard.

Recommendation #3

“That Confederation College clearly articulate its expectations of third-party vendors, including requirements for the hiring and recruitment of Indigenous candidates as part of any contractual agreement; and training around unconscious bias and Indigenous history for all employees and its Indigenous commitments in all contracts and agreements.”

We will review our current contracts in 2020 and as they expire.

Recommendation #4

“That, in the context of its collaborative relationship with SUCCI, the College should review the level of inclusiveness in SUCCI as it relates to Indigenous students; and its impact on the College’s overall mission and mandate to serve the needs of Indigenous students.”

This is a difficult recommendation to address because SUCCI is a separate and distinct organization. That said, we have an exceptional relationship with SUCCI and we enjoy a long and well-developed partnership in managing important projects of an equivalent magnitude. The College strongly embraces this important work and simultaneously commits to maintaining this relationship. We will share this recommendation with SUCCI.

Recommendation #5

“That the Safety and Security Department be strongly advised to enhance its training of security guards to include Indigenous history, unconscious bias and intercultural competence.”

Security guards are employees of a contracted firm. As Guarda World employees, they complete cultural diversity awareness training via an online training course. Additionally, they are required to complete the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation training and the Senior Manager of Public Safety recently brought in external trainers to deliver the Walk a Mile training. As part of the College community, guards will have ongoing access to courses offered through the Negahneewin Education Strategy.

Recommendation #6

“That the College put in place a process to hire security guards who self-identify as Indigenous.”

As identified above, the College is in a contractual relationship with a third-party contracted firm. That said, one current guard self-identifies as Indigenous. Once our new self-identification process is developed per the policy recommendations listed above (specifically Recommendation 7), we will be in a position to address this recommendation.

Recommendation #7

“That a more formal complaints process be established in all ancillary operations to better identify the effectiveness of practices and to hold employees accountable.”

The introduction of the new Anti-Racism Policy and Procedure will help to ensure that there is a mechanism by which complaints may be raised. An awareness campaign along with targeted training will ensure that all parties are not only aware of the policy, but also understand their rights and responsibilities.

Recommendation #8

“That the Ombuds Office have a closer working relationship with APIWIN, CPRIL and the Oshki Anishnawbeg Student Association (OASA) through a targeted outreach initiative to Indigenous students about its services and include appropriate tracking and monitoring of outcomes.”

The introduction of the new Equity and Human Rights Advisor has moved this recommendation forward. The Advisor regularly consults with the Ombuds Office and with CPRIL, and attends college-wide meetings to determine what is happening at each of the various tables. The Advisor will also be meeting with OASA representatives to determine how best to engage Indigenous students.

Recommendation #9

“That Indigenous students be consulted as to how they are engaging with the College, including individual and group interviews as well as an annual survey that could assist in the College in measuring the progress of their efforts to reduce systemic racism. This consultation should be designed and deployed with the help of Indigenous elders and others in the College—notably CPRIL—with deep knowledge and experience with Indigenous communities.”

The importance of this recommendation is not lost on the College. We recognize that the review process did not capture as many Indigenous students as it could have due to challenges external to the College. In an effort to engage more students, a survey was sent out but it had a very low response rate. We have since been advised by the OASA President that surveys are not the best mechanism to elicit feedback. We will therefore be working directly with OASA to determine the most appropriate way to consult with Indigenous students.

Recommendation #10

“That the College clearly message the entire community regarding their strategy to amplify the entire institution’s efforts at decolonization.”

This work began with the implementation of this review and has continued to current date. We will continue to provide regular updates in Town Hall meetings and our commitment to Indigenous education will continue to be reflected in our strategic plan.

Recommendation #11

“That job and salary evaluation practices be reviewed to ensure they are not overly reliant on formal education, compared to other ways of acquiring necessary skills that may be disadvantaging Indigenous candidates. There is a need to consider equivalencies and lived experience as a component of the job evaluation process.”

This is somewhat of a challenge considering that our job evaluation systems and salary levels for most employee groups are negotiated provincially. That said, we do have some flexibility as a College to determine what we need in many cases. The College will continue to work to find creative solutions to this challenge, including looking to equivalencies of formal qualifications where appropriate.

Recommendation # 12

“That, as part of ongoing learning and development of all staff and faculty, the College include staff development around decolonization and equity, using a valid psychometric tool to assess how individuals are bridging cultural differences.”

Our commitment to ongoing learning and development is reflected within the Negahneewin Education Strategy. We will continue to explore and offer new learning opportunities for our employees to ensure we are indeed the employer of choice that we strive to be.

Creation and Tailoring of the Diversity, Equity and Indigenous Lens

As a part of the review process DiversiPro was tasked to develop a Lens by which our policies, procedures and practices could be viewed to ensure equity is consciously considered in the course of our every day work.

The core of the Lens is a series of questions that should be applied before, during and after actions taken by a department or other areas in the College. Regarding the policy, program or every practices, these questions enable the College to determine:

- Whose reality is reflected and whose isn't?
- What assumptions are being made that may impact Indigenous peoples?
- In its current state how could this policy, program or practice be disadvantaging Indigenous populations?
- What needs to be done to address inequities and inconsistencies?

The Lens examines policies, programs and practices at three levels:

- Particulars (content)
- Perspective
- Principles

Once the status quo is diagnosed based on the questions posed, with the help of the forthcoming “Applying the Lens” guide, the College is able to determine a course of action that addresses gaps surfaced.

While it was originally anticipated that the Lens and Guide would be ready for full implementation in September 2019, the work has taken longer to complete for a number of reasons. The Lens was developed following generally accepted principles with respect to diversity and inclusion. While the work was valuable, we were required to review and ensure that it met our specific needs: that is, to ensure equity in a small college in northwestern Ontario.

The decolonization portion of the lens required significant work by the Centre for Policy and Research in Indigenous Learning to ensure that, when applied, it would result in the anticipated outcomes. This work was completed over the past several months and we now feel comfortable enough to share it with our College community and with our community partners belonging to the City of Thunder Anti-Racism Accord.