



# Algonquin College

## Office of the President

April 30, 2021

Ontario Human Rights Commission  
Ena Chadha, LL.B., LL.M.  
Chief Commissioner  
180 Dundas Street West,  
Suite 900 Toronto ON M7A 2G5

Dear Ms. Chadha:

**RE: Response to April 14 letter requesting actions to address systemic discrimination**

Algonquin College is an institution that prides itself on four fundamental values: Caring, Learning, Integrity and Respect. Algonquin College values both the dignity and uniqueness of the individual, and equity and diversity in our community. Holding true to this core value, our 2017-2020 People Plan reinforces Human Resources' role and commitment, with a particular goal to "build a learning workplace that is respectful, diverse, inclusive and healthy."

In 2019, the College released a 3-year plan to drive momentum on Inclusion and Diversity by committing to our first Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint that focuses on instilling the values of equity and diversity across the College. Achieving successful and sustainable inclusion and diversity is an ongoing pursuit. It must be seen as a journey, not a destination.

The intention of this work is codified in the [HR24 Policy: Inclusion & Diversity](#). The purpose of this policy is to express Algonquin College's beliefs, values and commitment regarding inclusion and diversity in the workplace. It aims to ensure that the College's voice about inclusion and Diversity are consistent and commitments to living our values related to inclusion and diversity are clear. The creation of a workplace that is diverse, inclusive, respectful and protects the human rights of all employees, including those groups designated under the Ontario Human Rights Code, requires the work of every member of our college community, across all our campuses, including students, employees, visitors, alumni and guests.

The following information addresses a number of areas within the College that are working towards sustaining equitable and inclusive education environments, including Human Resources policies, on-going learning and development opportunities for our faculty and staff, Students Services strategies, support for our International students, residence and security processes, and how we are embedding Indigenization into the fabric of our work.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

Algonquin College is committed to fostering a climate in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and in which the human rights of its employees, contractors and volunteers are respected. Harassment and discrimination as defined above will not be tolerated by the College in its educational, employment or business dealings. [Our Respectful Work Policy, HR22](#), articulates the College's commitment to the following:

- a) Every individual has the right to file a complaint of harassment or discrimination, participate or cooperate in an investigation, provide information relevant to the complaint or act in any role under this policy without fear of retaliation or reprisal. The rights of both complainants and respondents will be safeguarded to the extent possible with respect to the hearing of complaints.
- b) The College recognizes its responsibility to deal quickly, fairly and effectively with complaints of harassment and discrimination should they arise.
- c) The College will take all reasonable steps to ensure awareness of this policy and will be proactive in undertaking an education/prevention campaign in relation to its provisions.
- d) Any person who believes he/she has been subject to discriminatory or sexual harassment or discrimination continues to have the right to make application to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. In addition, every person retains his/her right to pursue other applicable legal avenues, such as through a collective agreement or the justice system, even when steps are being undertaken by the College. The College procedures will continue at the same time a person is exercising his/her rights outside of this policy.

## **ACADEMIC/LEARNING AND TEACHING SERVICES**

In the 2020-21 academic year, [Learning and Teaching Services](#) (LTS) continued its ongoing commitment to provide professional development and faculty support on a variety of inclusive education topics. The [Intercultural Teaching and Learning Institute](#) provided professional development workshops on:

- Teaching an Intercultural Class: Engaging Adult Learners
- Intercultural Teaching and Learning Online Course
- Strategies on Having Difficult Conversations with Intercultural Learners
- Learner Diversity and Variability in Second Language Classrooms

In addition to offering these workshops internally to College faculty, they were also offered asynchronously to our partners in the Multi-College Collaboration Model (MCCM); including faculty from Lambton College, Northern College and Sault College.

For the past three years, LTS has offered the "[Teaching Women in Tech Programs](#)" training program to faculty across the college. This two-day program is part of the "We Saved You a Seat Program" at Algonquin College which aims to increase the number of female students graduating from tech programs by providing scholarships, mentorships, saved seats and faculty training. So far 76 professors have completed the training, with more sessions planned for spring 2021. This program covers topics such as: gender stereotypes in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) classrooms, male and female brain science and teaching, creating equitable classrooms, handling micro aggressions, designing assessments and planning inclusive curriculum.

In 2020-21, LTS established the [Critical Pedagogy Initiative](#), which provides support to College faculty who are interested in enhancing inclusion in their learning environment that recognizes and represents learner diversity. This year, the Critical Pedagogy Initiative curated a webpage of resources for faculty, developed and delivered four inclusion-related workshops, and established a faculty book club that meets monthly to discuss various equity and anti-racism texts. For the 2021-22 academic year, in addition to expanding its programming, the initiative has four new workshops in development, is establishing a cross-college working group of faculty, and building partnerships with diverse student groups and academic committees.

LTS is also in the process of hiring a Curriculum Consultant specific to Indigenous Pedagogy who will be responsible for developing and implementing programs and initiatives to advance Algonquin's priority to include Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing in curricula and teaching practices.

### **LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**

Algonquin College provides ongoing learning and development opportunities for all members of the College community in the field of diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. Events organized from our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion office in the past year have included:

On February 5th, 2020, HR Programs presented a learning opportunity for employees on Anti-Black Racism. Robyn Maynard, the author of 'Policing Black Lives: State violence in Canada from slavery to the present,' presented a keynote address on 'Beyond Inclusion: Black Liberation Otherwise.'

A Panel Discussion on Race in Education - September 23, 2020. The Algonquin College community gathered for a candid conversation on Race in Education. The panel featured three experts: Meghan Wills, Chair for Parents for Diversity; Tim McCaskell, author of the book Race to Equity: Disrupting Educational Inequality; and Pascale Diverlus, co-founder Black Lives Matter -Toronto; moderated by Annette Carla Bouzi, professor in the School of Business at Algonquin College and President of the faculty union. Also available as a podcast here: [A Discussion on Race in Education](#)

[Taking a Stand: Disrupting Black and Indigenous Racism](#) – a week of events, presentations and workshops during 1-5 February 2021, organized by the Inclusion and Diversity Circle along with Indigenous and Black advisors, and the support of the entire College community. The week's goals were to: Building awareness and offering the opportunity to learn about racism and becoming anti-racist; Providing visible commitment and support to the Black and Indigenous members of the Algonquin College community; Celebrating Black and Indigenous cultures and; Encouraging the community to take action to foster an inclusive College. Events included the following:

- [White Fragility: What to Know and How to Combat It with Larissa Crawford](#)
- Empowering Black Wellness Sessions
- [Indigenous Wellness Sessions](#)
- [Keynote Address with Desmond Cole](#) – Author of, 'The Skin I Am In.'
- [Hair, Culture, & Identity](#)
- [Fireside Chat on "Finding Your Voice" with Waubgeshig Rice](#)
- [Creating Safer Classrooms for Black and Indigenous Learners](#)
- [How Disrupting the Hiring Process Can Increase Representation](#)

We have also [created resources](#) and dedicated training programs to equity, diversity and inclusion:

- [Inclusion Infusions Blogs](#): These short blogs reach an audience of over 300 readers with each publication. ABR topics addressed to date include:

- [Othering](#)
  - [Developing Your Muscle for Racial Stamina](#)
  - [Focusing on Equity in Education](#)
  - [Leveling Up Your Inclusion Language](#)
  - [Five Podcasts on Racial Inclusion and Exclusion](#)
  - [Racist Lexicon](#)
  - [Advancing Black and Racialized Talent](#)
  - [Black Liberation Otherwise](#)
  - [Diversity Fear and Courage](#)
  - [Comfort, Power, Privilege](#)
  - [Identifying Casual Racism](#)
  - [Unconscious Bias](#)
  - [Anti-Black Racism](#)
  - [Blackface](#)
- On October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 “[Ethical Upstander Training](#)” become available for employees of the College. This is an advanced four-hour Inclusion & Diversity workshop that provides participants with the basic skills to become an active bystander, with a distinct focus on racial microaggressions. At the completion of workshop, participants are able to: Identify commonly targeted social identity groups; Understand and counter the “bystander effect” psychology at the root of inaction; Recognize the conditions which promote and inhibit bystander intervention; Use a variety of strategies to effectively interrupt potentially harmful situations; Respectfully support those who have been targeted and; Effectively “call in” those in our community who are doing the harm.

### **STUDENT SERVICES**

Our Student Services Division oversees a number of policies, procedures and mechanisms to ensure the creation and maintenance of safe and inclusive places to learn and to have a great college experience that is free of systemic barriers to participation.

- **Active outreach to solicit student participation and reflect student perspectives** to ensure that student interests inform actions and direction in the development of College initiatives, such as the Strategic plan, a new student information system, and the Learner Driven Plan. Both academic and non-academic committees and working groups include student representation. (The diversity of our Students Association, on an ongoing basis, may be one small but reflective element of this approach.)
- **Comprehensive procedural mechanisms** through which students can seek accountability, redress and remedy where possible from all members of the College community, as appropriate:
  - The **Student Complaint Policy**, which allows students to either informally or formally raise any College-related concern to the highest level necessary for investigation and decision-making.
  - **The Student Conduct Policy**, which provides a venue to address non-academic misconduct by students against other students, other members of the College community, and the College itself.
  - **Sexual Assault/Sexual Violence policy**, which provides both personal and academic supports to students, directs them to safe spaces, and provides counselling and medical services, while always respecting the student’s decision to choose the response most appropriate to them (please reference Appendix A attached annual report).

- **Student Feedback**, all students are invited to provide feedback on their experience at Algonquin College in annual Program Reviews and Student Experience surveys each semester and through the Ombudsmen’s Review Committee and Student Association College Collaborative Committee.
- **Promotion of a “safe” and inclusive campus** through compulsory training, policy and “roadmaps” for all employees on sexual assault/sexual violence and how to intervene appropriately to support students.
- **In-house Counselling Services**, which remain available both on campus and remotely, to assist students with counselling regarding mental health, academic and career concerns. This service is augmented through the mental health partnership with the Royal Ottawa Psychiatric Hospital to supplement existing services .
- **Service units supporting students:**
  - **Mamidosewin Centre** has a goal to “empower and support Indigenous students at Algonquin College into the next phase of their lives”.
  - **The Centre for Accessibility (CAL)** is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible campus. CAL provides support to students with visible and non-visible disabilities who self-identify.
  - **Health Services (in-house)** provides a full range of physical and mental health services to all students.
  - **The Spiritual Centre** welcomes and provides multi-faith activities, worship, learning and community building opportunities.
  - **The Office of the Ombudsman** provides an independent, impartial and confidential process through which students at the College may pursue the resolution of any College-related concern. The Office of the Ombudsman may initiate systemic investigations where evidence indicates such an approach is needed.
  - **AC Hub** promotes and provides unique opportunities for students to embrace diversity and difference through travel and volunteering internationally (please see appendix B for annual report).
  - **Aspire AC** works with traditionally disadvantaged students, helping them to get to College and to succeed once they are here.

### **INTERNATIONAL**

The International Education Centre provides service delivery that focusses on supporting international students in a new and changing environment. We strive to support international students in their new home in Canada and understand that international students require more than academic support if they are to be successful in Canada. We provide holistic, personalized support to help them successfully integrate into Canada’s social fabric.

### **RESIDENCE**

Campus Services demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion through policy, residence programming and awareness training. Our Residence policy PM 06 ensures rooms are set aside for Indigenous and International students leading up to the beginning of an academic year. The Residence team works to encourage diversity and acceptance through programming initiatives and leadership opportunities. Campus Services ensures employees have access to and mandates participation in professional development and awareness activities provided by Algonquin College.

These include diversity training, Indigenous awareness and hiring practices that ensure our teams are reflective of our diverse student population.

### **SECURITY SERVICES**

The Security Services area has always, and continues to strongly demonstrate diversity, equity and inclusion in its recruitment and staffing practices. Equity is also instilled into the pay administration structure, that is set apart from the contract security industry standards in order to attract and retain a complement to serve the College needs that not only reflects the diversity of the broader community, but promotes an environment free from all forms of racism and gender inequality. All members of the Security Services program undergo training in areas of mental health, gender equity and cultural diversity and participate regularly in College training initiatives surrounding these topics, including training offerings such as pride at work 2SLGBTQ+ Bridging Cultural Diversity, Diversity in the Workplace, Equal Opportunities, Sisters in Spirit and Disrupting Black and Indigenous Racism.

Within the range of services provided to the College community, Security Services is often involved in complaints relating to these topics and maintains the same high investigative and administrative standards of conduct as it does for all of our services to ensure the proper investigation of matters and administration of adjudicative processes, in accordance with the policies of the College.

### **OFFICE OF TRUTH, RECONCILIATION AND INDIGENIZATION**

The Office of Truth, Reconciliation and Indigenization embeds equity, diversity and inclusion into all of its work. Initiatives, while founded on Indigenous Knowledge, do not focus solely on Indigenous learners. In fact, over the past four years, a variety of initiatives have helped to identify historic and systemic barriers to Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and address their dismantling through professional development opportunities such as '4 Seasons of Reconciliation', the inclusion of Indigenous governance models in the EDI Circle, which the Indigenous Student Counsellor attends regularly, and a considerable investment in infrastructure that is reflective of and empowers equity, diversity and inclusion.

Our current focus, which will carry us well into the future, is working very closely with college and student leadership in order to ensure inclusion of Indigenous Ways of Knowing into the governance model of the institution, such that it becomes and remains accessible. All of this work combined, enhances the colleges core values of Caring, Learning, Integrity and Respect. The Office of Truth, Reconciliation and Indigenization has operationalized the [Seven Grandfather teachings](#) and will continue to embed traditional Indigenous Knowledge into the very fabric of our fine institution.

Thank you for offering Algonquin College an opportunity to provide you with this very detailed and fulsome response. We remain steadfast in our journey of creating a culture of inclusion, and the strategies for how we will pursue and integrate inclusion and diversity into our policies, processes, operations, and services.

I am available to you and your colleagues, should you have additional questions or wish to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Claude Brulé  
President and CEO  
Algonquin College