

Good morning, Kwe, bonjour à tous et a toutes.

Welcome to our distinguished guests, colleagues and learners. I am so pleased to be here today to participate in the opening of Algonquin College's first full week of events aimed at addressing racism and celebrating Black and Indigenous culture. It's another step in our ongoing journey to build awareness, learning and critical thought around the College's role in creating an anti-racist society.

This week will allow us to explore what we need to do to create an institution where everyone belongs, and lives our values of caring, learning, integrity and respect.

You may recall having seen a call go out on myAC for Black and Indigenous Advisors to our Inclusion and Diversity Circle. That call was in recognition of placing the needs and lived experiences of Black and Indigenous people at the heart of this action.

By listening, seeing and understanding the experiences of our Black and Indigenous colleagues, we are intentionally addressing our institutional mechanisms that can hinder these experiences from coming to light. I invite you to amplify this visibility by taking a moment to celebrate our advisors:

- **Alem Legesse** – Professor, School of Advance Technology
- **Greg Mapp** – Program Coordinator, Aviation Management

- **Jackie Tenute** – Aboriginal Counselor, Mamidosewin Centre
- **Marcus Christian** – Classification Specialist, Human Resources
- **Marina Westbrook** – Professor & Coordinator, Aboriginal Studies
- **Sacha Leduc** - Online Student Pathway Advisor, AC Online

In conceptualizing and building this week's series of events, the members of the expanded Inclusion and Diversity Circle asked our Black and Indigenous advisors what topics they wanted to bring forward, who the speakers should be, and to define event goals.

With the direction established, this group of leaders and allies then contracted, planned, marketed and secured sponsors.

This is allyship in action – where a person of privilege works in solidarity with a marginalized group of people to help take down the systemic barriers that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society. Allyship exemplifies our value of caring – it is an act of empathy.

The end result is 15 important events happening this week that were organized and planned in a decentralized fashion by a truly qualified leadership team.

You will note that there are two events daily designated for “Afro-Caribbean Black” only and “Indigenous people” only. These sessions offer safe spaces and will be led by trained counsellors. Engaging in events that highlight the realities of racism and traumatic lived experiences can be exhausting and triggering. Prioritizing the mental health of Black and

Indigenous attendees when the topics put them at risk is an important part of creating an anti-racist institution.

I also want to highlight the cross-College collaboration in making this week a reality. The cost for each event has been sponsored by the Academic Area, Counselling Services, the AC Hub, my Office, the Student's Association, Truth Reconciliation & Indigenization, and Human Resources.

And this collaboration extends to launching a series of actions and changes within the College. The Advancement team is seeking resources to support our Black and Indigenous learners by highlighting the James McNulty Bursary, which is given, based on financial need, to an Indigenous, Black or a New Canadian practical nursing student. If you are inspired to give, the donation link is on the event website.

The Program Quality Assurance Committee within Academic Development is calling for proposals to diversify the General-

Education and Degree-Breadth courses. Faculty are invited to identify courses for development on the topic of Indigenous culture, reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Human Resources has a current pilot initiative in which faculty applicants are asked to submit a written statement of their skills and experience in contributing to an inclusive campus where everyone belongs.

Additionally, our Algonquin College employee mentoring program will be saving seats for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour employees with leadership aspirations in our September 2021 intake. For more details on how to participate, go to algonquincollege.com/pd and look for the Leadership Mentoring Program.

In closing, I have a few questions for everyone. **What does action look like?** What can we do to change our internal

dialogue and inherent biases? How can we create more respectful and inclusive daily interactions? How do we identify and alter instances of institutional racism, in hiring, in learner recruitment, and in our curriculum?

All of these examples of action impact and influence one another, and a series of actions here WILL shift our culture to one that is more equitable, diverse, and inclusive. I am issuing a challenge to our College leaders and our student leaders... take time in your team meeting this month to reflect on the knowledge and the learning you will acquire this week to answer these questions.

What actions can YOU take to make Algonquin College a place where EVERYONE belongs*you* are invited to Take a Stand.

Thank you, miigwetch, merci.