

BCIT EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION Progress Report 2024

Canada Research Chair Program (CRCP)

Key EDI action #1

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

BCIT's Respect, Diversity & Inclusion (RDI) office advanced equity and belonging through the Diversity Circle program, which hosts events that engage faculty, staff, and students in meaningful dialogue and learning. We hosted 7 events during this time period, with events covering the areas of neurodiversity, accessibility, conflict resolution, body inclusivity, and equity. Our events on neurodiversity and accessibility invited community partners like the Canucks Autism Network to share strategies to support folks on the autism spectrum, as well as hosting panels consisting of students, educators, and administrators to better understand the experiences of neurodiverse learners and access to accommodations. We explored anti-fat bias and strategies for dismantling weight stigma, and addressing growing societal and workplace polarization. Our Celebrating Black Excellence event honored Black contributions and fostered racial equity. There was also an event featuring how Indigenous knowledges and approaches can support land restoration through a seven step strategy that promotes reconciliation and sustainability.

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

- Yes. Briefly describe the related objective. (Maximum 500 characters)
- No

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

We held seven Diversity Circle events with over 200 participants and achieved a strong satisfaction rating of 4.27 out of 5.00. These sessions went beyond dialogue as they equipped the BCIT community with practical knowledge and strategies to identify systemic and structural obstacles, begin to dismantle inequities, and foster inclusive practices. Participants at our events shared a desire to apply EDI principles in their work; start to identify and eliminate barriers to

participation; enhance equitable representation; and embed EDI values across academic, research, and working environments. The events also built a small community of staff and faculty, encouraging individuals to get to know each other and expand their networks. Collectively, these events created recurring spaces for reflection and action, driving systemic change and positioning diversity as a catalyst for innovation and excellence at BCIT.

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

One challenge was identifying topics that resonated with the diverse needs of our BCIT community while aligning with institutional priorities and the Canada Research Chair Program's EDI objectives. To address this, we asked staff, faculty, and students about their learning needs. In addition, our post-event surveys ask participants to share what topics they would like for future Diversity Circle events. This consultation with the community ensures that future sessions reflect emerging interests and gaps. Another challenge was scheduling events at times that accommodated busy academic and operational calendars, which have limited participation in the past. We mitigated this by offering hybrid formats, rotating event times to maximize inclusivity, taking advantage of timeslots where faculty are encouraged to engage in professional development, and providing food. We also promoted our events widely through our networks, newsletters, and word of mouth. These strategies strengthened engagement and ensured that Diversity Circle events remained accessible, relevant, and impactful in fostering an inclusive environment.

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)

BCIT's Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion office received training from Kwela, a consulting agency that focuses on developing leaders and organizational development. The training equipped RDI staff with skills to champion equity, diversity, and inclusion across BCIT's academic and research ecosystem. In particular, it focused on how the RDI office could better support our academic and research units, recognizing the unique circumstances that differ from our student services and administrative units. Using an EDI lens, Kwela focused on building cultural competence, inclusive leadership strategies, and community engagement skills to enhance how we consult and support the academic Schools. This consulting supports the CRC program by demonstrating proactive measures to remove systemic barriers and foster equitable recruitment, retention, and advancement of researchers from underrepresented groups. By strengthening the RDI team's capacity, Kwela ensures that BCIT can design and implement robust EDI initiatives, support faculty in embedding EDI in their work, and cultivating inclusive environments.

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

- Yes. Briefly describe the related objective. (Maximum 500 characters)
- No

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

The training has improved RDI's ability to consult the BCIT community on strengthening inclusive leadership skills, focusing on psychological safety, bias awareness, and conflict resolution. This has enabled RDI to embed EDI principles into institutional policies and academic governance, creating a foundation for systemic change. Over the year, RDI advisors have consulted with each School to learn more about their needs and situation. Specifically, they've inquired about EDI plans and goals for each School and have helped shaped initiatives that goals that each School can accomplish to advance EDI goals to cultivate more welcoming and inclusive academic and research environments. The training has also supported the advisors in handling individual cases by taking more of an EDI perspective when addressing potential allegations of harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

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

The main challenge was ensuring that RDI Advisors understood the needs of the academic schools without placing further burden on already heavy workloads. The training supported the

Advisors in understanding how best to consult with Schools without adding more work and instead, framing the support as helping address existing workload. A key aspect was being able to provide an EDI lens on existing work so that Schools would see RDI as a resource to solve day-to-day problems, with an EDI perspective. This approach has helped us better connect with the Schools and highlight the value of EDI in addressing problems, especially those that may not necessarily seem to involve EDI.

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

- Yes
- No

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 only please)

- Not important
- Somewhat important
- 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)

The Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion (RDI) office at BCIT is currently developing two important action plans for the institution: the Canada Research Chair EDI Action Plan and an updated Accessibility Plan. Both plans advance our commitment to EDI in the academic, research, and working environment. In addition, the completion of both plans will help us craft a longer-term EDI strategy for the institution in the future. For now, the RDI office has posted our annual action plan publicly on our website which will be updated with what we've done to increase accountability to the community.

We have also organized a wide range of workshops and training this year that utilizes the remaining funds from our EDI stipend. This includes a series on how faculty and staff can best support neurodiverse learners through neuroaffirming practices. RDI, in collaboration with the ConnectHER Hub, organized a day of professional development for women and gender-diverse trades faculty, recognizing the importance of addressing systemic barriers to the participation of women and gender-diverse individuals in academic and research environments in the skilled trades. Additional training has been offered on conflict resolution and mediation as the

institution offers proactive strategies and skills to promote more inclusive ways to resolve conflicts between individuals and groups. Training has been provided through an EDI lens, recognizing the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups, including women, Indigenous Peoples, 2S/LGBTQIA+, and racialized minorities, when encountering conflicts in the academic, research, and working environment. We have more training and workshops scheduled that utilize our stipend, with further topics on neurodiversity and conflict resolution as well as microaggressions.

<https://www.bcit.ca/accessibility-hub/>

<https://www.bcit.ca/respect/bcit-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy/>

<https://www.bcit.ca/respect/education-and-awareness/>

<https://www.diversitycircles.com/events/>

<https://www.bcit.ca/news/stories/building-inclusive-trades-learning/>