

**If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.**

- Lilla Watson

**Project 4.3/4.4: Recruitment & Retention of Indigenous Employees and Recognition of Contributions**

In 2019 the University of Manitoba's (UM) Indigenous Senior Leadership (ISL) Advisory Committee finalized a report outlining methods for enhancing the mandate for Indigenous Senior Leadership and promoting Indigenous engagement and achievement at the University of Manitoba. From this report six project teams were created, each with a specific mandate focused on supporting Indigenous leadership.

Project team 4.0 was assigned with implementing five tasks focused on the promotion of a *Supportive Environment for Indigenous Faculty, Students, Staff and Guests*. The following report reflects the culmination of work conducted by two Project 4.0 subcommittees assigned with the development of recommendations to address:

- Recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees;
- Development and implementation of professional development programs for Indigenous faculty and staff; and,
- Recognition of the contributions of Indigenous students, staff, faculty, alumni and community when requests extend beyond the normal expectations of service.

Subcommittee members and contributors to this work included:

- Office of Human Rights and Conflict Management, Meghan Menzies
- Office of the Vice-President (Indigenous), Christine Cyr
- Indigenous Student Centre, Denise Proulx
- College of Nursing, Marla Robson
- Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, Dr. Heather McRae
- SEED Winnipeg, Pam Krasniuk

The subcommittees have identified six key issues arising from consultations with community and lived experience and have provided accompanying recommendations for addressing these issues. The recommendations below are all grounded in the principles underpinning the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* and the University of Manitoba's Strategic Plan: *Taking our Place*.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [Taking Our Place: University of Manitoba Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020](#). See specifically at pg 16: "We are committed to fostering the development of the next generation of Indigenous leaders by providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment that promotes Indigenous student success from the time of admission through graduation and beyond" and "Build a culturally rich, safe and supportive learning and work environment in which an increasing number of Indigenous students, faculty and staff succeed."

## I. ISSUES

1. Identity and the role it plays in recruitment and hiring. Carleton's [Kinàmàgawin \(Learning Together\)](#) Indigenous strategy, released in 2020, recognizes that "we will lose amazing students, staff and faculty if we cannot address this issue."

### *Recommendations:*

*1.1 That UM creates an Indigenous-specific hiring policy that would protect positions that are meant for indigenous peoples;*

*1.2 That UM acknowledges and honours Indigenous self-determination and the Indigenous staff, faculty, and students;*

*1.3 That UM supports identity journeys for Indigenous peoples.*

2. New staff need to belong and be aware. Currently, many Indigenous staff and faculty do not know that there are resources and a strong, vibrant community of Indigenous peoples at the University of Manitoba. An important part of retention of staff and faculty is connecting them into a community, making them feel welcome, and creating a sense of belonging. All of these components also contribute to the mental, emotional, and cultural wellness of a person. The [Circle of Courage](#) model suggests that 'belonging' is an essential part of the cycle of holistic wellness, and that once someone 'belongs,' they can proficiently navigate learning, thriving, and giving back to their communities.

### *Recommendations:*

*2.1 Create a module on UM Learn that is specific for Indigenous employees that includes training for new hires around employee rights, how to access benefits, setting boundaries to avoid burnout, and an introduction to the Indigenous communities at all campuses.*

*2.2 Create mentorship opportunities for new hires to better understand UM progression, to feel supported, and to consider job progression/career advancement;*

*2.3 Develop a cohort – a grouping of new Indigenous staff and faculty who all start their employment at UM within a certain timeframe (e.g., School year). Cohorts could build strong relationships, attend professional development activities together, and feel grounded as part of a community.*

3. All staff need to be supported emotionally, culturally, personally and professionally. The UM strategic plan outlines a goal of providing healthy living options to all staff and

faculty.<sup>2</sup> As such, employees need to feel supported by their units and must have access to culturally-relevant resources such as counselling, therapy, financial and legal advice. Currently, there are no Indigenous counsellors/therapists available through the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).

*Recommendations:*

- 3.1 That UM takes a family-centered approach in all environments so that employees with families and children have flexibility in their positions in order to accommodate their familial responsibilities;*
- 3.2 That UM partners with EFAP to include access to Indigenous-specific supports;*
- 3.3 That UM works with internal and external organizations/partners to ensure that all environments are safe and healthy for BIPOC and 2SLGBTQIA+ relatives;*
- 3.4 Develop an Indigenous-specific mental health strategy;*
- 3.5 Develop an anti-Indigenous racism strategy and ensure that it is supported by people/offices that are equipped to receive and act on disclosures of racism;*
- 3.6 Promote and support professional development for Indigenous staff and faculty that includes community-building, cultural education, development of career progression plans, and holding memberships with external organizations/professional groups;*
- 3.7 Establish an institute for Indigenous learning (languages, Indigenous studies, Elders (Elder training, Elder protocols, data sovereignty, historical training, culture/ceremony training);*
- 3.8 Create safe spaces for Indigenous peoples by providing cultural education and training for the larger University of Manitoba community. This should include support for white/settler guilt, inherent bias, and having difficult conversations;*
- 3.9 That UM engages with an Indigenous organization (such as AMIK) to do a comprehensive retention strategy.<sup>3</sup>*

---

<sup>2</sup> [Taking Our Place: University of Manitoba Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020](#), at pg. 18.

<sup>3</sup> We recommend considering [AMIK](#) as a possible service to engage. AMIK provides Indigenous Workforce Engagement & Training services with a mission focused on enhancing the socio-economic participation of Canada's Indigenous demographic through respectful collaboration.

4. The addition of the “Indigenous portfolio”<sup>4</sup> is often tasked to Indigenous staff, whether they want it or not. It is often not part of the job description but is just expected. This additional work is emotionally taxing and sometimes triggering/traumatic. Many Indigenous staff and faculty say that it is exhausting to always be expected to educate the whole community. It limits time for further education, research, teaching, publications, and other tasks that would lead to tenure/promotion, etc.

*Recommendations:*

*4.1 That these tasks (the invisible cultural work) are recognized and compensated appropriately;*

*4.2 That supervisors recognize that time is needed for relationship-building in the form of meetings, committee work, ceremonies, and events. This is necessary for well-being, but it is also necessary for the roles that Indigenous employees fulfill.*

*4.3 Cultural safety education and training is accessible to the entire UM Community so that people can do some of the education themselves.*

5. Weighting of experience/qualifications can create limitations for progression. Community work and portfolios are weighted the same for advancement as other tasks.

*Recommendations:*

*5.1 Job descriptions and progression factors should be broadened – they should point to relevant experience such as working with Indigenous Elders and relational experience;*

*5.2 That More opportunities should be created for graduate students to thrive. This could include creating more TAs (which are currently limited in numbers), helping to build CVs, and compensate for committee work.*

6. Human Resource (HR) policies and procedures often limit opportunities appropriate classification, stunting opportunities for advancement and promotion.

*Recommendations:*

*6.1 HR needs to undergo intense process to decolonize policies and procedures including the use of the Hay system to evaluate Indigenous positions and classifications, fair compensation (ceremony time, salaries, public validation), and accountability around*

---

<sup>4</sup> This term is used to reference the invisible cultural work expected of Indigenous hires. This may include the added work of being the default educator on Indigenous culture and protocols, increased expectations for committee work, and/or increased expectations to mentor and train.

*hiring processes and annual performance reviews;*

*6.2 HR should enter an engagement process to develop a strategic action plan on recruiting, retaining and advancing Indigenous staff and faculty.<sup>5</sup>*

7. As an institution, the UM doesn't seem to actively recruit Indigenous staff and faculty, but rather passively waits for them to apply to our posted positions. The pool of Indigenous candidates in Canada is growing, but still relatively small. If we want to have excellent people filling roles, we need to be more active in seeking out the right people.

*Recommendations:*

*7.1 Build relationships with Indigenous peoples both internally and externally;*

*7.2 Build relationships with Indigenous students (at any level) before they graduate in order to assist with progression into UM positions;*

*7.3 Create space for the progression of graduate students into academic roles.*

8. *Additional Recommendations:*

*8.1 All employees be required to read the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action;*

*8.2 UM create an Inuit Advisory Committee to address the lack of Inuit staff and faculty;*

*8.3 Marketing campaigns be developed to promote messages of reconciliation that resonate with the UM community (e.g., We are all relatives, reconciliation is everyone's responsibility, reconciliation is for every meeting, every space);*

*8.4 Recruit Indigenous peoples into spaces/jobs/careers that are not Indigenous-specific;*

*8.5 Training for Deans, supervisors, senior leaders about the issues – especially around creating safe spaces, compensating for time, weighing experiences and qualifications, including cultural safety training for all leaders, all staff/faculty;*

*8.6 HR commit to an exit interview process that is culturally-grounded and safe.*

## II. REFERENCES

Carleton's [Kinàmàqawin \(Learning Together\)](#) Indigenous strategy, released in 2020

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, SEED Winnipeg (<https://seedwinnipeg.ca/>) contracted AMIK to lead a process for them that included reviewing and documenting all HR policies and procedures and comparing against industry standards.

[Circle of Courage Model](#)

SEED Winnipeg Inc.; Indigenous HR & Partnerships Development Initiatives; Monthly Progress Report – September 28, 2020

[Taking Our Place: University of Manitoba Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)