



The President's Action Committee on Anti Racism (PACAR) Interim Report 1 October 13, 2021

Racism on university campuses

Six months after a series of meetings with Black students at StFX, the President's Advisory Committee has been listening and learning about what needs to happen to address racism at StFX. The conversation has been happening in the context of police and state violence against Black people in the U.S. and Canada. Black students returned to campuses in Sept 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic thinking that things would have changed following the Black Lives Matter protests across North America, including in Antigonish. However, the reality of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized individuals on university campuses remains rooted in a culture of racism that ranges from constant interpersonal microaggressions to overt threats of violence. Racial discrimination goes beyond blatant and "direct" racial discrimination to include more institutionalized forms of racism, including recruitment and hiring practices, and requires significant advances to ensure success, retention, and mentoring for racialized students, faculty, and staff on university campuses. In addition to addressing systemic racism, many universities are seeking new ways to strengthen curricula to advance anti-racist research and programs of study.

President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR)

The committee comprises students, staff, faculty, community members, administrators, and an anti-racism consultant who are all committed to anti-racism. The purpose of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism is to identify and address systemic barriers to full and equal participation at StFX, review university policies, procedures, and practices to ensure alignment with the University's goals of equity and inclusion. Widespread education about racism and clear communications about our intolerance of racism and racist practices must be at the forefront of the StFX anti-racist strategy. The scope of work will encompass the entire sphere of university operations with the following objectives:

- Serve as a resource to the President, and members of the senior leadership team, on anti-racism with particular attention to anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.
- Work with existing offices, committee structures, and units within the university to ensure highly coordinated, and well communicated university-wide approaches to addressing anti-racism.
- Review current policies and procedures with an intention to better address community racism and promote anti-racism.
- Work to provide community informed pathways to adjust, improve and implement a university-level anti-racism action plan.
- Deliver an action plan for the University that will speak to diversity, equity and inclusion issues related to reporting, teaching, and learning practices, and services and supports.
- Serve as an ongoing lens focused on all matters associated with addressing racism and the promotion of anti-racism at StFX.



PACAR met seven times between May 19, 2021 and September 22, 2021. Additionally, PACAR formed subcommittees to set priorities to guide immediate actions relative to the implementation of the revised Harassment and Discrimination Policy (three meetings), and to develop the PACAR communication plan (four meetings). PACAR membership, meeting minutes and terms of reference, and resource documents are available on the PACAR website:

www.stfx.ca/pacar

Immediate Actions

To address immediate priorities, the Office of the Vice President Students and the Office of Human Rights and Equity implemented the following actions:

- i. Through the spring and summer, the Manager of Human Rights and Equity led the development of a **new Harassment and Discrimination Policy** which was approved in August 2021. The new policy is modeled on the Sexual Violence Policy which entailed multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement and an independent review panel comprised of legal experts. The revised policy incorporates best practices for process, significantly compressing process timelines, and includes definition of microaggressions.

PACAR reviewed the draft policy and provided extensive advice concerning the implementation of the policy. The following items have been actioned to date:

- Budget secured and a position posting is pending for an **Investigator** who will bring trauma informed, survivor centric approach to investigations under the Harassment and Discrimination Policy (and other policies). The preferred candidate will bring lived experience of being a member of an Indigenous, Black or other racialized community.
- Budget secured and a position posting is pending for a **Human Rights Education and Response Advocate** who will receive disclosures and reports under the Harassment and Discrimination policy. The individual will support students, faculty and staff through incidents and the reporting process, and will provide proactive education and outreach. The position description is based on the model associated with the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Advocate and the preferred candidate will bring lived experience of being a member of an Indigenous, Black or other racialized community.
- The Manager of Human Rights and Equity has developed and promoted a workshop entitled, **Policy 101 Workshop: Overview of the new Harassment and Discrimination Policy**. The workshop highlights the features of the new policy and supports managers, faculty, and staff to be knowledgeable on how to receive and support a disclosure and how to direct individuals to the policy and resources. An Online reading companion to the policy will be available in October/November 2021



- PACAR advised that regular **reporting** concerning the Harassment and Discrimination Policy is critical to build accountability and trust. The Committee advocated for an action-based report that does not compromise the privacy of individuals. The Office of the Vice President Students and Manager of Human Rights and Equity will provide an update following each term that summarizes:
 - Number of action-based programs, educational modules offered and number of participants by employment category (i.e. managers, faculty, staff, students).
 - Number of reports received, number currently under investigation, number completed and outcomes. Categories with less than five reports would not be shared to protect individual privacy, however, statistics will also be captured in annual reports or will be aggregated within more extended time periods to enable sharing of information. A continuous improvement approach will be taken with reporting under the policy to balance transparency and protection of privacy.

- ii. Developed and implemented You Belong @X, a 60-minute self-directed online **anti-racism student resource** offered via Moodle. You Belong@X is one of three online interactive modules offered on going to new students as August of 2021 and to returning students beginning in September. The modules overview key policies that set expectations and govern behavior, including the Student Community Code of Conduct, the Sexual Violence Policy, and the Harassment and Discrimination Policy. The modules are designed to help students understand why these policies are important to our community and provide exercises and scenarios to deepen students' ability to comply with the policies or seek support when needed. At the October 6, 2021, meeting, Senate passed a motion making these modules **mandatory** for first year undergraduate students.

You Belong @X was developed May – August, 2021 by an external consultant guided by a local team including Robert Upshaw, StFX Faculty of Education, the Manager of Human Rights, Equity/Diversity Engagement staff and engaged students from equity deserving groups who provided feedback during the content development. The content addresses the following learning goals:

- Identify personal social identities, state how identities impact our experiences in university, describe how racism impacts people in Nova Scotia and Canada
- Define race, racism, and racialization; Recognize the role unconscious/ implicit bias plays in racism; Identify microaggressions related to race
- Identify and practice being aware of when racism is happening; Practice ways to address racism on campus; Identify where to go for more information, supports, and services



- iii. Beginning in August 2021, the Office of Human Rights and Equity introduced a series of new **equity modules for faculty and staff**. Developed in 2020 – 21 by the Office of Human Rights and Equity, the Diversity and Engagement Center Advisors, with consultant and faculty member Robert Upshaw, the educational workshops are offered in person and through online synchronous delivery. The modules include:
- Anti-Indigenous Racism (The Blanket Exercise)
 - Anti-Black Racism
 - Anti- Oppression:
 - Widening Participation: Addressing Systemic Barriers in Research
 - EDI in the Hiring Process

StFX gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Research Chair EDI grant in providing funding to support the creation of the modules.

- iv. PACAR advised on **communications** in particular changes needed to the University website and the need for a promotional campaign that supports a welcoming and inclusive community that does not tolerate racism.
- In September, in partnership with Advancement (Marketing and Communications), the #Being Xaverian Campaign was introduced. The campaign upholds positive expectations for student behavior and later phases and a sub campaign will articulate zero tolerance for racism.
 - The website is under review and is being updated.
- v. StFX established free **counselling services** for Black and Indigenous faculty, staff, and students:
- The People’s Counselling Clinic (PCC) provides **culturally relevant counselling for members of the StFX community who identify as persons of African Descent**. Founded and run by Robert Wright, The PCC is a non-profit community based mental health agency based in Halifax. Services will be offered virtually. To arrange services, contact JJ Wilson, PCC program coordinator at (902) 832-1593 or email jj.wilson677@gmail.com
 - Andrea Currie in partnership with StFX provides **culturally relevant counselling for members of the StFX community who identify as Indigenous**. Andrea is in Kiknu, StFX’s Indigenous Student Centre on Wednesdays. To schedule an appointment with Andrea email andreacurrie03@hotmail.com
 - All services are confidential. StFX will not receive the names of the individuals who make use of the services and will receive aggregate data only on service use.

StFX gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Research Chair EDI grant in making these services possible.



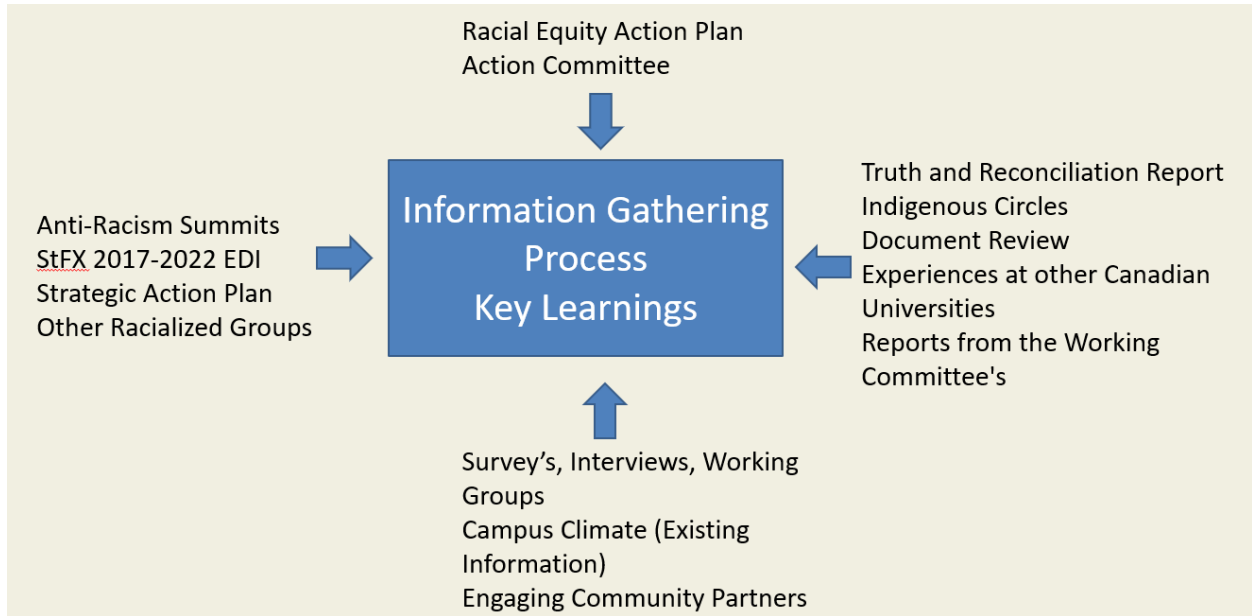
In addition to the initiatives noted above, the Office of the Vice President Academic highlights the following initiatives:

- vi. The University's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), led by Coordinator Dr. Angie Kolen, designed, and offered **two multi-day retreats** during the summer focused on topics related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The first of these virtual teaching retreats was entitled Mawita'yk Mawkina'masultimk (Come together; Learn together) and was designed for all faculty and teaching staff to deepen their understanding of **how to decolonize and indigenize our teaching and research spaces as part of our campus wide reconciliation agenda**. This retreat was spread over five days with topics that included: Rooting Ourselves in Mi'kma'ki; Colonizing and Decolonizing; Trauma and Healing, and Actionizing Decolonizing and Indigenization in our Teaching and Research. The sessions were very well received with close to 200 people participating in some of the interactive presentations. There was uptake from StFX students, staff and faculty and participation of people from other universities and multiple Mi'kmaw communities. Not only were people left with hope for the possibility of the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge within our classrooms (and research), but new relationships were built, and older relationships reimagined.

Later in the summer, a second retreat was launched entitled **Black Students Matter**. This ground-breaking teaching retreat enabled faculty to delve into the **history of the Black Community in our province and the reality of Black Students at StFX University**. The objective was to deepen our understanding of the lived reality of our Black Students to help us build an equitable learning environment for these students at StFX. Some of the topics addressed over the three days of the retreat included: Anti-Black Racism in postsecondary education and why we have to consider race; The History of Black People in Nova Scotia, and The Gift of Black Presence: We are here We are still here. We contribute. Again, the sessions were very well received with some sessions attracting almost 150 attendees (in the middle of the summer!). Participants described some of the workshops as "informative and eye-opening". Hearing the voices of our Black Students was meaningful for a greater understanding of their lived reality within the university community. A second part of the Black Students Matter retreat is scheduled for the week of November 8-12.

Intermediate and Long-Term Actions

Concerning intermediate and long-term priorities, the agenda to date has focused primarily on gathering information and distilling key learnings from the work of those who have provided equity leadership and feedback concerning the racial equity needs of students, faculty and staff at StFX. The committee has reviewed the over 170 previously documented recommendations and has heard directly from individuals who have been engaged in this work at StFX in the last few years.



Through October, the Committee will continue to distill key learnings from those who have come before us in this work, reflect on their own lived experience of StFX, and review the work of individuals and groups who have provided leadership in anti-racism at other postsecondary institutions. The PACAR aims to share drafts and invite input on a draft plan through December, culminating in a consultation session on January 15, 2022 where all interested parties are invited to contribute their feedback and input into the draft priorities. **If you would like to be added to the invitation list for the January 15, 2022 consultation session, please email pacar@stfx.ca**

Timelines

| March 2021 | April 2021 | May/June 2021 | July 2021 | August/October 2021 | November 2021 | December 2021 | January 2022 | February/April 2022 |
|--|-----------------------------|---|--|---|--------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Tip of the Anti-Racism ICEBURG Meeting with the students | PACAR's appointment process | Confirm PACAR's scope, Terms of Reference, Inform Immediate Actions | Develop the working groups, Inform Immediate Actions | Information gathering, key learnings, consultations, and priority setting | Drafting the Action Plan | Review, Revise, Recommendations + Action | Present the Draft Anti-Racism Action Plan: January 15 | Refine and Finalize the Action Plan |



PACAR established **three working groups** that will bring forward priorities to support the needs of students, faculty, and staff at StFX who are impacted by racism. The priorities will address the following major categories of action:

| Category of Recommendation Definitions: | |
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| Inclusive Teaching, Learning, and Curricula | Address gaps in the inclusion and validation of (Indigenous, Black and other) racialized perspectives, experiences, ways of knowing and learning, and contributions within existing curricula; approaches to teaching, learning, curriculum design, pedagogical approaches; research, and classroom cultures. |
| Responsibility and Obligations for Administration | Recognizes that efforts in support of meaningful change within institutions and higher education sector should not be the sole responsibility of (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized colleagues. It is the responsibility and obligation of all peers and leaders to facilitate supportive environments, promote equitable policy and practices (including internally and externally equitable recruitment, hiring, compensation and other employment practices) and actively, intellectually, and appropriately foster inclusion for (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized students, staff, and faculty. |
| Responsibility and Obligations for Faculty and Staff | Recognizes that efforts in support of meaningful change within institutions and higher education sector should not be the sole responsibility of (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized colleagues. It is the responsibility and obligation of all peers and leaders to facilitate supportive environments, promote equitable practices and actively, intellectually, and appropriately foster inclusion for of (Indigenous, Black and) racialized students, staff, and faculty. |
| Responsibility and Obligations for Students | Recognizes that efforts in support of meaningful change within institutions and higher education sector should not be the sole responsibility of (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized students and colleagues. It is the responsibility and obligation of all peers and leaders to facilitate supportive environments, promote equitable practices and actively, intellectually, and appropriately foster inclusion for of (Indigenous, Black and other) racialized students, staff, and faculty. |
| Race-based Data Collection and Use | Explore the current status on race-based data collection in postsecondary institutions and identify thoughtful approaches to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Identify the questions the data are helping to answer for StFX. |
| Access and Success | Identify and address institutional barriers for (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized students, faculty and staff which affect |



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| | their sense of belonging, their representation in institutional practices and structures, their academic success, and their overall well-being in classroom and beyond from recruitment through to graduation. |
| Mentoring and Support Networks for Wellbeing | Examine gaps in support systems for (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized students, faculty, and staff and deliberate on how institutions and the sector, in collaboration with community partners, can enhance enduring support systems and mentoring networks that ensure their overall wellbeing. |
| Inclusive Decision-Making Structures/representation in Leadership | Explore deficits in (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized representation in leadership and the benefits of addressing them. This will mean examining how to effectively integrate the perspectives of (Indigenous, Black, and other) racialized students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members in governance and other decision-making structures to advance institutional commitments to inclusion and to contribute to a supportive and healthy environment to work, study, and create. |

For more information or to share your comments, please email the PACAR Committee at pacar@stfx.ca

Respectfully submitted October 13, 2021, by Robert Upshaw and Elizabeth Yeo, Co-Chairs on behalf of the PACAR Committee.