

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Social Justice

***Okanagan College Project Group Report
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	p. 1
Highlights of EDISJ Project Group Activities: Year 1	p.2
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice Action Plan	p.7
Appendix I: Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) Leadership Council Responses	p.10
Appendix II: GDEIB – Leadership Goals	p. 14
Appendix III: Employee Climate Survey	p. 25

Introduction

Through Inspire, the new Strategic Plan, Okanagan College (OC) has committed to advancing the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice (EDISJ) and to work actively towards being a leader in the implementation of fair, just, respectful and equitable practices throughout the College and in our local communities.

In 2021 an EDISJ Project Group initiated the work of gathering information on how best to move the EDISJ agenda forward and initiated activities to promote awareness of EDISJ throughout the institution. Over the next year, activities included:

1. Building awareness of the EDISJ project.
2. Establishing an EDISJ Ambassador group.
3. Collecting information about activity underway that promotes EDISJ principles.
4. Establishing an EDISJ mission statement and working definitions of equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice
5. Approval of the Board of Governors' Statement on EDISJ.
6. Gathering input on how College leadership views Okanagan College's EDISJ in the context of the GDEIB (Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks).
7. Resourcing a short-term position to move forward with select EDISJ projects
8. Conducting an employee climate survey
9. Building the EDISJ web presence and resource hub.

This report captures the highlights of these activities and the Action Plan that has been developed in response to what the Project Group has learned about institutional needs and expectations for future EDISJ education and projects.

Highlights of EDISJ Project Group Activities: Year 1

1. Build Awareness of the EDISJ Project

In the fall of 2021, all employees and students were invited to participate in facilitated discussions about EDISJ. These conversations took place online, and approximately 140 people participated during one of two sessions. We learned that there is a wide range of knowledge about what it means to embed EDISJ principles in our College work. These discussions also indicated many employees' and students' strong interest in seeing EDISJ work engaged in more intentional and targeted ways.

As a result of these discussions, additional awareness-building opportunities were offered to the OC community. Training and activities included:

- Anti-bias training
- Kelowna Community Resources – Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training to Leadership Council, employees and students
- Resource hub launched on the EDISJ website.

2. Establish EDISJ Ambassador Group

Following the general conversations on EDISJ, all employees and students were invited to participate more formally in EDISJ work at Okanagan College. Over 65 employees and students from all regions and departments volunteered to become EDISJ Ambassadors. This working group promotes leadership, innovation, collaboration and information sharing on EDISJ topics and activities within the College. The Ambassadors continue to meet monthly and are actively working to foster a more welcoming, inclusive and diverse OC community with the following activities:

- a. Participation in training on the fundamentals of EDISJ facilitated by Kelowna Community Resources;
- b. Conducting non-bias training across the College;
- c. Providing non-bias training to selection committees and departments as requested;
- d. Developed OC definitions of EDISJ
- e. Developed a Mission for EDISJ work at Okanagan College, and
- f. Participation in smaller working groups on:
 - i. Universal washrooms and change rooms
 - ii. Teaching and learning resources
 - iii. EDISJ Checklists
 - iv. Positive/Brave Space
 - v. Events and Engagement
 - vi. Accessibility
 - vii. Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention
 - viii. Student Recruitment
 - ix. Curated Credential

The Ambassadors will continue to meet monthly to engage in a consultative and collaborative process to advance EDISJ across the College. This work will explore best practices across the

College regarding EDISJ, to work with College Relations to develop a brand and image that signifies their role as ambassadors and advocates for EDISJ. The working groups will develop recommendations to the EDISJ Project Team for advancing their topic areas.

3. Collect Information about Current Activity and Awareness

OC distributed a survey to employees, asking for input on how they incorporate EDISJ into their work, their awareness of existing legislation and policies that support EDISJ and their recommendations for future EDISJ work at the College. Of the 163 respondents, over 50% of the respondents were from Student Services, Business, Arts and Foundational, the Library, and Continuing Studies and Corporate Training. Approximately 65% of respondents indicated that they engage in personal learning on EDISJ topics, and about 75% participate in professional conversations.

The survey's low response rate could be attributed to several factors: the timing of the survey in winter 2022, individuals not wanting to respond if not actively engaged in EDISJ activities, a need for more communication about the purpose of the survey and reminders of it being open, or a disinterest in the topic.

The survey results indicated that a few respondents have participated in formal education or professional development on EDISJ topics and that familiarity with relevant legislation and policy is mixed. The input reinforced what was heard during the facilitated conversations: OC needs to do more to educate our employees and students on all aspects of EDISJ principles.

4. Develop Okanagan College Mission and Definitions

The EDISJ Ambassadors developed working definitions of EDISJ specific to Okanagan College and provided this work to the OC Executive for approval. The Mission Statement guides why EDISJ work is critical to the College, while the definitions give a reference point for consistency in the EDISJ work.

EDISJ Mission Statement

We strive to weave EDISJ principles throughout policy, practice, and action in all aspects of College life and throughout the communities we serve, to create an environment where all feel welcome and valued. *You belong here.*

Equity:

Equity is the concept of fairness, acceptance and belonging. In defining equity, the difference between "equality" and "equity" must be emphasized. Although both promote fairness, equality achieves this through treating everyone the same regardless of circumstances. Equity acknowledges systemic power and privilege, and redistributes resources to identify and address the obstacles, barriers and biases that limit access and opportunities. Okanagan College seeks to create conditions that allow everyone to reach their full potential through building confidence and celebrating accomplishments.

Diversity:

Diversity acknowledges that each person is unique and their individual differences are respected. To embrace diversity means we must recognize that personal, cultural and

institutionalized discrimination shapes and provides privileges for some while creating and perpetuating disadvantages for others.

Diversity includes different ways of being, ways of knowing and embracing intersecting identities. Okanagan College understands and respects different qualities of lived experiences and cultural expression, as part of our commitment to accessibility.

Inclusion:

Inclusion is an organizational effort and practice ensuring different groups and/or individuals having different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed. Inclusion is the full and authentic membership in the Okanagan College community for all people. It is a continuous and ongoing process that requires active participation. This requires the intentional creation of environments where systematically disadvantaged individuals or groups feel welcome, safe, respected and valued in any of their activities and as a part of the community.

Social Justice:

Social justice is the recognition that systems were built to perpetuate the power and influence of select groups or individuals and will continue to do so without conscious effort to actively break down these systems. At Okanagan College, all community members are responsible for creating a just organization, where people looking to learn, share and work at the institution can all benefit equitably from these social systems and power structures. Social justice also recognizes that the responsibility for creating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive world goes beyond Okanagan College and extends to the community. The call for social justice is answered when Okanagan College's role as a place of learning and innovation expands to improve the lives of people who face systemic obstacles to full and equal participation in the College and community.

5. Post Okanagan College Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

The Board of Governors approved and posted the following statement of the Board's commitment to EDISJ for Okanagan College.

Okanagan College's Board of Governors recognizes that a strategic focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice is essential to the well-being of the College and all its members.

Our mission is to transform lives and communities. We are committed to imbuing the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice into every corner of the College and thus into every possible aspect of how we can fulfill that mission.

We are committed to educating ourselves on what and how we can do better by being vulnerable and through our continuous commitment to learn, unlearn, and re-learn. We are persistent in planning how we can build upon the steps taken in the past and present.

The Board commits to embrace the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice in its deliberations and decisions and through the process of appointing members to the Board.

6. College Leadership Perception of EDISJ

Members of the Leadership Council were asked to review the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) and to use the Benchmark Categories and itemized lists as an awareness-building exercise for their programs and departments. Each Leader was asked to check boxes associated with the Standards in the 15 Categories to indicate where they believe their department and the College are implementing the listed Standard.

We recognize that at Okanagan College, targeted work on EDISJ topics is in the early stages. Therefore, this exercise was not initiated to establish a baseline at this time. This exercise is intended to build awareness of the activities considered best practice for any organization and to get Leadership thinking about the work their teams are engaged in related to EDISJ. This project was also done to raise awareness of how EDISJ principles can be embedded in our work.

Each Benchmark category consists of five Levels of Standards that demonstrate the College's effectiveness in embedding EDISJ Principles. The responses were mapped to identify critical areas of agreement regarding current activities at OC and where leaders see gaps.

This mapping exercise identified sample goals that would move Okanagan College from Inactive, Reactive or Proactive Levels towards meeting standards in the Progressive Level of each category. (Appendix I)

Leaders were also asked to set three goals for their departments that would engage their teams in EDISJ work over the next two years as part of the initiative to help OC achieve higher Standards within the five Levels of each GDEIB Category. The sample goals were charted against the plans submitted by Leadership Council. (Appendix II)

This process contributed to the package of information that the Project Group will use to develop the EDISJ Action Plan. The EDISJ Action Plan will guide the process of embedding EDISJ principles and Standards in other Inspire initiatives.

The GDEIB (Benchmarks) will be used again in two years in a more targeted way. Each department or program will be asked to complete one to two Categories, involving as many people from their department as possible in the process and providing evidence for their responses. Goals will then be set that are specific to the department/program and will be targeted to demonstrate progress in moving through the levels of the particular category.

7. Short-Term Secondment for Project Delivery

Using funding made available in Learning and Research, it was possible to second a full time person for 6 weeks to work on two projects:

- i) Research and development of the employee Climate Survey; and
- ii) Development of a 12-hour course for researchers and research assistants on EDISJ in research.

8. Employee Climate Survey

A Climate Survey (Appendix III) was circulated to all OC employees in the spring of 2022. A total of 429 respondents, or 40.1% of the eligible 1071 employees, responded to the survey.

When asked to rate Okanagan College on a set of adjectives based on their direct experience, the majority of respondents provided positive average ratings on all adjectives. On a sliding scale where 6 indicated the highest possible average positive rating, the following reflects a sample of the ratings that were provided:

- Friendly (5.0 average rating)
- Non-homophobic (5.0 average rating)
- Anti-racist (4.6 average rating)
- Diverse (4.1 average rating)

Based on their experience over the previous 12 months, a majority (86%) of the employees are satisfied with the overall campus climate/environment; however, one in five employees (21%) indicate that they are sometimes concerned about their psychological or emotional safety. Further, 1 in 10 (12%) report that they felt discriminated against at OC over the previous 12 months and of that 12%, 22% felt the discrimination they experienced was because of race or ethnicity.

Survey participants provided comments to add information about areas where they have felt unsafe and about discriminatory events. If the comments in the survey offered sufficient detail, they were distributed to related departments for action and follow-up. For example, the lighting was not turned on in the health building when classes start at 0700; this has been resolved. Other items will continue to be addressed individually or in the context of addressing College culture through ongoing training, awareness building and policy review. The full report and additional analysis will be considered in winter 2023 following the distribution of the Employee Engagement Survey.

9. Website development and Resource Hub

The EDISJ Project Team has started a resource hub on the EDISJ website to build awareness and promote many education and training opportunities related to EDISJ. The website includes at-a-glance options to read journals, articles, books and other resources related to EDISJ. It also provides links to relevant Federal and Provincial Legislation related to EDISJ and Accessibility and links to EDI workshops and free training.

Going forward, the website will provide a forum to communicate the work underway by the OC Ambassadors.

College Relations will work to develop a communications plan to leverage the information available on the EDISJ website and ensure the broader OC community is aware of this resource.

EDISJ Action Plan

Okanagan College's *Inspire* strategic plan firmly states our commitment and responsibility to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice (EDISJ). We are members of a college community that is becoming more diverse each year which has increased societal demand for action to address inequities perpetuated by systems that impact perpetually marginalized groups. The time is now for OC to model the way forward.

OC is committed to learning what it means to find a path to reconciliation with the people on whose traditional and unceded lands the College campuses are located – the Silyx, Secwepemc, Ktunaxa and Sinixt. The work of embedding EDISJ principles into the layers and complexities of the College identity is interconnected with the work of Indigenization and accessibility. EDISJ and Indigenization are core components of each of the activities required to achieve the outcomes of *Inspire*, the Okanagan College strategic plan and the associated roadmap.

Okanagan College's **EDISJ Mission** is to strive to weave EDISJ principles throughout policy, practice, and action in all aspects of college life and throughout the communities, we serve to create an environment where all feel welcome and valued. **You belong here.** Working collectively with employees, students, and community partners, the EDISJ team will work as agents of change to advance the structures and tools required to coordinate action and *inspire* leaders across the College to foster this mission statement.

Based on input from the Okanagan College community, the following 2-year **EDISJ Action Plan** will be implemented to support the EDISJ principles of *Inspire* and form the basis of a long-term, sustainable EDISJ Plan for the College. To date, the EDISJ Project Team and the EDISJ Ambassador Group have accomplished this work. These change champions have provided the backbone, coordination, and support for the launch of this work; however, it is necessary to allocate adequate support and resources to continue this momentum and achieve the goals outlined in *Inspire*.

2022-2024 Goals

1. **Engagement, Communication and Coordination** of EDISJ initiatives to support OC's Strategic Plan – *Inspire*
 - a. OC EDISJ Ambassadors were established to harmonize and build on EDISJ activities across the College by fostering collaboration at all institutional levels. The following workgroups were created to support the EDISJ project team Leadership Council GDEI Goals and will provide recommendations for social change in a structured manner:
 - i. Universal Design Washroom and Changeroom
 - ii. Accessibility
 - iii. Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention
 - iv. OC Calendar of Events and Engagement-including EDISJ Website and developing a communications framework to enhance coordination
 - v. Student Engagement
 - vi. EDISJ Curated Credential
 - vii. EDISJ Systems and Processes

2. **Data Gathering and Consultation**-OC will hold itself accountable for its commitment to EDISJ and Indigenization through clear and timely evaluation and transparent reporting on its progress through this action plan.
 - a. Student climate survey fall 2022
 - b. Leadership Council Global Equity Diversity and Engagement Survey
 - c. OC Sexual Violence Prevention Survey
 - d. OC employee climate survey 2022
 - e. Accessibility consultations for fall 2022 and winter 2023
 - f. Consultations with external agencies
 - i. Regional Advisory Groups
 - ii. Agencies that support equity-seeking groups
 - iii. Others, as identified through initial consultations
 - g. Concerns/feedback webpage to receive input on EDISJ/Accessibility topics implemented in 2022

3. **Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Interdisciplinarity in Curriculum and Research**-OC will foster learning environments that value EDISJ and Indigenization. This work will include the following:
 - a. Request a report from each portfolio and program on how it contributes to expanding decolonization and fostering EDISJ principles at OC.
 - b. Review the portfolio and program reports and develop work plans and recommendations to monitor progress
 - c. Researchers and research assistants trained to meet Tri-Council requirements.
 - d. Collaborate with the OC Indigenization and International team to advance their projects.

4. **Learning, Education and Training for all Employees and Students**-OC will build capacity by enhancing institutional and individual skills to advance the concepts of EDISJ. This work will include the following:
 - a. Provide the OC Board, Executive and Leadership Council members with education and training to model best practices in embedding EDISJ principles and practices in all aspects of institutional systems and activities.
 - b. Train all new employees in Four Seasons Indigenous Ways of Knowing
 - c. Provide OC students with a modified Four Seasons module.
 - d. Develop workshops on accessible BC legislation education for employees and departments.
 - e. Educate students and employees on sexual violence awareness and prevention
 - f. Provide bias training for all employees
 - g. Schedule EDI, 2SLGBTQ+, Anti-racism and Blanket training for leadership council, employees and students
 - h. Develop an EDISJ-curated credential and provide access to all employees and students

5. **Capacity Building focused on Recruitment and Retention of Equity Seeking Groups** – OC will enhance institutional and individual capacities and skills to advance inclusive environments. The first step in this process will be to:

- a. Enhance support for Indigenous Transition Coordinators' recruitment in the community
 - b. Provide bias training for all participants in the selection processes
 - c. Explore demographic representation in all selection processes
 - d. Develop toolkits and frameworks to build capacity amongst employees to become agents of change
- 6. Systems Change**-OC will intentionally change systems and structures to advance EDISJ across all aspects of the College. This work will include infrastructure, policies, and practices that will foster a more welcoming and inclusive physical, social and emotional environment at OC where You Belong Here.
- a. Review OC Policies
 - b. Develop hiring guidelines
 - c. Develop and communicate protocols and training for the use of land acknowledgments and pronouns
 - d. Build capacity for student engagement
 - e. Create institutional EDISJ training portal (Four Seasons of Reconciliation, Curated Credential, Sexual Violence Prevention)
 - f. Provide resources and workshops to instill inclusive teaching practices
 - g. Develop frameworks and toolkits
 - h. Revise curriculum with an EDISJ lens
 - i. Enhance demographic survey data for students and employees
 - j. Create an evaluation plan and reporting tool for EDISJ efforts and Leadership Council GDEIB goals across the College

2024-2029

Engage GDEIB (Benchmarking Survey) in detail in 2024; this work will include wide-ranging input from all programs and departments to establish benchmarks and goals for 2024-2026. As the EDISJ work advances, our efforts will focus on enhancing communications and identifying options to address resource constraints. We will continue to pursue alignment with other *Inspire* institutional plans and commitments and develop a comprehensive data reporting and evaluation approach to assess our impact.