Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) Audit

Final Report and Evaluation Plan

Prepared for: Nipissing University

September 2025

Acknowledgement

Acknowledging the land

Nipissing University is located on the traditional territory of Nipissing First Nation, the territory of the Anishinaabek, within lands protected by the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850. The University is also situated near Dokis First Nation and the Temagami First Nation. These communities have lived on and cared for the land for generations. Acknowledging that the land falls within the greater responsibilities of decolonization and reconciliation is foundational to respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Within this respect we work together, knowing that our relationships still need to improve. In our daily work we strive to dismantle colonization, systemic racism, and ongoing violence that continue to impact Indigenous people.

Acknowledging the people

The team would like to recognize the Nipissing University community for their continued support of this Audit. We are grateful to share elements of knowledge, expertise, and lived experiences that contribute to our common understanding of this important work.

We honour the truths of those who shared.

Acknowledging sensitivities

This report details some hard things. People described experiences of discrimination, racism, anti-Indigenous racism, ableism, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiments and other difficult topics like addressing sexual violence. While experiences are not described in detail, we acknowledge that it can be difficult to read about such topics.

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Executive summary

Nipissing University (NU) is deeply shaped by the place it calls home. Tucked between the trees and water near Lake Nipissing, just outside the city of North Bay, the University sits on the traditional territory of Nipissing First Nation and is close to other communities that have lived on and cared for the land for generations – Dokis First Nation and the Temagami First Nation. North Bay is also home to 8,000 urban Indigenous people.

The University is also an anchor institution in North Bay, a city with deep ties to both Indigenous and settler communities, where people come together across cultures, backgrounds, and generations. In this context — northern, rural, and rich in relationship — Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA), Indigenization, and decolonization are not just institutional goals. Instead, they are part of what it means to be a good neighbour, a good partner, and a good place to learn and grow. The University's Strategic Plan, Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People, makes it clear that real learning can only happen in a space that welcomes people fully, sees their strengths, and actively works to remove the barriers they face (Nipissing University, 2023).

What happened in the Audit

Environmental Scan: The Audit began with an examination of the University's documents, policies, and procedures, with additional research into sector-leading promising practices in EDIA and Indigenization and decolonization.

Climate Review: ParriagGroup also collected the perspectives and lived experiences of NU community members through in-person and online focus groups and interviews (160 unique participants), and a community forum (approximately 100 participants). Safety and confidentiality was of the uppermost importance to encourage spaces to speak openly and honestly. An online survey was also conducted and completed by 879 NU community members. Finally, there was an Indigenization and decolonization review of syllabi from participating faculty and teaching staff.

Findings

Findings informed by the Environmental Scan and Climate Review were summarized into main themes:

 Indigenization and decolonization: The University attracts many Indigenous students given its location. It has made concerted efforts at Indigenization and decolonization but is perceived as not yet actively committing to the difficult, necessary work of change. Simultaneously, every-day actions from dedicated employees and students signal positive change. Efforts must be aligned and institutionally supported to move forward in a good way.

 Culture and place: Changemakers help foster a supportive and accepting culture within the NU community, but full inclusion is not quite felt by all. There is room for the community to overcome barriers of perceived intolerance and distrust, and NU has the opportunity to be an EDIA leader in the place they call home.

Organizational structure, governance, and power: Structural commitments and movement with EDIA are evident in some University spaces, but there are gaps in implementing changes that go beyond performative actions. Diversified decision-making power and concrete resourcing to deliver on good promises are needed.

Communication, transparency, and accountability: Increased communication and transparency are needed to build trust and keep community members informed on EDIA issues, while formalized EDIA leadership will help keep NU accountable to its goals.

Measuring progress: Attempts to better track data have been made, however NU's lack of infrastructure and limited institutional efforts to collect data are preventing progress around effective measurement. Comprehensive data is needed to make informed decisions on EDIA issues and opportunities.

Student supports: While many services are designed to be inclusive and student-centred, not all are explicitly grounded in EDIA principles. Still, there is dedicated and compassionate work being done to support students across the University. Work remains to be done to wholly integrate responsive practices to support students.

Institutional practices: The NU community has a real desire to work and study in healthy, welcoming spaces. Updated policies and procedures, comprehensive training, and increased diversity will help NU get there.

Accessibility: Accessibility and accommodations are embraced to a certain degree, with pockets of meaningful efforts in some classrooms and University services. True and fulsome disability acceptance will come with relational approaches and structural integration of accessibility.

Academic policies: Academic policies are relatively comprehensive but are still missing key EDIA elements to elevate them. Faculty require supports to feel confident in fully embedding EDIA principles in classroom and to decolonize the curriculum.

Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Nipissing University is at a crossroads with both challenges and exciting opportunities. While financially stable today, it must act now to secure its long-term resilience. There is a chance to become a national leader in Indigenous-friendly education by decolonizing structures and policies to truly support Indigenous learners. NU also has space to grow its international student community, provided it invests in culturally responsive supports and wraparound services. With many faculty nearing retirement, the university can build a more diverse professoriate through renewed hiring and onboarding practices. And although North Bay can sometimes feel like a barrier to attracting newcomers, it can also be a powerful partner: by strengthening relationships with civic, cultural, and business communities, NU can help create a welcoming environment where students, staff, and faculty feel they belong. Recommendations were informed by all data sources and promising practices.

Recommendation 1
Revitalize and formalize Indigenization and decolonization

Recommendation 2
Reorient understandings of disability and accessibility

Recommendation 3
Renew the focus on trust and relationships

Recommendation 4
Solidify leadership as stewards of change

Recommendation 5
Establish a Human Rights and Equity Office

Recommendation 6
Increase capabilities for equity and belonging

Recommendation 7
Support Human Resources systems rooted in justice

Recommendation 8
Communicate with greater transparency and accountability to reflect a new focus

Recommendation 9
Strengthen data collection for reflection & mutual learning

An Implementation Plan was also created to equip the University with timelines and milestones for EDIA, Indigenization, and decolonization goals, alongside accountability mechanisms.

Conclusion

Many parts of Nipissing University are already weaving EDIA, Indigenization, and decolonization into their daily work in meaningful ways. While not perfect, these efforts are nudging the community toward a more inclusive and respectful way of being. Other areas still need deeper change — places where people with lived experience have pointed to entrenched inequities and harm. In these spaces, there is a strong call for action and growth.

The university community understands that this work can be messy and uncomfortable but also deeply transformative. This is an opportunity to build nurturing relationships, foster a culture of care, and draw everyone in. These recommendations and the implementation plan are a starting point, but lasting change will require full commitment and shared responsibility. The report is both a tool for accountability and an invitation for all members of the Nipissing community to help forge a path forward. There is good work to be done — together.

"I might not be able to change the world, but maybe I can change my community at Nipissing University."

- Audit participant

Introduction

Nipissing University (NU) is deeply shaped by the place it calls home. Tucked between the trees and water near Lake Nipissing, just outside the city of North Bay, the University sits on the traditional territory of Nipissing First Nation and is close to other communities that have lived on and cared for the land for generations – Dokis First Nation and the Temagami First Nation. North Bay is also home to 8,000 urban Indigenous people.

The University is also an anchor institution in North Bay, a city with deep ties to both Indigenous and settler communities, where people come together across cultures, backgrounds, and generations. In this context — northern, rural, and rich in relationship — Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA), Indigenization, and decolonization are not just institutional goals. Instead, they are part of what it means to be a good neighbour, a good partner, and a good place to learn and grow. The University's Strategic Plan, *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People*, makes it clear that real learning can only happen in a space that welcomes people fully, sees their strengths, and actively works to remove the barriers they face (Nipissing University, 2023).

What this report is

This Final Report and Evaluation Plan is part of NU's larger commitment to EDIA. It is the final of four key pieces[1] that make up the full EDIA Audit, including Indigenization and decolonization. It is a chance to look closely at where the University is today, and to start building toward a future where everyone at Nipissing University can thrive.

This report pulls from all that was learned across the Audit through reviewing documents, policies and procedures; examining promising practices; as well as the voices and lived experiences of NU community members to weave together a holistic view of the University's EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization journey.

This report considers two parallel examinations: EDIA and Indigenization and decolonization work. This parallel examination process is necessary and addresses each distinctly where needed. This report maps what exists, identifies what is missing, and points to what could follow with a series of recommendations and actions.

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[1] For further information on the Audit components, including the Environmental Scan and the Climate review, please reference Appendix B.

Context

How the Audit came to be

This Audit is the result of a multi-year process that started with the formation of the Equity Action Planning Taskforce (EAPT) in the spring of 2023. In the spring of 2024, the EAPT launched a Request for Proposals for an EDIA Audit of the University. ParriagGroup was chosen to complete the Audit, and work began in the winter of 2025.[2]

Systemic issues

It is important to acknowledge that the University operates within a broader provincial post-secondary system that brings with it its own context of colonialism, racism, patriarchy, ableism, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ agendas, and other intertwined oppressive systems. However, these broader systemic and structural issues do not negate the University's responsibilities towards EDIA, Indigenization, and decolonization. To create the sense of belonging and inclusion rooted in reconciliation outlined in the University's strategic plan, Nipissing University has much work to do on its EDIA, Indigenization, and decolonization journey and despite these broader systemic and structural challenges, NU still has an opportunity within its community to lead in a positive direction with integrity, empathy, and purpose.

Protest

During the timeline of the Audit, a student-led "Break the Chain Protest" took place at Nipissing University on April 3rd, 2025. The protest leaders indicated that the school has failed to improve Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility (EDIA) for Indigenous students (705blackfly.com, 2025). The protest and its aftermath are ongoing. Because contextual events affect NU and its community, they are acknowledged in the Climate Review where appropriate.

Safety and confidentiality

This report contains appendices with abridged versions of the Environmental Scan (Appendix C) and Climate Review (Appendix D), which are the other two major deliverables included in the Audit. This allows for easier communication of the findings.

In particular, the Climate Review has been summarized to maintain our promises to participants that any data released to the public would be strictly high-level. Part of honouring that research relationship is keeping safety, confidentiality, and anonymity uppermost, especially since participants were often concerned that their words would be identifiable, and sometimes shared fears of repercussions for speaking out

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[2] After the EDIA Audit was underway, ParriagGroup was asked to do a separate Indigenization and Decolonization Audit as well. While carrying out a separate audit in a good way was out of scope for the EDIA Audit contract, we have highlighted where Indigenization and decolonization issues and opportunities have arisen within this work. It is also important to note that there is a Reconciliation Audit named in the Academic and Operational Plan (APOP) that will be taking place.

Nevertheless, many people still shared their personal and identifiable lived experiences with ParriagGroup. Finally, because the NU community is small and a finite number of people participated in the engagements for the Audit, we have also chosen to suppress the number of members of specific equity-deserving groups who took part in engagements. Even at a high level, we have tried to keep the integrity of people's words and sentiments in ways that do not identify them but still hold the power and meaning of their participation.

Even in our best efforts to conceal identities while honouring participants' experiences and truths, there is a risk that those reading the report will "fill in the blanks" and (correctly or incorrectly) infer what certain data means, or who data may be about. We discourage the reader from doing this not only because assumptions may be incorrect, but also because the purpose of the Audit and the findings are to look at NU holistically and objectively. This report is not a reckoning for people who have created harm, nor a space to place blame on individuals.

Grounding this work

The Audit team was designed to bring multiple intersectionalities into one space. In this way, with our various lived and professional experiences, we use Indigenous, non-Indigenous and additional cultural lenses to inform our work. This means that the data analysis is shaped by all team members at critical points. Our diverse cultural lenses frame the findings and inform the words on the pages.

By nature, EDIA issues are sticky. There are often conflicting opinions, and as researchers, it is our responsibility to be accountable to all voices, while still maintaining the integrity of the data. In this report, we did our best to provide a balance the information that was shared to honour all who participated.

ParriagGroup positionality and approach

As researchers and evaluators, it is also important to recognize how our own social locations may have impacted data collection. While we strove to have a diverse team with unique lived experiences and expertise, we know that there still may have been those in the NU community who might not have felt comfortable sharing their experiences or sharing their experiences in certain ways. As with all our research and evaluation, we make it a point to be as objective as possible, without losing the human element to our work.

Limitations

As with any work, the process of gathering voices has limitations.

Self-selection bias

Participants self-selected into the engagements and the survey; only those motivated to share their stories took part. As is often seen, those with negative experiences are often more motivated to participate, particularly in engagements. Others, including those with positive experiences, may have chosen not to participate. Of note, most of those who took part in the engagements were from equity-deserving communities, and most of those who completed the survey were not.

Engagements and the survey were offered to all NU community members. However, they were not completed by every community member, which means that, as with all audits, there was a selection bias in the pool of potential respondents.

Missing voices

Some other factors might have limited participation. For example, shifting audit timelines meant that engagements and the survey were conducted at a busy time for students, staff, and faculty. There also may have been communication gaps that left some unaware of the opportunity to participate. Despite multiple recruitment efforts, there are also limited perspectives of international students.

Although ParriagGroup did not host any formal engagement sessions with the three nearby First Nations community members, Nipissing University Indigenous Council on Education (NUICE) representatives who hold multiple positions within other Indigenous groups and organizations did participate. Although formal engagements with all First Nations community members would have been beyond the scope of the Audit, it must be acknowledged that understanding EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization at Nipissing University without these perspectives creates a gap.

Participants shared both direct experiences and 'second-hand' knowledge (e.g., EDIA experiences that have happened to people they know). Our analysis considers all perspectives, and it does not discredit the value of participants' words.

The bias in responses and missing voices are noted and does not diminish the importance of the voices included.

Supressing demographic data

People often identified themselves in engagements in the ways that made most sense to them while sharing their story (e.g., identifying their sexuality and/or gender, experiences of (dis)ability, cultural or ethnic groups and communities, or in a distinctions-based way). As noted earlier, this data has been supressed to reduce the risk of identifying participants and to honour their confidentiality.

Data differences, perceptions, and personal experiences

As is natural in EDIA work, individual experiences that were shared differed. These reflections represent how individuals experienced and perceived events, rather than a single agreed-upon version of reality. It is important to recognize that different people can experience the same situation in diverse ways, and that these perspectives offer valuable insights, regardless of whether they are seen as "factual" to some.

Further, it is possible that those with negative experiences were more likely to take part in engagements, and/or share stories of harm, while the relative ease of completing a survey could have attracted participants with more positive experiences. As such, data from the survey and data from engagements do not always align to create a straightforward story.

The audit team has aimed to fairly portray differing opinions, experiences, and perspectives of those who participated. What is important for the Audit, is that we treat experiences as the truths of the individual that can be indicative of institutional strengths and challenges. EDIA work is meant to drive positive and systemic change, and it must include listening to the NU community. When participants have named an experience, it is a true experience to them.

Methodology: How we did this work

Engagements

Engagements took place both in-person and online through Zoom. An option to provide written feedback was also provided. During engagements, the team tried to match facilitators with shared or similar identities to participants where possible to foster safer spaces and encourage open and honest dialogue. Many participants in engagements held diverse identities. In addition to sessions for everyone, we also offered specific engagements for different groups:

Identity group	NU community member type	Additional groups
• Racialized, • Indigenous • Non-racialized • People with disabilities, • 2SLGBTQIA+ people • International students • Distance learners • Summer students	• Students • Staff • Faculty • Senior leaders • Alumni • Former employees	• EAPT • NUICE • Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII) • Nipissing University Student Union (NUSU) • Contract Academic Staff Bargaining Unit (CASBU) • Full-time Academic Staff Bargaining Unit (FASBU) • Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) • Board of Governors • University Management Group

Participants were briefed on ParriagGroup's data safety, consent, and confidentiality processes prior to taking part.

For participants, our team <u>offered</u> 130 scheduled engagements (40 focus groups and 90 interviews). Of these engagements, 25 were offered in-person and 105 were offered online.
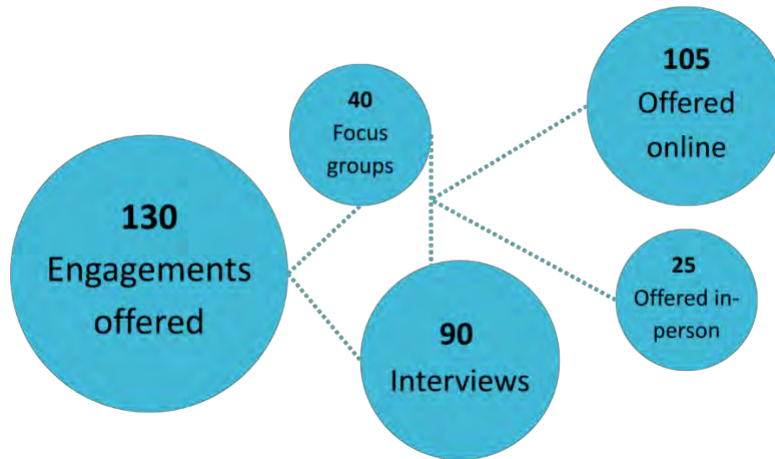
All together, participants <u>attended</u> 98 engagements (25 focus groups and 73 interviews). Of these engagements, 18 were held in-person and 80 were held online.
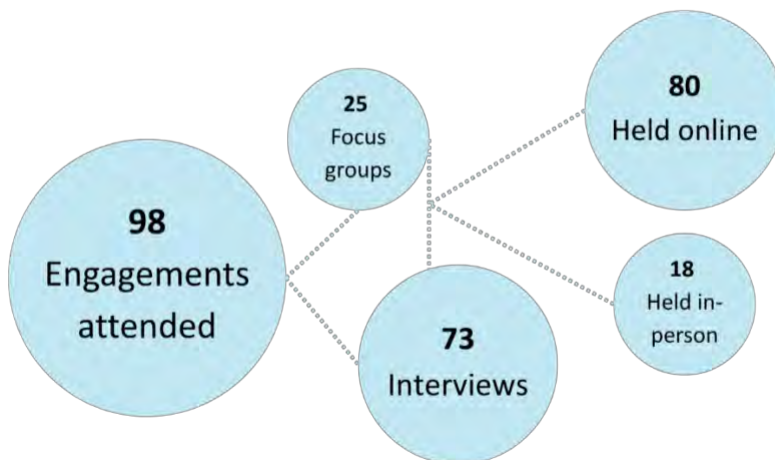
Nipissing University held two separate community engagement forums to build awareness of the Audit and respond to questions and concerns. Over 100 people participated either in person or online across these forums. These participants are not included in the total number who took part in the Audit.

In total, we engaged with 160 <u>unique</u> participants.[3]

The following numbers break down estimates of how many people from different groups were engaged:[4]

- 43 students
- 54 staff
- 37 faculty
- 26 senior leaders
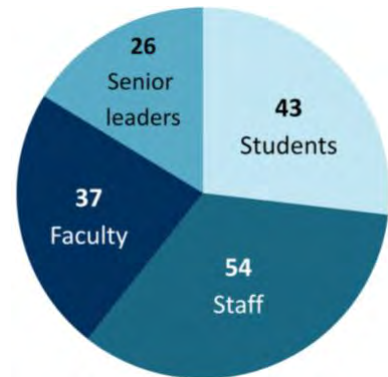
Survey

The survey instrument was developed collaboratively with the EAPT and is based on best practices in survey design, the survey purpose, and relevant lived experience. The survey included background, consent and privacy as well as an invitation to take part in a prize draw as an incentive for participation. NU students (on campus and distance education), faculty, staff, alumni, and administration were intended survey respondents.

The survey content questions explored perceptions of and experiences with EDIA at Nipissing University. Key demographic survey questions were included to obtain a profile of survey respondents.

By the numbers

In all, 879 respondents completed the EDIA Audit Survey. The majority of respondents were students (on campus or distance learners) (52%), followed by alumni (40%), with a smaller proportion representing faculty, staff, admin, student employees, or Board of Governors. Respondents were able to select more than one role. See Figure 1 for details.

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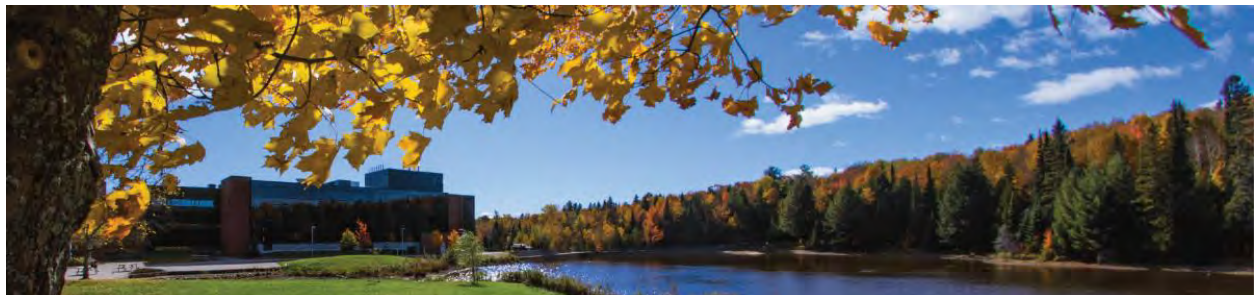
[3] Quite a few people participated in multiple engagements, some because of their varying roles, and others because they felt they needed additional time to tell their story. This number does <u>not</u> include those who were present at the community engagement forums, as no individual, identifying attendance was taken.

[4] Exact numbers of these specific groups are unknown, as people at NU often hold multiple identities but did not always disclose them (e.g., many employees are also alumni).

Figure 1 – Survey respondents

Demographic responses

52% Students

40% Alumni

18% Support/admin staff or student employees*

9% Faculty*

<1% Board of Governors

Missing responses are not included in percentages

Pie chart:
- Faculty 9%
- <1% Board of Governors
- 18% Staff / employee
- 52% Students
- 40% Alumni
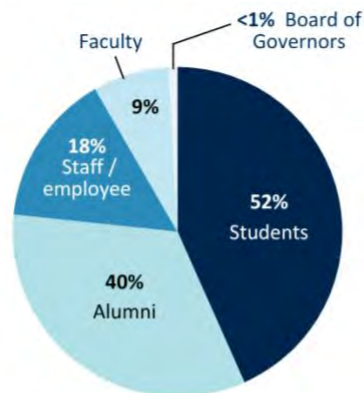
*Among employee respondents, most worked full time (79%) and preferred not to say how long they worked at the University.

79%

A **majority** of respondents identified as:

| Over the age of 24 (64%) | Female (71%) | Heterosexual (74%) | Not having a disability (74%) | White / Non-racialized (68%) | Not a member of committees, councils, executives, or boards (88%) |

Demographics from another angle

5% Identified as a gender other than male or female

5% Preferred not to identify gender

20% Identified as non-heterosexual

7% Preferred not to say

19% Identified as 2SLGBTQIA+[5]

19% Identified that they had a disability

7% Preferred not to say

Bar chart:
- Racialized 12%
- Multiple race categories 7%
- Indigenous 5%
- Preferred not to say 8%

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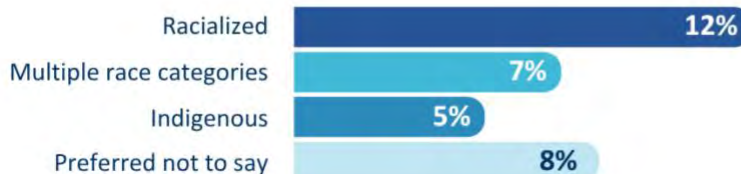
[5] 2SLGBTQIA+ is a derived group that included all respondents who identified as a diverse gender (not male/female) and/or sexual orientation (non-heterosexual).

Data analysis

Engagements

Qualitative data was clustered across subgroups by question. Initial themes surfaced using grounded theory and content analysis. Team members agreed on the themes, then coded the notes and transcripts into the themes.

Survey

ParriagGroup cleaned and analyzed the survey data, identified key themes, issues and opportunities and assessed subgroups for segmentation. Key steps to the analysis included:

- Determining the criteria for "eligible" respondents who completed survey (completed all content questions)
- Combining small subgroups or small response categories
- Combining responses across questions (e.g., strongly agree / somewhat agree)
- Assessing how responses vary by subgroups (segmentation)

Where relevant and significant, cross-tabulated results with chi-squared analyses are included to highlight patterns across respondent groups. Only significant differences between subgroups are reported. In addition, select qualitative responses have been included to reflect key themes and insights, while retaining the anonymity of participants.

What we found

The following section summarizes point-in-time findings across both the Environmental Scan, which included a thorough review of current processes, structures and policies at NU, and the Climate Review, which provided a summary of what we heard across interviews, focus groups, the survey, and community meetings.

An important reminder

Some of the findings below reflect <u>what was heard</u> from Audit participants. In this way, data is participants' perceptions of their experiences. It is important to recognize that different people can experience the same situation in diverse ways, and that these perspectives offer valuable insights, regardless of whether they are seen as "factual" to some.

Please reference "Data differences, perceptions, and personal experiences" in the Limitations section for further explanation. For more detail on the data within the themes, please review the Abridged Environmental Scan (Appendix C) and Abridged Climate Review (Appendix D).

Indigenization and decolonization

The University has made concerted efforts at Indigenization and decolonization but is perceived as not yet actively committing to the difficult, necessary work of change. Simultaneously, every-day actions from dedicated employees and students signal positive change. Efforts must be aligned and institutionally supported to move forward in a good way.

Successes	**Indigenization Steering Committee:** Committee created in 2017 **Operational documents:** Indigenization and decolonization goals named in the Strategic Plan and APOP **Positive signals of change:** Indigenous art, language and structures built into the campus; events like Sunrise Ceremonies; "open-to-anyone" Indigenous-led workshops and teachings; or Indigenized hiring posts **Indigenous faculty and staff:** Strong and supportive Indigenous faculty and staff hold relational accountability to Indigenous community members to move forward Indigenization and decolonization work **NUICE:** Connects the University with surrounding Indigenous communities, and ensures their voices help guide academic programming, policy development, and governance decision-making **OII:** Provides staff support and resources to NUICE; creates inclusive spaces and hosts events for students to belong **Enrollment:** Reduces barriers for Indigenous students to enroll in certain programs **Syllabi:** An analysis of 82 syllabi across multiple disciplines indicated that 74 syllabi did contain at least some form of Indigenous ways of learning, Indigenization, decolonization, and/or reconciliation (data to be taken with caution, as self-selection bias is inherent in voluntary provision of syllabi) **Overall actions:** Majorities of respondents agreed that the University is taking meaningful actions to become more Indigenized and to decolonize. Smaller proportions agreed that the actions taken to become more Indigenized and decolonized needed to change.
Gaps	**Operational documents:** Perceived lack of structural changes to governance, curriculum, or staffing to empower Indigenous people; ambiguous pathways to enact change **Lack of definitions:** Absence of a definition of Indigenization and decolonization **Decision-making power:** Need for more Indigenous seats at decision-making tables **Student supports:** Gap in Indigenous student supports (unfilled positions or paused services)[6] **Course content:** Lack of supports to Indigenize course content. Only 37% of faculty and staff agreed they were supported to build Indigenous ways of being and doing

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[6] By the time this report was concluded, Indigenous student support positions were in the process of being filled or filled.

	into their work. A third (33%) of faculty and staff said they were supported to decolonize aspects of their work.
Challenges	• **Microaggressions and discrimination:** Experience of microaggressions and discrimination • **Library:** Dissatisfaction with the library name and inaction in changing the name • **Funding:** Perceived lack of funding for key initiatives • **Performativity:** Perceived performativity of institutional actions to support Indigenization and decolonization • **Capacity:** Staff turnover and limited resources/capacity to move Indigenization and decolonization forward in a coordinated way. While relational accountability holds Indigenous staff and faculty close to Indigenization and decolonization work, it can burden them without institutional support • **Hiring and retention:** Difficulties hiring and retaining Indigenous employees and leadership positions; no hiring policies or Indigenized hiring processes. In the survey, a majority of faculty and staff agreed that the University faces challenges in both recruiting and retaining Indigenous faculty (81%) and staff (61%). • **Self-identification:** Self-identification processes are met with concerns (e.g., Indigenous identity theft and concerns with policing Indigenous identity)
Suggestions for improvement from participants[7]	• **Real action:** Leadership-level movement to enact change beyond written promises • **Funding:** Fund efforts for Indigenization and decolonization • **Definitions:** Craft definitions for Indigenization and decolonization • **Student supports:** Provide more culturally-relevant student supports • **Hiring and retention:** Prioritize hiring Indigenous staff and faculty; have more Indigenous-focussed positions • **Self-identification:** Alongside First Nations, be a sector leader in broader discussions on Indigenous self-identification and Indigenous identity theft

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[7] Suggestions for improvements are from participants in the engagements and may not completely mirror ParriagGroup's list of recommendations in the following section. They are however taken into account in developing recommendations.

In their own words →

"Reconciliation isn't supposed to be comfortable. If it's not uncomfortable, you are doing it wrong."

"I have mixed feelings about the way Indigenization is approached at the university. While it's encouraging to see efforts made to include Indigenous knowledge and visibility on campus, like land acknowledgements, cultural events, and occasional course content, there's still a very long way to go. Too often, Indigenization feels like it's happening around us, not with us. Decisions are made without our input, and Indigenous culture is sometimes treated like an add-on, not a foundation […] It should mean hiring more Indigenous faculty, offering land-based learning, supporting ceremonies, and creating spaces that feel like home – not like we're guests."

"I definitely see a lot of effort and representation for Indigenous content and practices and awareness. Coming from a very Indigenous community, that's important to me just to be able to see that."

Culture and place

Changemakers help foster a supportive and accepting culture within the NU community, but full inclusion is not felt by all. There is room for the community to overcome barriers of perceived intolerance and distrust, and NU has the opportunity to be an EDIA leader in the place they call home.

Successes	• **Being a "small" university:** Can foster tight-knit community, care, and camaraderie • **Aspirations for a relational approach:** Community has a real desire to "meet people where they are" and approach interactions with humanity and humility • **Dedicated changemakers:** NU community has a network of people who push EDIA work forward in a good way • **Connection to North Bay**: Knowing community members and sharing support; growing racial diversity in recent years • **Positive and safe culture:** Survey results reveal 95% of respondents feel that everyone should feel safe at Nipissing University; 74% of students agree that NU fosters a positive student culture; 68% of students, faculty and staff agreed they feel safe expressing their true self at NU • Only 26% of survey respondents agreed that the University creates barriers to EDIA initiatives
Gaps	• **Culture of fear:** NU community named feeling a culture of fear and perceived repercussions for speaking out; senior leaders recognized while there may be perceptions of a culture of fear, they did not believe senior leadership posed a genuine threat to the community
Challenges	• **Being a "small" university:** University community is often hyperaware of others' experiences; culture can be conducive to rumours and gossip; close relationships can create a diffusion of accountability • Respondents who were members of Nipissing University formal committees, councils, executives, or boards; working at Nipissing University; non-heterosexual; 2SLGBTQIA+; and/or persons with disabilities were less likely to agree that they feel safe to express their true selves at Nipissing University • Survey respondents who were members of Nipissing University formal committees, councils, executives, or boards; non-heterosexual; 2SLGBTQIA+; and/or persons with disabilities were more likely to agree that "Nipissing University creates barriers to EDIA initiatives". • **Dedicated changemakers:** These changemakers are often from equity-deserving groups that shoulder the burden of change for their communities • **Connection to North Bay**: Lack of inclusion for those without social capital, racialized people, and international students
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **Care of others:** Acknowledge and support intersectionality and diverse identities in ways that uphold a culture of tolerance, inclusion, and collaboration

In their own words →

"I do feel proud to work at Nipissing [University]."

"Some people don't talk. There are fears for people to not approach others [about EDIA issues]. I'm worried about those who can't speak for themselves."

"Confidentiality at Nipissing [University] just means you're telling one person at time."

"I don't always feel comfortable or welcomed as a person of colour in NU. While NU may strive to embody progressive values, it's clear that significantly more work must be done to fully reflect those ideals."

Organizational structure, governance, and power

Structural commitments and movement with EDIA are evident in some University spaces, but there are gaps in implementing changes that go beyond performative actions. Diversified decision-making power and concrete resourcing to deliver on good promises are needed.

Successes	• **Senate:** Generally described as transparent and open (e.g., regular reports, public minutes, and space for questions) • **Representation:** Seat for the Nipissing First Nation Chief (or Designate) and a NUICE Representative on the Board of Governors, as well as NUICE Representation on Senate • **Strategic Plan:** Is values-driven and culturally resonant; names intention to explicitly disrupt and transform colonial, racist, and exclusionary systems • **APOP:** Outlines some EDIA deliverables (e.g., launching an independent EDIA unit and audit, aligning hiring policies, and implementing Indigenized learning outcomes) • **Formal engagement with reconciliation:** Senate passed a motion affirming support for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action in 2021 • **Acknowledgement of equity-deserving groups:** Operational documents clearly and consistently recognize students with a disability; Racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+ groups also appear more prominently in recent years (since 2020), though operational detail is limited • **EAPT:** Marks structural commitment to EDIA Audit • **Sexual violence and gender-based violence response:** Work done through the Action Against Gender-Based Violence (AAGBV) Committee, Restorative Justice Working Group, and Sexual Violence Prevention & Education Coordinator (SVPEC) • **Access and Belonging Office:** Creation of the Access and Belonging Office (by the time of the release of this report)
Gaps	• **Lived experience and privilege:** Gap between how members of dominant groups (e.g., white, male, cisgender, able-bodied, or Canadian-born individuals) are accepted into NU culture vs. experiences of harm and frustration of equity-deserving groups • **Senate**: Underrepresentation of student voices and influence despite formal mechanisms for participation • **Acknowledgement of equity-deserving groups:** Women, low-income students, international learners, and linguistic minorities are largely neglected in operational documents, which poses risks to truly inclusive institutional planning • **Action:** Motions and reports on EDIA issues are presented, but follow-up is inconsistent • **Absence of a standing Senate committee on EDIA:** While ad hoc working groups are productive, they lack structural permanence and sustained oversight • **Institution-wide EDIA responsibility:** Appears to rest with the Assistant Vice-President, Human Resources and EDIA, which lacks cross-institutional reach
Challenges	• **EDIA in governance:** Survey details 57% agreement from participants that NU's governance reflects EDIA. It also showed 54% who <u>agreed</u> that leaders were change agents and role models for EDIA. Further, respondents who work at the University <u>disagreed</u> (39%) that the University's governance reflects EDIA compared to those

	who did not work at the University (16%). 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents (34%) were <u>more likely</u> than those without these identities (14%) to <u>disagree</u> that Nipissing University's governance reflects EDIA. • **Change agents and role models**: 44% of those who work at the University and 15% of those who do not work there, and 42% of 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents and only 14% of respondents without these identities <u>disagreed</u> that "leaders at Nipissing University are change agents and role models for EDIA" • **Board of Governors:** Perception of limited diversity in senior executive members which leads to decisions that do not include equity-deserving groups; perception that decision-making power is concentrated within senior leadership • **Power dynamics:** Culture of fatigue and skepticism that EDIA efforts will not affect real change without formal authority, time, or resources • **Performativity:** Perception that NU will often "take credit" for positive EDIA work done by staff, faculty, and students; highlighting good news stories without real change and tangible supports was seen as virtue-signalling, disingenuous, and misleading about campus culture and NU values • **Empty promises:** Perception that NU has positioned itself to show it cares about EDIA "hot topics" and promises to improve, but does not keep a sustained interest or dedicate the resources to meaningfully pushing issues forward
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **Go beyond symbolic gestures:** When the University publicly celebrates "EDIA wins," they must give credit to the changemakers themselves and support change through action

In their own words →

"At Nipissing University, EDIA (which should come as no shock to anyone), is in relation to an assumed whiteness, and assumed able-bodiedness, and assumed heteronormativity. You know, 'equity is everybody being treated the same, and diversity is everybody who is not us.'"

"We need to move beyond the performative space we're in, where we put students of colour on our brochures but we're not supporting them when they need help."

"I believe in the institution's capacity to do these things. I wouldn't be an educator if I didn't care about these things. But people are fed up and retreat into themselves or they go somewhere else where their efforts seem to matter. It doesn't feel good to feel like you're the only person trying to do something; everywhere you turn there's a roadblock."

Communication, transparency, and accountability

Increased communication and transparency are needed to build trust and keep community members informed on EDIA issues, while formalized EDIA leadership will help keep NU accountable to its goals.

Successes	• **Student residence communications:** Good communication about residence, campus and academic activities • **Senior leaders:** Perception from a few senior leaders that communication is improving while acknowledging that it still poses challenges in a small university; perception from community that a few senior leaders are making an extra effort to communicate well (providing rationales for decision-making, naming when they could not communicate more deeply on an issue, and truly being available to respond to questions) • **Written commitments:** Current written or verbal statements and commitments are important to establish EDIA values, and once coupled with action, will demonstrate positive change
Gaps	• **Need for formalized EDIA leadership**: Leaders to actively model support and take on EDIA, Indigenization, and decolonization responsibilities; Survey reveals 74% agreement that there should be an independent[8] person to contact for support when experiencing issues • **Monthly EDIA newsletters:** Are circulated consistently, but lack formal ties to NU-specific EDIA planning, goals, or evaluation
Challenges	• **Lack of EDIA communications:** Leads to perceptions of limited transparency, heightened miscommunication and disinformation; can foster gossip and promote a trust deficit in senior leadership • **Strategic communications:** No universal or streamlined application of communication through policy or practice; general lack of awareness from the NU community • **Employee turnover:** Perception of continual staff turnover and a large number of temporary positions can cause a breakdown in efficient communication
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **EDIA experts:** Hire EDIA experts and have arm's length offices (e.g. Human Rights or Ombuds office). 74% of survey respondents agree with this suggestion. • **Transparency:** More transparent communication from senior leadership (e.g., how and why decisions are being made, sharing information as quickly and broadly as possible, providing explanations when asked, and creating a common understanding of communications expectations between senior leaders and NU community members) • **Accountability:** Desire for NU and senior leadership to take accountability for past actions, commit fully to this new path forward with timelines and milestones, and be

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[8] The survey question asked for agreement or disagreement for the statement "There should be an independent person to contact for support when experiencing issues (e.g., an ombudsperson)."

transparent about every step of the journey. 66% of survey respondents agree there should be more leadership accountability.

- **Representation:** Include diverse staff, faculty, and student representation and influence in the EDIA journey without over-burdening equity-deserving groups. 60% of survey respondents would like to see more diverse mentors at the University.
- **Strategic Plan:** The Strategic Plan should be wholly integrated into the changes

In their own words →

"On every issue, communication is a problem, so every issue becomes large."

"I'm wary of those who say they're going to take EDIA seriously. Some people don't want practice inclusion – they just want to check a tick box."

"The more we can be transparent, the more we know we can trust each other. How can we let people in?"

"There is an authentic and real desire in executive team to make our campus more welcoming, but we need help on how to make the University a better place. What's the best next step for us? We won't get there with just the next step, but let's try and start it in the right direction."

Measuring progress

Attempts to better track data have been made, however NU's lack of infrastructure and limited institutional efforts to collect data are preventing progress around effective measurement. Comprehensive data is needed to make informed decisions on EDIA issues and opportunities.

Successes	• **Financial Aid:** Tracking of basic information about bursary applicants; some student service units have begun; early conversations around improving data to better target scholarships and supports • **Identity data:** Attempts to work with the Registrar's Office, University Technology Services, and Student Development Services (SDS) to embed identity-based questions into early intake or registration processes • **SDS:** Good tracking of data at SDS and adjustment of programming based on feedback
Gaps	• **Lack of infrastructure:** NU lacks the infrastructure and institutional will to consistently collect, analyze, and act on EDIA-related data, particularly at the staff/faculty-level • **Identity data:** Despite attempts to collect identity-based data, processes are lacking; no identity-based information on job applications, hiring and promotions
Challenges	• **Resistance to data transparency:** Lack of data perceived to be rooted in concerns around privacy and a longstanding discomfort with naming systemic inequities; HR data viewed as particularly contentious • **Outdated technology:** Manual systems make even simple data tracking burdensome
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **Consistent data measurement:** Should include standard evaluations or feedback tools to measure progress over time • **Census:** Launch a campus-wide census • **Human Resource Information System (HRIS) system:** Need an HRIS system to manage employee data; include identity-based data to assess equity across employee lifecycle over recruitment, promotions, and performance • **Identity information:** Embed identity-based questions early into student and employee processes • **Anonymizing data:** Anonymize complaint and service access data • **Upgrade data systems:** Invest in systems that make data usable and build processes to act on what the data reveals.

Student supports

While many services are designed to be inclusive and student-centred, not all are explicitly grounded in EDIA principles. Still, there is dedicated and compassionate work being done to support students across the University. Work remains to be done to wholly integrate responsive practices to support students.

Successes	**Funding:** Between 2023–24, nearly $1.87 million in grant funding (representing close to 50% of the University's total special purpose grant allocations) was directed toward initiatives focused on underrepresented groups **Equity Centre (TEC):** Before its closure, the NU community felt that TEC successfully supported students and equity-deserving groups in a low-stress environment **SVP:** The Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Office serves survivors with compassion, experience and proper training; has had far reach in education and prevention through workshops and training sessions; recent revisions to Sexual Violence Policy to remove onus on survivors **Student support services:**[9] NU Success, Student Intervention Services (SIS), Student Learning and Transitions (SLT), and the Multi-Faith Space **Student-run supports:** Groups through NUSU work to support equity-deserving students (e.g., Black Association for Student Expression (NUBASE), Nipissing Pride Alliance, Indigenous Student Circle, Women's Centre, etc.) **NU Listens and REAL TALK:** These initiatives promote peer-based, non-judgmental support **International student supports:** International Student Services provides logistical support that seems to be improving (e.g. peer mentorship for international students, a racialized counsellor on staff, and some campus cultural events) **Library supports:** Collection and educational displays are diverse, inclusive, representative of many viewpoints, and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)-compliant wherever possible **Attracting first-generation and financially-marginalized students:** There is a higher-than-average percentage of students who use Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), along with many who are first-generation
Gaps	**Gender-based violence data:** Limited data on gender-based violence on campus **Equity Centre:** Confusion, mistrust, and a perceived lack of transparency surround the closing of TEC; gap in TEC supports after its closure **Supports for equity-deserving students:** Student-run groups can face gaps in supports, like transient leadership, limited resourcing, and sustainability dependent on annual turnover and volunteer commitment **International student supports:** Students are less likely to attempt to access supports if they do not feel welcome on campus

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[9] Student Accessibility Services and support provided from OII are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Challenges	• **Sexual Violence Policy:** Thought to place too much onus on the survivor, seen as a "check-box" activity • **International student supports:** Students face heavy financial burdens and high living costs; are often not welcomed into spaces and culture, or experience racism at NU or in North Bay; International Student Services lacks embedded anti-racism education and culturally-specific mental health services • **NU Success:** Provides critical case management and early intervention, but does not appear to disaggregate data by identity group or build explicit referral pathways to culturally relevant supports • **Support varies by equity-deserving group**: Respondents who identified as genders other than male or female were <u>less</u> likely to agree that "I have the supports I need to participate fully at Nipissing University". Survey respondents who identified as non-heterosexual; 2SLGBTQIA+; and/or persons with disabilities were <u>less</u> likely to agree that "Nipissing University runs student supports (such as NU Success, Health Services, etc.) transparently."
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **Representation:** Take actions to create safe environments where persons with disabilities can see themselves reflected in within leadership, staff, and faculty • **Equity Centre:** Acknowledge the harm done in closing TEC; reinstate TEC (or similar organization) that serves the same function and supports students and equity-deserving groups; have permanent staff to support TEC • **International student supports:** Support international students with housing, food security, and social and cultural supports

In their own words →

"The actual people serving students - we all care very much about the student experience. That's why we're here. Because we want our students to be successful."

"If I had experience with sexual violence, though, I know I could go to [the office] and I'd be safe. And we could navigate things that way."

"Sexual harassment and violence are happening at Nipissing University…it is real, ongoing, and affecting the safety and well-being of our student community."

"… professors are becoming more and more prepared and open-minded to students with disabilities."

"Online students often fall behind as the University focuses so much on on-campus students and services. Some students fall through the cracks."

Institutional practices

The NU community has a real desire to work and study in healthy, welcoming spaces. Updated policies and procedures, comprehensive training, and increased diversity will help NU get there.

Successes	
	• **Safety:** 95% of student, faculty, and staff survey respondents felt it was important that everyone feels safe at the University
	• **Managing bias:** 88% of student, faculty, and staff survey respondents felt they knew how to manage their own biases in the NU community
	• **Accessing supports:** 72% of student, faculty, and staff survey respondents knew what supports were available to them at NU, while 67% felt they had the supports they needed
	• **Desire for healthy functioning workspaces:** Recognition of skills and good qualities of colleagues; desire for talent retention
	• **Diverse gender inclusion:** Gender-inclusive bathroom signage; new name-change policy at the Registrar's Office
	• **Existence of training**: Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and other Equity-focused training modules (Accessible Customer Service Training, Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), Faculty Training for Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Services, Workplace Harassment, etc.) are available for employees
	• **Training for those in senior positions:** Bias training, as well as individual and institutional cultural capacity training, is mandatory
	• **Training and capacity building:** Student services training includes NUListeners, Mental Health First Aid, and SafeTalk/ASIST training with certification
	• **Existence of policies:** The Accommodation Policy, Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, Respectful Workplace and Learning Environments Policy, Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities, and the Disconnecting from Work Policy allow a structured approach
	• **Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC):** Along with Human Resources (HR), supports the Respectful Workplace and Learning Environments Policy (right to a learning and working environment free from discrimination, harassment, and reprisal)

Gaps	
	• **Lack of employee capacity:** Feelings of overbearing workloads, inequitable distribution/requirement of certain work across faculty, or not enough people/funding to have certain positions; perceptions of high employee turnover; perceptions of lack of transparency from management when positions become vacant or filled
	• **Lack of employee diversity and inclusion:** Anecdotally, there is limited racial diversity reflected in faculty and limited faculty gender diversity within specific departments; hiring processes not standardized, and can allow for bias
	• **Lack of 2SLGBTQIA+ supports:** Perceived lack of support or knowledge of supports after TEC closure; lack of official 2SLGBTQIA+-specific counsellor in Student Development Services
	• **Policies:** Current suite of policies reflect legal compliance rather than proactive engagement with EDIA; lack of some clear, consistent, or existing policies

	• **Training:** Some training (e.g. bias training, or individual and Institutional cultural capacity training) is not mandatory for all employees; Reconciliation training was available for all employees in 2021 but had very low completion rates • **Union collective agreements:** Contain the minimum legal standards for equity protection but are largely exclusive of cultural and intersectional inclusion (e.g., bereavement leave policy that could consider different understandings of kin)
Challenges	• **Disrespect in workplaces and classrooms:** mentions of interpersonal issues with colleagues, experiences of microaggressions, gendered discrimination, ableism, and hostile work environments. • **Discrimination and harassment:** Qualitative data reflected experiences of racial and xenophobic discrimination, bias, microaggressions, or humiliation from staff, faculty, or colleagues. Further, only 55% of survey respondents feel safe reporting discrimination or harassment. 29% said that they have experienced microaggressions, 22% have experienced discrimination, and 20% have experienced harassment at Nipissing University. • **Lack of support for 2SLGBTQIA+ people:** Anti-transgender rhetoric; lack of care about using the right pronouns or names • **Hiring and supporting employees:** Concerns about whether staff or faculty members were in the right positions or were qualified for their jobs (e.g., concerns about perceived cronyism and nepotism); feelings of being overlooked for new jobs or promotions; competitive nature of the workplace; perceived insufficient length of time that job postings are open; lack of EDIA-related training • **Retaining racialized employees:** Anecdotally, the majority of employees are non-racialized, which can make it difficult to create safe spaces for racialized employees • **Uneven EDIA workloads**: Racialized staff, faculty, and students often shoulder specific EDIA work; expectations to speak for one's entire community • **HR:** Lack of trust and perceptions that HR protects the University at the expense of employees; not seen as the appropriate place to house university-wide EDIA functions • **Navigating administration:** Frustrations that NU's processes are overly complex, rigid, and not accessible; difficulty finding the "right person to talk to;" suggestions that NU has a culture of avoidance and opportunism that wears people down over time • **Lack of accountability:** Perceptions of a lack of accountability mechanisms suggest that communication around the safety to access them, and their effectiveness is unclear
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **Accountability:** Put accountability mechanisms in place (or highlight mechanisms that already exist) to address misconduct and those that have caused harm; option to use a restorative justice model; have open dialogues for conflict resolution • **Diverse staff and faculty:** Need for racially diverse staff and faculty for students to connect and build trust • **Open communication:** To build trust, increase transparency about job postings, hiring practices and personnel changes within legal requirements of confidentiality • **Training and capacity building:** Provide training for staff to support diverse students (e.g., students in crisis; students with disabilities, neurodivergent students); training should have certificates to show completion and keep people accountable

- **Policy:** Create policies where there are EDIA gaps; update existing policies to have more clarity and have standardized procedures
- **Navigating administration:** Have "open door" policies and clear paths for students to seek support and connect with others

In their own words →

"As an overall rule, I like the staff and faculty at Nipissing. Most are quite friendly and helpful. But there are definitely folks here that do not appreciate or want to adhere to the changes required to improve our EDI practices, and people like that will hold us back on progression."

"The students keep us grounded and remind us why we care."

"I've seen how certain groups or individuals at Nipissing may not always receive the same opportunities or support as others."

"A lot of people are like, well, if I give feedback, it's just going to go into the void."

Accessibility

Accessibility and accommodations are embraced to a certain degree, with pockets of meaningful efforts in some classrooms and University services. True and fulsome disability acceptance will come with relational approaches and structural integration of accessibility.

Successes	• **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:** Provides a comprehensive overview of accessibility standards and reflects compliance with provincial requirements • **Annual Status Report:** Outlines tangible progress in accessible teaching practices, digital communications, and adaptive technology • **Employment Accommodation Policy:** Affirms the University's duty to accommodate employees and applicants with disabilities in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code • **Accessibility Committee:** Identifies and addresses challenges related to accessibility at NU • **JHSC:** Work shows some structural attention to accessibility (e.g., disability parking concerns, COVID-19 accommodations for immunocompromised employees • **SAS:** Staff have been said to genuinely care about students; has positive disability representation and visibility; helpful neurodivergence and mental wellness supports; accessibility support from professors; some distance learners are supported • **Student Counselling Services (SCS):** Has evolved into a multi-faceted support system built on empathy, flexibility, and student voice • **Classroom accommodation:** Many faculty and staff advocate for student accessibility needs, going beyond "formal" accommodation processes • **Physical spaces:** Some spaces are fully accessible. 64% of survey respondents said that the University is accessible
Gaps	• **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Status Report:** Do not address systemic ableism or disability justice principles • **Employment Accommodation Policy:** Approach remains heavily reliant on medical documentation and emphasizes individual adjustments rather than making systems more accessible • **SAS:** Reliance on traditional accommodation models means that much of this work is still reactive and individualized; student supports from SAS are limited if their professors are not committed to accessibility in their classrooms • **Limited awareness:** Limited awareness of different types of disabilities (e.g. chronic illness or neurodivergence) and supports/accommodations needed • **Physical spaces:** Some spaces not fully accessible
Challenges	• **Disability inclusion:** Accessibility supports are seen as optional or distributed unequally; individual intersectionalities are not considered in accessibility supports • **Proof of identity:** Rigid and unfair demands to prove one's disability can be onerous, time-consuming, stressful, create doubt about one's character, and erase one's identity

	• **Medical documentation:** The emphasis on medical documentation fails to recognize the higher proportion of northern Ontario residents without a family physician and the limited access to health care services • **SAS:** Support requests can be difficult, time-consuming, and have inconsistent outcomes; SAS supports more available "face-to-face" which can exclude distance learners • **Stigma and bias:** Perceptions that people are discouraged from discussing their accommodations • **Perception of accessibility:** Only 51% of survey respondents who had disabilities agreed that the University is accessible, compared to 69% of those without a disability
Suggestions for improvement from participants	• **Universal design:** Adopt relational, proactive approaches to disability that consider universal design to support access and full inclusion • **Definitions:** Use wholistic and inclusive definitions of accessibility and integrate these into processes and structures rather than simply policies • **Training:** Offer accessibility training and capacity building for employees • **Commitment:** Desire to go further than the "bare minimum" of the AODA requirements

In their own words →

"I encourage Nipissing University to expand their knowledge of disabilities and how to interact with people who are disabled. Sometimes the disability is not visible or understood properly and thus can impact a student's well-being. Having more knowledge will reduce bias and misconceptions and misunderstandings."

"I know students who couldn't come up with the medical documentation for their disability. And so, they're just doing the best they can on their own."

Academic policies

Academic policies are relatively comprehensive but are still missing key EDIA elements to elevate them. Faculty require supports to feel confident in fully embedding EDIA principles in classroom and to decolonize the curriculum.

Successes	• **Curriculum development policies:** Focus primarily on procedural integrity, quality assurance, and academic governance • **Student-focused academic policies:** Ensure the integrity, fairness, and quality of NU's academic programs • **Faculty-related academic policies:** Includes a comprehensive suite of policies (e.g. Faculty Appointments and Designations, Tenure and Promotion, Research Policies, Respectful Workplace Conduct and Environment Policies, Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, Academic Dishonesty Policy, etc.) • **Policies**: 64% of survey respondents said that the University's policies reflected EDIA
Gaps	• **Curriculum development policies:** No explicit mention of Indigenous content, decolonization, or Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action; no stated requirement to include Indigenous perspectives or frameworks, and no evidence of decolonizing curriculum expectations within this process; no mention of equity, diversity, inclusion, or accessibility • **Student-focused academic policies:** No explicit references to equity, equality, diversity, inclusion, Indigenous, decolonization, reconciliation, family composition, or specific religions • **Faculty-related academic policies:** Notable absence of explicit commitment to the TRC Calls to; no recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems, community engagement, or decolonizing approaches; no integration of Indigenous worldviews or cultural safety practices
Challenges	• **Faculty-related academic policies:** No targeted considerations for EDIA beyond generalized inclusion language, and no considerations for Indigenous accessibility, cultural protocols, or relationship-based ethics in research and teaching • **Faculty require supports:** Faculty mentioned they lacked confidence in adequately addressing EDIA, decolonization, and Indigenization within the classroom and curriculum, however some relied on OII • **Policies:** Survey respondents who identified as not working at Nipissing University; non-heterosexual; 2SLGBTQIA+; and/or persons with disabilities were less likely to agree that Nipissing University's policies reflect EDIA

Recommendations and action plan

Nipissing University stands at a pivotal moment. While currently solvent, financial sustainability beyond the next four years is uncertain. The urgency for transformation is not only ethical and cultural, but also strategic and economic. There is a window of opportunity to act with clarity and boldness. Key drivers include:

Impending Financial Risk

NU is solvent now, but without action, it faces long-term financial instability. Strategic transformation is essential to resilience.

Opportunity to Lead in Indigenous-Friendly Education

Indigenous populations are growing and younger than the Canadian average. More Indigenous learners are seeking university pathways. NU can lead nationally, but only if it decolonizes its structures, pedagogy, and policies.

Room for International Student Growth

NU has space within federal caps to grow its international student body, but it must build culturally responsive supports and wraparound services to attract and retain these students.

Faculty Renewal Opportunity

With a large portion of faculty nearing retirement, NU can rebuild with greater diversity, but only if it reforms hiring, selection, and onboarding processes.

North Bay as Both Barrier and Opportunity

The community is not yet fully welcoming to newcomers. To succeed in recruitment and retention, NU must cultivate belonging both on and off campus by building relationships with North Bay's civic, cultural, and business communities.

The recommendations in the following pages are presented with a focus on Indigenization and decolonization, first. Next are recommendations focused on accessibility, followed by additional recommendations that focus on embedding EDIA principles and values across the University's culture. Where possible, specific equity-seeking groups are named; otherwise, the recommendations are presumed to span all equity-seeking group members.

How to read the recommendations

Recommendations are written with the overall recommendation named first, a brief description of key issues that drive the recommendations, then specific sub-recommendations and following action items. Alignment of recommendations with the Strategic Plan and APOP are also described. The recommendations will be described alongside timelines, accountabilities, and performance measures in the Implementation Plan that follows.

EDIA recommendations overview

The following recommendations cover nine areas where NU can make EDIA changes. While recommendations name responsibilities for specific roles and departments, EDIA change must happen across the University. EDIA responsibilities rest with everyone.

Figure 2: EDIA Recommendations Overview
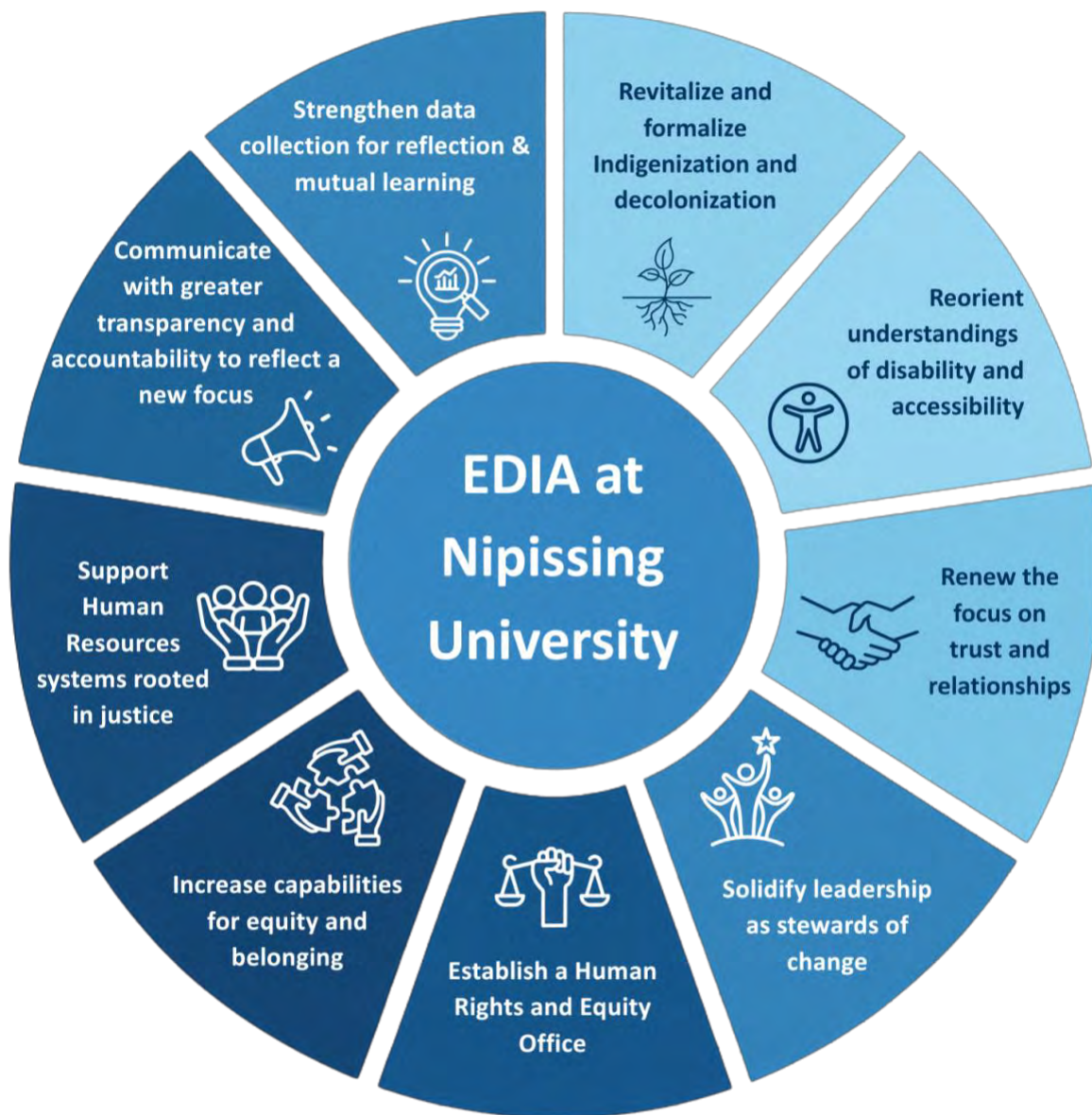
Recommendation 1

Revitalize and formalize Indigenization and decolonization

Key issues

Nipissing University has committed to further Indigenizing and decolonizing systems, governance, processes, curriculum, and services. However, institutional progress is slower than desired, uneven, and lacking consistent supports to create and harness momentum. As well, NUICE and OII have accomplished foundational work that has not yet been nurtured by the University. Shared decision-making concerning Indigenous priorities does not appear to be in place.

Budget and timing elements should be balanced with the need for positional influence to make sure goals are accomplished. The Indigenization and decolonization senior-level role, once implemented, should be reviewed in a year.

There should be equivalence in the senior-level roles leading Indigenization and decolonization and leading EDIA (see Recommendation 5) at Nipissing University.

Detailed Recommendations

Embed Indigenous knowledge systems, decolonizing pedagogy, and implement commitments from the Strategic Plan into University structures writ large.
- Frame Indigenization and decolonization as the starting point, and not an "add-on" to EDIA work being done.
- Build leadership support for OII and NUICE to develop a place-based definition of Indigenization and decolonization, as well as an approach to Indigenous self-identification.
- Ensure that policies and processes include Indigenous cultural competence.
- Provide continuous Indigenous education opportunities for students, staff, faculty and leadership; support core cultural competency as a mandatory requirement for students, staff and faculty, and leadership.
- If not already taking place, formally adapt faculty job descriptions to recognize lived experience as a legitimate competency.
- Support continuous, culturally rooted programming across the school year.
- Invite complex conversation regarding academic freedom and integrating Indigenization and decolonization curricula.
- Complete a detailed analysis (e.g., Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats - SWOT) on Indigenization and decolonization at the University to identify gaps and critical areas of response (Refer to Recommendation 5).

Support Indigenous leadership to promote change across the University.
- Support the OII senior leader role to move Indigenization and decolonization forward across the entire university (i.e., student experience, curriculum and governance).
- This role should collaborate with the Human Rights & Equity Office (HR & E Office) where needed (refer to Recommendation 5). Ensure this role has direct authority over Indigenization and decolonization implementation and has dotted-line reporting relationships across all faculties,

departments, and administrative portfolios to reinforce shared accountability and increased responsibility for Indigenization and decolonization initiatives.
- As part of usual review processes, review the OII role after 1 year to confirm scope for Indigenization and decolonization responsibilities.
- Consult with NUICE to determine the best way to embed their role in the institution.
- Clarify OII and NUICE responsibilities for staff, volunteer members, and the broader Nipissing University community.
- Ensure meaningful consultation and shared decision-making with NUICE, OII, and other Indigenous key players in Indigenization and decolonization work.
- Support senior academic leadership in Indigenization.
- Embed Indigenization in leadership accountability.
- Support individualized learning plans (i.e., registration in workshops and courses, mentoring in addition to formal training, informal book clubs, movie lists,) for senior leaders, faculty, staff, administrators, and the Board of Governors.

Build collaborative and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities to better foster cultural safety.
- Relationships should be nurtured at both the institutional and individual levels.
- Support guidance, training and pathways for NU employees to build these relationships in a good and safe way.
- Strengthen existing ties with nations near Nipissing University and those across Northern Ontario.
- Continue recruiting students in Indigenous communities, noting NU as a unique and culturally safe place to learn and study (ensuring supports are available to faculty, staff and students).

Build Indigenous-centered supports: While Enji giigdoyang provides culturally grounded programs, opportunities remain to:
- Ensure non-Indigenous services (e.g., academic advising, counselling, SLT) are embedded with Indigenous knowledge and trauma-informed practices. Expand the reach of Indigenous-specific supports into areas like financial aid, emergency funding, and housing.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

Pathways positions Indigenization and decolonization as foundational to institutional change, emphasizing Indigenous leadership, lived experience, and sustained community relationships. It promotes cultural safety, continuous Indigenous learning, and the integration of Elders' guidance, ensuring Indigenous knowledges shape all areas of university life and governance.

APOP affirms Indigenization as a core institutional priority, supporting collaborative leadership, ongoing cultural learning, and accountability through performance management. It emphasizes the importance of Indigenous representation, culturally grounded supports, and integrated services across academic and student life.

Recommendation 2

Reorient understandings of disability and accessibility

Key issues
- There are good resources available through the SAS and the personnel within the office are working to demystify access needs.
- While awareness is growing, SAS and its services are not well-known.
- Even where policies (employee and academic accommodations) are in place, supports can be unevenly provided to students, faculty and staff.
- Currently, University policies and practices reflect a view of disability from the medical model lens, where disability is something onerous to "deal with." Pivoting to a social model, the University can recognize disability as an evolving concept that stems from structural barriers.
- There are perceptions that work needs to be done to dismantle ableist perspectives and practices across the University.

Recommendations

Elevate accessibility as a response to anti-ableism objectives in policy and governance.
- Do this work through a constrained accessibility audit.
- Review and revise institutional policies to include accessibility expectations and standards through a disability justice lens.
- Communicate the resources available at Student Accessibility Services and the Accessibility Committee.
- Support the University functions to include lived-experience representation.
- Support employee capacity to report on service delivery (e.g., accommodation types).

Normalize disability inclusion and increase awareness of ableism through training and disability representation.
- Deliver ongoing required training for faculty, staff, and leadership on accessible learning and service delivery.
- Consider training designed by those with lived experience.

Build accessible communications and technology.
- Require inclusive and diverse graphics, language, captioning, and screen-reader compatibility in all external and internal communications.
- Ensure learning management systems, websites, and campus technologies meet or exceed AODA standards.

Expand financial, academic, and social supports.
- Support accessibility-focused advisors to assist with accommodations navigation.
- Promote the availability of services broadly.

Monitor progress and report publicly.
- Collect disaggregated data on accessibility gaps and improvements.

- Include accessibility in institutional scorecards and strategic reporting cycles.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People*/APOP

Pathways emphasizes inclusive, respectful, and culturally safe environments, which support the integration of accessibility principles throughout the institution. Its call for barrier-free services, community engagement, and equity in policy and leadership aligns with efforts to embed universal design, strengthen accountability, and normalize disability inclusion in all aspects of university life.

APOP supports the advancement of accessibility through its focus on inclusive learning environments, universal design principles, and responsive student services. It promotes embedding accessibility within governance, staff training, and institutional policy, and reinforces the importance of performance metrics, lived-experience leadership, and integrated service delivery in building an equitable university culture.

Recommendation 3

Renew the focus on trust and relationships

Key issues

- The University space is Northern-based, close-knit and has the potential to be wildly supportive.
- There is a perception that Nipissing University is not a place where all members of equity-deserving groups can bring their full selves.
- Trust must be rebuilt.

Recommendations

Foster a culture of relational accountability by embedding EDIA into relationship-building activities.

- Meaningfully engage Indigenous and equity-deserving groups in the planning and implementation of key University initiatives and communicate progress back to the groups.
- Integrate inclusive welcome protocols for all new hires and students, including introductions to EDIA commitments and culturally safe practices.
- Embed EDIA into everyday interactions.

Reinforce trust by addressing past harms and involving Indigenous and equity-deserving groups in this process.

- As relationships with Indigenous and equity-deserving groups deepen, examine ways in which harms can be repaired.
- Working alongside the Board of Governors and Canadore, consider changing the name of the library, alongside changing all building names to represent the University's commitment to decolonization and Indigenization.

Conclude the work of EAPT and develop a Terms of Reference for a new EDIA implementation committee to inform EDIA, Indigenization, and decolonization work.

- Consider the option to continue the implementation committee to work alongside the HR & E Office. Consider the option to nominate previous EAPT members, and additional students, faculty, and staff with representation from Indigenous and equity-deserving groups.
- The new implementation committee may provide strategic advice on implementing EDIA recommendations while the HR & E Office is in the process of being stood up to support continuity.
- Provide a clear mandate for the EAPT alongside financial support.

Publish commitments for action and timelines and consider using the APOP website to communicate this.

- Do this by accepting these Audit recommendations as a starting point and ensuring ongoing review and updates.
- Transparently show EDIA progress or lack thereof.

Consider commitments to relational accountability and reconciliation in strategic reporting and leadership evaluations.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People*/APOP

Pathways emphasizes the importance of relationality, mutual respect, and truth-telling as central to institutional transformation. The recommendations to embed EDIA in onboarding practices, engage equity-deserving groups in strategic planning, and address historical harms align with *Pathways'* calls to rebuild trust, acknowledge Indigenous presence, and involve community voices in governance. The proposal to rename buildings as part of a decolonization process and establish a well-supported reference group reflects the *Pathways* vision for shared decision-making, cultural safety, and visible change rooted in community priorities.

APOP prioritizes inclusive leadership, reconciliation, and transparency, which directly align with the recommendations to establish a strategic reference group, integrate EDIA into hiring and onboarding practices, and acknowledge historical harms. The call for public commitments, accountability in reporting, and equity-informed engagement in planning mirrors APOP's emphasis on action-oriented governance and meaningful relationships with Indigenous and equity-deserving groups. These recommendations also support APOP's vision of embedding EDIA and decolonization across institutional systems and culture.

Recommendation 4

Solidify leadership as stewards of change

Key issues

- While leadership is often well-meaning and individually working to build EDIA, the positions themselves do not hold EDIA requirements. This means that the work is dependent on the desire of the individual holding the role.
- While some view leadership communication to be generous, it is also perceived as fragmented.
- This overall situation has led to a lack of structural accountability built into the roles, distrust of some senior leaders, and perceptions that some leaders actively resist change.

Recommendations

Accept the Audit recommendations.
- Demonstrate alignment within the leadership team by accepting the recommendations.
- Demonstrate different ways of working, better infused with EDIA, quickly

Define and embed EDIA competencies.
- Develop a clear and context-specific framework for EDIA leadership competencies that emphasizes humility, accountability, cultural intelligence, and relational practice.
- Integrate these competencies into job descriptions, hiring criteria, PMA reviews, tenure and promotion processes, and leadership development frameworks.

Establish senior-level accountability.
- Appoint separate, well-resourced senior-level roles for EDIA and Indigenization and decolonization that collaborate closely together, and with existing senior roles but maintain distinct mandates.
- Create structured onboarding, mentorship and support for these roles, including guidance from Elders, NUICE, and the new implementation committee where appropriate.

Promote continuous leadership development.
- Require leaders to participate in tiered EDIA learning tailored to their level of responsibility.
- Offer coaching and peer reflection sessions focused on leading in complex, equity-focused environments.

Foster visibility and accountability.
- Track and recognize leaders who demonstrate alignment with EDIA values through their actions, learning participation, and relational approach.
- Introduce a feedback tool or rubric to assess how leaders demonstrate EDIA competencies, especially in community settings and decision-making.

Infuse EDIA into onboarding and succession planning.
- Co-create onboarding protocols with Indigenous and equity-deserving community partners.
- Ensure all new leaders are introduced to institutional EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization commitments, cultural safety principles, and community engagement expectations.

Cultivate relational leadership practices.
- Emphasize values of humility, listening, respect, and shared learning in leadership development programs.
- Require training on relational accountability, particularly for those managing people or engaging with Indigenous communities.

Embed EDIA into strategic governance.
- Promote EDIA-informed decision-making and consultation processes for leadership-level committees and task forces.
- Include equity-deserving representatives and Elders in governance and strategic decision-making bodies.

Advance healing and trust restoration.
- Publicly acknowledge institutional harms, including those related to racism, ableism, homophobia, and settler-colonialism.
- Consider organizing truth-sharing or restorative circles supported by trained facilitators to build understanding and trust.
- Incorporate commitments to healing and relational leadership in strategic plans and public reporting.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

Pathways emphasizes the need for Indigenous leadership, respectful engagement, and institutional structures that reflect humility, shared responsibility, and reciprocity. The proposed actions (such as defining EDIA leadership competencies, appointing senior roles for Indigenization and EDIA, and incorporating truth-sharing processes) advance the *Pathways* vision of relational governance, visible reconciliation, and a learning culture grounded in Indigenous ways of being. By centring relational leadership and community-guided decision-making, these recommendations ensure that Nipissing's leadership practices embody the values and commitments articulated throughout *Pathways*.

APOP calls for collaborative leadership models, equity-informed professional development, and mechanisms to embed EDIA into hiring, onboarding, and performance evaluation. The recommendations to establish distinct senior-level roles, integrate EDIA competencies into PMAs, and require tiered learning for leaders directly support APOP's commitment to leadership accountability. Furthermore, the emphasis on restorative approaches, truth-sharing, and culturally grounded onboarding reflects APOP's priorities of transparency, reconciliation, and the co-creation of culturally safe spaces within all levels of University leadership and operations.

Recommendation 5

Establish a Human Rights and Equity Office

Key issues

There continue to be efforts to build EDIA into Nipissing University's ethos. The Strategic Plan is a clear example where Indigenous and equity-seeking community members' voices were amplified, decisions were made through consensus, and humility led the process. However, there are spaces where the Nipissing University community can seek guidance and support in EDIA matters.

Even with allyship among students, faculty, and staff, efforts are not clearly led by one office, creating fragmentation and dilution of impact and accountability.

While there is a need for coordination and leadership in one function, budget and timing elements are balanced with the need for positional influence to make sure that goals are accomplished. The EDIA senior-level role, once implemented, should be reviewed in a year.

Further, there should be equivalence in the senior-level roles leading Indigenization and decolonization (See Recommendation 1) and leading EDIA at Nipissing University.

Recommendations

Establish a Human Rights and Equity Office to coordinate EDIA efforts across all academic and administrative units and drive cultural change across the institution.
- Define a clear mandate and reporting structure.
- Establish a senior EDIA role to lead the HR & E Office.
- This role should collaborate with the senior Indigenization and decolonization role. (See Recommendation 1).
- Ensure the EDIA role has direct authority over strategic EDIA implementation, with dotted-line reporting relationships across all faculties, departments, and administrative portfolios to reinforce shared accountability and increased responsibility for EDIA initiatives.
- Equip the Office to address complaint reporting mechanisms.
- Review the senior EDIA role after 1 year to confirm level.

Include additional resources within the office that include specialization in EDIA, Indigenous relations, human rights law, accessibility, and staff/student/faculty support.
- Build capacity within the office without taking resources from existing departments.

Ensure the office leads university-wide training, equity audits, and policy reviews.
- Support the office to coordinate annual training cycles, conduct disaggregated equity audits, and review all institutional policies for systemic bias and exclusion.
- Work in tandem with University functions, experts and advisory groups focussed on accessibility.
- Complete a detailed analysis (e.g., SWOT) on EDIA at the University to identify gaps and critical areas of response (Refer to Recommendation 1).

Position the office to monitor, track, and report on institutional EDIA performance using disaggregated data.

- Work to implement centralized EDIA dashboards that track progress across all units, using self-identification and anonymous data collection tools aligned with OCAP® and Nipissing University privacy and confidentiality guidance.

Build relational practices into the office's culture by establishing regular engagement sessions with equity-deserving groups and Indigenous communities.
- Schedule regular listening circles, community check-ins, and reciprocal engagement sessions with Indigenous and equity-deserving communities to continually shape priorities.

Ensure the office operates independently of Human Resources and influences all aspects of the University including administration, student services and academics.
- Convey the independent operational elements of this Office to enhance trust.
- Design the office as an independent unit with influence around recruitment design and retention strategies; policy implementation; curriculum committees; equity-based budgeting and capital planning, and student-facing service design.
- Recognize that while a goal of the office should be to dismantle colonial systems, the current system is hierarchical and thus the office must have authority within the hierarchy.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

The establishment of a Human Rights and Equity Office aligns directly with *Pathways'* vision for embedding EDIA into the institutional structure. *Pathways* emphasizes the need for institutional practices rooted in cultural safety and accountability. A dedicated structure with clear authority and relational engagement mechanisms supports the strategic embedding of EDIA across all faculties and services. This office's emphasis on policy review, training, and data monitoring reflects *Pathways'* commitment to transformational change grounded in mutual responsibility and ongoing learning.

This recommendation aligns with APOP's operational priorities to build coordinated and accountable systems that support EDIA institution-wide. The plan highlights the need for senior leadership roles to drive change, shared accountability frameworks, and institutional tracking of progress. A senior-led office with dotted-line accountability and reporting authority ensures that EDIA is not siloed but integrated into all operational areas. APOP also prioritizes disaggregated data collection, culturally appropriate policy design, and ongoing professional learning—each of which is addressed through this proposed office's mandate and structure.

Recommendation 6

Increase capabilities for equity and belonging

Key issues

- Students, faculty, staff, and senior leaders would like to "do the right thing" when it comes to EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization. They need the tools to do this.
- In the past, training offerings have been sparse, and participation has not been tracked. Training has also not been consistent or ongoing.
- Support outside of training is ad hoc and dependent on the goodwill of Indigenous and equity-seeking community members to lead and maintain. This places additional emotional labour on already burdened community members. It also leaves those who want to do the right thing without the tools and supports.

Recommendations

Implement progressive, ongoing EDIA training and peer models.

- Develop tiered, ongoing EDIA training frameworks tailored to faculty, staff, students, and leadership.
- Establish peer-led learning circles or mentorship programs where equity-deserving group members are compensated for sharing insights and shaping training.
- Ensure training content is regularly updated to reflect emerging social justice issues, community feedback, and institutional learning**.**
- Train frontline staff in intersectionality, trauma-informed care, and anti-oppression frameworks to enhance the inclusivity and responsiveness of student services.

Use applied and relational methods such as storytelling, case studies, and dialogue-based workshops.

- Embed EDIA learning into onboarding and all PMAs.
- Require all new hires, including senior leadership and Board members, to complete EDIA learning modules (including foundational concepts like definitions, privilege and unconscious bias; understanding of Indigenous Histories & Reconciliation; Legislative and Policy frameworks; Accountability) as part of onboarding.
- Include EDIA engagement, progress, and self-reflection as mandatory components of annual performance reviews and leadership evaluations.
- Offer flexible but trackable learning plans with optional deep dives for individuals wishing to exceed baseline expectations.
- Integrate learning into team meetings or planning retreats, reinforcing a culture of shared accountability.

Rebuild student equity infrastructure with sustainable supports.

- Replace the Equity Centre with a funded, staff-supported office[10] for student equity leadership to ensure continuity, reduce volunteer burnout, and embed student voice into institutional planning. This office should be a safe and supportive space for students to bring equity concerns. Include a student advisory committee as part of the governance within this office.

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[10] Towards the end of the Audit, the new Office of Access and Belonging was created.

- Provide targeted resources for student-led groups (e.g., mentorship, help with succession planning, recruitment and retention, community connections).
- Embed EDIA into already existing orientation materials.
- Offer an optional first year course on EDIA for all first-year students.

Recognize community knowledge and lived expertise in hiring and development.
- Consider including include diverse and lived expertise as valued qualifications in relevant job postings (e.g., community engagement, activism, or cultural leadership).
- Consider creating scoring rubrics that give weight to lived expertise alongside academic credentials that align with language in Collective Agreements.
- Continue to train hiring and promotion committees to recognize non-institutional knowledge and remove bias against non-linear career paths for faculty and staff.
- Support professional development programs that honour community-based knowledge systems, Indigenous teachings, and intergenerational learning.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

The recommendations to implement progressive EDIA training, embed learning into onboarding and PMAs, and recognize lived experience in hiring closely align with *Pathways'* commitment to cultural safety, inclusive excellence, and relational accountability. *Pathways* emphasizes the value of lived experience, continuous learning, and reciprocity as key to institutional transformation and equity in postsecondary education. The use of peer learning models, storytelling, and mentorship reflects the *Pathways* vision of relational learning rooted in community. Embedding EDIA into evaluation and onboarding practices also reinforces *Pathways'* emphasis on accountability and sustained behavioural change across the University.

These recommendations directly support APOP's focus on institutionalizing EDIA across systems, from hiring and professional development to evaluation and accountability. APOP calls for annual learning plans, EDIA integration in onboarding, and performance frameworks that reward inclusive leadership. Recognizing lived experience in hiring also supports APOP's emphasis on broadening faculty and staff diversity and valuing equity-informed expertise. Together, these measures reinforce APOP's goal to operationalize EDIA and Indigenization through policies, systems, and professional learning infrastructure.

Recommendation 7

Support Human Resources systems rooted in justice

Key issues

The Human Resources (HR) function has a marked impact on much of the University climate, through employment searches, receiving HR complaints, working with accommodations, and other areas. HR infrastructure can be perceived to be rules and compliance-oriented to the point of being inflexible to EDIA principles.

At the same time, credentialization within the HR function is limited, training is sparse, and EDIA work is shouldered on top of other responsibilities.

Further, it was felt that there is a lack of transparency in some internal and external hiring processes.

Recommendations

Improve definitions and measurement of EDIA leadership competencies rooted in humility. Support HR leadership to embody these leadership competencies. Leverage experience in leading large-scale transformation.

- Root EDIA leadership competencies in humility and accountability and tailored them to the Nipissing University context.
- Because HR plays such a critical role in people's experiences of EDIA, HR leadership should meet or exceed the expectations around EDIA competencies.
- Support HR leadership to be champions of the transformation, balance compliance with equity leadership, and be a partner in trust-based culture-building (e.g., ensuring processes are not just technically compliant but also experienced as fair and supportive by the NU community).
- Strengthen HR leadership change management/ transformation experience to infuse EDIA into the culture, processes, and practices within the department.

Redesign HR and institutional policies to reflect equity values through guidance from the Equity Office or the new implementation committee.

- Conduct a full review and enhance HR policy documents through an equity lens, ensuring language is inclusive and procedural fairness is embedded.
- Establish guiding principles that centre accommodations through a disability justice and proactive lens.
- Update evaluation and hiring rubrics, as well as salary expectations to ensure the elimination of bias and incorporate criteria related to community engagement, cultural humility, and lived experience (see Recommendation 6).
- Enhance equity screening tools for HR processes (recruitment, conflict resolution, promotion) with checklists for inclusive practice and create a process for fair implementation and increased transparency.
- Provide equity-focused policy orientation to all staff and faculty, particularly those in supervisory and evaluative roles.
- Increase transparency in HR practices (e.g., keeping and sharing evaluation scorecards to allow for audits and challenges to recruitment processes, similarly with PM evaluations).

- Conduct regular, independent/external audits of HR processes to identify areas for improvement.

Implement an HRIS system to collect and report on identity-based data to increase transparency and address systemic inequities.
- Until a human resource information system (HRIS) is implemented, consider collecting and reporting on identity-based data that includes self-ID functionality with robust privacy protections, trauma-informed language, and consent-based design.
- Ensure disaggregated data reporting is embedded in institutional dashboards and reviewed annually by HR, EDIA leadership, and governance bodies.
- Use the system to identify patterns of exclusion or attrition and flag departments for follow-up review.
- Establish protocols aligned with Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®), and Nipissing's own privacy guidance to protect the dignity and ownership of identity data.
- Train HR and leadership teams on how to interpret and act on HRIS data through an equity lens.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

Pathways calls for institutional transformation rooted in cultural safety, transparency, and systemic change. The recommendation to redesign HR policies to reflect equity values directly aligns with this vision by ensuring that institutional practices uphold fairness, accountability, and relational integrity. Recognizing accommodations as rights and removing bias from evaluations and hiring reflects *Pathways'* emphasis on inclusive environments and respect for diverse lived experiences. The implementation of an HRIS system that tracks disaggregated identity data is consistent with *Pathways'* commitment to evidence-informed planning, honouring community self-identification, and responding to inequities through sustained, accountable action.

APOP emphasizes systemic integration of EDIA through clear accountability structures, data-driven decision-making, and inclusive HR processes. Redesigning institutional policies to prioritize equity and transparency directly supports APOP's goals of embedding EDIA in hiring, promotion, and policy review. The HRIS recommendation aligns with APOP's focus on measurement and continuous improvement, enabling the University to monitor patterns of exclusion, track progress institution-wide, and intervene where disparities persist. Together, these actions operationalize APOP's vision of creating responsive, equitable, and well-governed institutional systems.

Recommendation 8

Communicate with greater transparency and accountability to reflect a new focus

Key issues

While the University is small, and communications are happening in a variety of ways, the lack of trust in the administration that has developed has created a communications challenge.

Recommendations

With the support of the new implementation committee, craft transparent, values-driven communication strategies around EDIA decisions that demonstrate transparency without breaching confidentiality.

- Develop a communications plan rooted in principles of relational accountability, cultural safety, and transparency.
- Establish a centralized EDIA communications team or designate a senior communications lead with EDIA training.
- Publish consistent messaging across platforms (email, web, social media) that reinforces the University's EDIA commitments.
- Ensure communication strategies are proactive, not only reactive to crisis or scrutiny.
- Determine how specific communications are being received. Acknowledge mistakes and move forward differently.

Share progress, challenges, and authentic community stories.

- Develop a regular reporting cycle (e.g., quarterly) to share EDIA updates and relevant data with internal and external communities through APOP.
- Include transparent accounts of setbacks and barriers, along with next steps and adjustments.
- Use accessible formats such as infographics, plain language summaries, and multilingual versions (if needed for certain audiences).
- Feature diverse voices from Indigenous and equity-deserving communities through storytelling, videos, and events.

Repair trust through accountability.

- Acknowledge historical and ongoing harms through public statements and institutional memory initiatives.
- Include reconciliation and relational accountability as a standing item in strategic reporting and annual reviews.
- Transparently communicate progress or lack thereof.
- Establish a feedback loop where community members can respond to EDIA communications and institutional actions.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

Pathways emphasizes transparency, cultural safety, and relational accountability as central to transformative change. The recommendation to craft values-driven communication strategies, share authentic community stories, and repair trust through clear accountability aligns directly with this vision. By publicly acknowledging harm, reporting on EDIA progress, and engaging community voices in

storytelling, the institution demonstrates its commitment to honesty, reciprocity, and inclusivity—core principles articulated in *Pathways*. These practices also embody *Pathways'* call for visible, meaningful reconciliation and community-rooted transformation.

APOP outlines the importance of accountability, transparency, and community-informed governance across institutional systems. The call for structured EDIA communications, regular reporting, and trust-building mechanisms supports APOP's objectives to embed EDIA into leadership performance, public reporting, and institutional storytelling. By creating feedback loops and sharing challenges as well as progress, these actions reflect APOP's emphasis on continuous learning, participatory engagement, and leadership that is responsive to the voices of equity-deserving and Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 9

Strengthen data collection for reflection & mutual learning

Key issues

- The University collects limited data, particularly around employees.
- Data that is currently collected lacks disaggregation and therefore has limited application to inform decision-making.
- Efforts to collect data University-wide have been constrained by financial barriers.

Recommendations

Use disaggregated, trauma-informed data for EDIA planning and evaluation.

- Develop data governance protocols that align with OCAP® and Nipissing University's privacy and ethics standards.
- Ensure that all data collection tools are designed using trauma-informed and culturally safe principles, particularly for self-identification.
- Consider using the EDIA survey developed for this Audit as a baseline; collect annual data to determine progress.
- Train staff and faculty in ethical data use and interpretation through an equity lens.
- Embed identity-based data collection into annual planning, audits, and strategic reviews. Internal services, for example, would benefit from disaggregated tracking of service access (e.g., which students use the Student Emergency Fund), paired with targeted equity goals.
- Support the HR & E, and OII Offices to collect data was part of their mandate.

Align metrics with values.

- Define success using objective, shared goals, alongside qualitative and quantitative indicators that reflect the University's commitments to equity, belonging, and Indigenous self-determination.
- Consider co-developing evaluation frameworks and metrics with equity-deserving and Indigenous community members, where they do not already exist.
- Regularly assess whether performance indicators are reinforcing equity goals or inadvertently perpetuating systemic bias.

Share results regularly and transparently.

- Support the H R and E office to publish an annual EDIA data summary that includes key trends, challenges, and progress markers.
- Share relevant data with key players (e.g., Board of Governors, OPSEU, and Nipissing University Faculty Association (NUFA)).
- Include visual summaries in board reports, public updates, and staff/faculty meetings.
- Ensure reporting mechanisms are accessible and distributed across multiple platforms.
- Consider including student and Indigenous voices when reporting on the success of equity-targeted grants (e.g., Ontario Postsecondary Access and Inclusion Program or the Indigenous Student Success Fund).

Complement statistics with qualitative stories of impact.

- Consider collecting testimonials, case studies, and community reflections as part of ongoing EDIA assessments.
- Consider pairing disaggregated metrics with narrative storytelling in all major reports.
- Consider engaging Elders, students, and frontline staff to co-author story-based evidence of transformation.
- Consider creating a standing archive of community voices to guide institutional memory and accountability.

Alignment with *Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People* and *APOP*

Pathways emphasizes evidence-informed planning, transparency, and community accountability—principles that are deeply reflected in the recommendation to use disaggregated, trauma-informed data alongside qualitative storytelling. By aligning metrics with values and embedding cultural safety into data practices, the University honours *Pathways'* call to respect Indigenous data sovereignty, elevate lived experiences, and report progress in ways that are accessible and meaningful. This approach reinforces *Pathways'* emphasis on relational accountability, ongoing learning, and transformation rooted in both quantitative evaluation and community voice.

APOP prioritizes performance measurement, data transparency, and culturally appropriate evaluation strategies. The recommendations to implement trauma-informed data governance, align indicators with equity goals, and integrate storytelling into reporting directly support APOP's objectives to embed EDIA into institutional planning, monitoring, and strategic accountability. Regular reporting and participatory evaluation mechanisms align with APOP's focus on continuous improvement and inclusive governance, ensuring that progress is not only tracked but also responsive to the needs and insights of Indigenous and equity-deserving communities.

Implementation plan with evaluation and accountability framework

This Implementation Plan outlines a multi-year roadmap for advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA), Indigenization, and decolonization at Nipissing University. Grounded in community voice, and institutional values, the plan provides a practical guide for transformational change and includes 3 phases to be implemented across three years. The plan is ambitious but is necessary to the ongoing sustainability of NU.

Figure 3: High-level overview of implementation phases

PHASE 1: BUILD FOUNDATIONS AND SIGNAL CHANGE

Establish the leadership structure, clarify mandates, and signal a visible institutional shift toward EDIA by initiating culturally grounded practices, early engagement with Elders, and foundational communications.

Sept. 2026

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENT CORE STRUCTURES AND EMBED ACCOUNTABILITY

Operationalize EDIA across governance, HR, student services, and learning environments through hiring, training, policy integration, and data collection. Embed accountability through performance measures, reporting tools, and institutional rituals.

Sept. 2027

PHASE 3: INTEGRATE, EVALUATE, AND SCALE

Integrate EDIA principles systemically into governance, curriculum, leadership evaluations, and hiring. Conduct formal audits, scale up community engagement, and publish comprehensive impact reports to assess progress and recalibrate.

Sept. 2028

Detailed Plan

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Build foundations and signal change	**Implement core structures and embed accountability**	**Integrate, evaluate, and scale**
Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
(until Sept. 2026)	**(until Sept. 2027)**	**(until Sept. 2028)**

The purpose of this Implementation Plan is to guide and support institutional change in line with key milestones identified in the Recommendations. There are additional elements that cover important details and action items within the Recommendations that are <u>not</u> included in this Implementation Plan. Please refer to the Recommendations and Sub-Recommendations for additional details.

Based on sequencing and timelines, in some instances, RACI roles may not be filled when key actions need to be taken. These roles are still named, as they will eventually take part in specific work. For example, it will take time for the HR & E Office to be established and staffed, but it is essential to keep EDIA work moving while the pieces fall into place.

In some instances, responsibilities and accountabilities are proposed to be shared, which may differ from the current University model.

Finally, descriptions for how RACI should be interpreted are below.

Responsible: The person who performs the action item is responsible for its execution. The action item executor reports to the person who is accountable.

Accountable: This person bears the final responsibility for the correct completion of the action item. They must approve the action item.

Consulted: This is a person who is asked for their advice in <u>advance,</u> characterized by two-way and meaningful communication. In addition to advice, they also help in the implementation by directing the action item forward in a good way.

Informed: This person is informed where needed about decisions, progress, and results achieved. This is one-way communication.

Phase 1: Year 1

Recommendation #1 Revitalize and formalize Indigenization and decolonization					
Action item	**Responsible**	**Accountable**	**Consulted**	**Informed**	**Milestone**
Hire OII senior leader role	Provost	HR	OII, NUICE	Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2025
Implement commitments from the Strategic Plan into university structures writ large	President	Provost	NUICE, OII	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2026
Hold meaningful conversations about changing the name of the library (and other building names)	President, Board of Governors and Canadore	N/A	NUICE, OII, First Nations communities, Senate	Senate, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2026
Confirm NUICE and OII mandates	NUICE, OII	President, Provost	N/A	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2026
Performance Measures	- Hire OII senior leader role - Meetings held between key leadership around library and building name changes - NUICE and OII mandates confirmed by senior leadership - Progress reflected on APOP website				

Recommendation #2 Reorient understandings of disability and accessibility

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Communicate the resources available at Student Accessibility Services and the Accessibility Advisory Committee	Communications and Marketing	AVP Students	SAS, Accessibility Advisory Committee, HR & E Office (once stood up)	Students, Staff, Faculty	Dec. 2025
Require accessible formats in all external and internal communications	Communications and Marketing	Director, University Technology Services	SAS, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Students, Staff, Faculty	Mar. 2026
Performance Measures	• Communications are delivered regularly • Accessible formatting is implemented in all internal and external communications				

Recommendation #3 Renew the focus on trust and relationships

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Develop TOR for the new Implementation Committee to support implementation of the EDIA Audit recommendations	President, Provost	Board of Governors,	Senior Leadership team, current EAPT member (if interested)	Senate, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Nov. 2025
Recruit Implementation Committee Members	President, Provost	Board of Governors	Senior Leadership Team, current EAPT member (if interested)	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Dec. 2026
Performance Measures	• TOR is developed • Implementation Committee established • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #4 Solidify leadership as stewards of change

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone

Accept recommendations	Senior leadership team, UMG	President	Board of Governors	Senate, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Oct. 2025
Implement individual learning plans and track progress	Senior leadership team, UMG	President	Implementation Committee	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2026
Performance Measures	• Recommendations are accepted • Leadership confirms that learning plans and tracking are in place • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #5 Establish the Human Rights and Equity Office

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Determine the relationship between the HR & E senior leader role and OII senior leader role	President, Provost	Board of Governors,	NUICE, OII, Implementation Committee	Senate, Students, Staff, Faculty	Dec. 2025
Launch recruitment for HR & E senior leader role	HR	VP Finance and Administration, President	Implementation Committee	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Jan. 2026
Performance Measures	• Relationship with OII senior level role is named in the job description for the HR & E senior level role • Recruitment launched for HR & E senior leader role • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #6 Increase capabilities for equity and belonging

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Staff new Equity & Belonging office	HR	VP Finance and Administration	SDS, AVP Students	Students, Staff, Faculty	Dec. 2025

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Develop plan to increase capabilities for equity and belonging	Office of Access and Belonging	AVP Students	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up)	Students, Staff, Faculty	Jan. 2026
Performance Measures	• Equity and Belonging Office staffed • Equity and Belonging Plan in motion • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #7 Reorient Human Resources systems rooted in justice

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Improve definitions and measurement of EDIA leadership competencies rooted in humility	HR	VP Finance and Administration	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up)	Senior leadership team	Mar. 2026
Performance Measures	• Definitions and measurement of competencies updated • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #8 Communicate with greater transparency and accountability to reflect a new focus

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Develop communication plan rooted in transparency and EDIA messaging	Marketing and Communications	President	Provost	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Oct. 2025
Performance Measures	• Communications reflecting Indigenization as EDIA foundation launched				

Recommendation #9 Strengthen data collection for reflection & mutual learning

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone

Annualize the EDIA Audit survey	Institutional Planning and Analysis	VP Finance and Administration	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up)	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2026
Performance Measures	• Annual EDIA Audit survey conducted and published • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Phase 2: Year 2[11]

Recommendation #1 Revitalize and Formalize Indigenization and Decolonization					
Action item	**Responsible**	**Accountable**	**Consulted**	**Informed**	**Milestone**
Confirm the level of the OII senior role	HR	Provost	NUICE, Implementation Committee, Board	Students, Staff, Faculty	Dec. 2026
Define core concepts (Indigenization, decolonization)	OII, NUICE	Provost, President	OII/NUICE to confirm	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Oct. 2026
Support Indigenous learning for students/faculty/staff	OII, NUICE, HR & E Office,	Provost, President	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up), HR	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Level of OII senior role is confirmed • Core concepts are defined • Indigenous learning is baselined and measured (e.g., attendance of workshops, completion of courses) • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

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[11] It is understood that a Reconciliation Audit will be taking place – this Implementation Plan assumes that by the end of Phase 2, work will be underway/completed. This assumption informs further Indigenization and decolonization action items in this plan.

Recommendation #2 Reorient understandings of disability and accessibility

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Review and revise institutional policies to include accessibility expectations and standards	HR	VP Finance and Administration	SAS, Accessibility Advisory Committee, Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up),	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Plan accessibility audit, form review committee	Human Rights & Equity Office	President	HR, SAS, Accessibility Advisory Committee, Equity and Belonging Office	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Institutional policies reviewed for accessibility expectations and standards • Accessibility audit approved • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #3 Renew the focus on trust and relationships

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Meaningfully engage Indigenous and equity-deserving groups in the planning and implementation of key University initiatives	HR & E Office, OII	President	NUICE, Advisory/ Affiliation Groups, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Qualitative data suggest Indigenous and equity-deserving groups feel meaningfully included • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #4 Solidify leadership as stewards of change

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Embed EDIA into strategic governance	Senior leadership team	Board of Governors	HR & E Office	Senate, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Qualitative data indicates a decision-making culture shift (e.g., agreement that prior and meaningful consultation happens with key players in decision-making)				

Recommendation #5 Establish the Human Rights and Equity Office

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Establish the HR & E Office	President, HR	Board of Governors	NUICE, OII, Implementation Committee	Senate, Students, Staff, Faculty	Dec. 2026
Support EDIA learning for students/faculty/staff	HR & E Office,	Provost, President	OII, NUICE, Advisory/ Affiliation Groups, HR	Senate, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• HR & E senior leader role onboarded and active in leadership • EDIA learning is baselined and measured (e.g., attendance of workshops, completion of courses) • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #6 Increase capabilities for equity and belonging

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Develop tiered, ongoing EDIA training frameworks tailored to faculty, staff, and leadership	HR	HR & E Office	Equity and Belonging Office, Advisory/ Affiliation Groups	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty, Senior Leadership	Sept. 2027
Develop tiered, ongoing EDIA training frameworks tailored to students	Equity and Belonging Office	HR & E Office	HR, Advisory/ Affiliation Groups	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty, Senior Leadership	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Training is developed				

	• Progress demonstrated on APOP website

Recommendation #7 Reorient Human Resources systems rooted in justice

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Redesign HR and institutional policies to reflect equity values	HR	VP Finance and Administration	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up)	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Embed EDIA expectations into performance management, hiring, onboarding, and evaluation tools	HR	VP Finance and Administration	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up)	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• 100% of policies are redesigned • EDIA expectations are embedded into 100% of performance management, hiring, onboarding, and evaluation tools • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #8 Communicate with greater transparency and accountability to reflect a new focus

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Share progress, challenges, and authentic community stories	Marketing and Communications	President	Provost, Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up), Equity and Belonging Office	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Regular reporting cycle is developed, and data indicates increased engagement with EDIA communications • Qualitative data indicates a greater perception of transparency and positive shift in tone • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #9 Strengthen data collection for reflection & mutual learning

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Co-develop evaluation frameworks and metrics with equity-deserving and Indigenous community members	Institutional Planning and Analysis, OII, NUICE	VP Finance and Administration	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up), Provost	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Collect annual EDIA survey data to determine progress	Institutional Planning and Analysis	VP Finance and Administration	Implementation committee (until HR & E Office is stood up), Provost	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2027
Performance Measures	• Evaluation frameworks are co-developed • EDIA survey is conducted and results reported • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Phase 3: Year 3

Recommendation #1 Revitalize and Formalize Indigenization and Decolonization					
Action item	**Responsible**	**Accountable**	**Consulted**	**Informed**	**Milestone**
Assess Indigenization and decolonization progress over the previous 2 years	OII	Provost	NUICE, Institutional Planning and Analysis	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 202
Embed Indigenization in leadership accountability	HR	OII, HR & E Office	NUICE	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Require personal learning plans for faculty and staff as well as administrators and the Board of Governors	HR	OII, HR & E Office	NUICE	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Begin integrating Indigenization and decolonization curricula	OII, NUICE	HR & E Office, Provost	Equity and Belonging Office	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• Indigenization and decolonization progress is assessed • Indigenization is embedded in leadership accountability • 100% of staff and faculty and Board have learning plans or training completed • Indigenization and decolonization are demonstrably included in curricula • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #2 Reorient understandings of disability and accessibility

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Carry out accessibility audit	HR & E Office	President	HR, SAS, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Jan. 2028
Review institutional policies to include accessibility expectations and standards	HR & E Office	VP Finance and Administration	HR, Accessibility Office, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Deliver ongoing required training for faculty, staff, and leadership on accessible learning and service delivery	HR & E Office	VP Finance and Administration	HR, Accessibility Office, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Ensure learning management systems, websites, and campus technologies meet or exceed AODA standards	Technology Services	VP Finance and Administration	HR & E Office, Accessibility Office, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Collect disaggregated data on accessibility gaps and improvements	Institutional Planning and Analysis	VP Finance and Administration	Institutional Planning, HR & E Office, Accessibility Office, Accessibility Advisory Committee	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	- Accessibility audit is carried out and results published - Accessibility audit data used to guide 100% policy revisions - Ongoing training is delivered to all faculty, staff, and leadership - Learning management systems, websites, and campus technologies meet or exceed AODA - Disaggregated data on accessibility gaps and improvement is collected - Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #3 Renew the focus on trust and relationships

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone

Include actions supporting relational accountability and reconciliation in leadership evaluations	HR & E Office	President, Board of Governors,	NUICE, OII, HR	Senate, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• Actions and examples are a mandatory part of 100% of leadership evaluations • Communicate shift of leadership evaluations on APOP website				

Recommendation #4 Solidify leadership as stewards of change

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Integrate EDIA-infused competencies into hiring processes	HR	VP Finance and Administration	HR & E Office	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Offer coaching and peer reflection leadership sessions	HR & E Office	President, Board of Governors,	HR,	Senate, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Acknowledge historical and ongoing harms through public statements and institutional memory initiatives	Senior leadership team	Board of Governors	HR & E Office,	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• EDIA-infused competencies are embedded into relevant hiring competencies • Coaching and peer reflection leadership sessions are offered; attendance is measured; and session feedback is used to improve sessions • Appropriate public statements and institutional memory initiatives are made by senior leadership • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #5 Establish the Human Rights and Equity Office

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Complete a detailed analysis (e.g., SWOT) on EDIA	HR & E Office	President	NUICE, OII, Equity and Belonging Office, Provost, UMG	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Coordinate annual training cycles	HR & E Office,	President	HR, Equity and Belonging Office, OII, NUICE	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Review all institutional policies for systemic bias and exclusion	HR & E Office	President	HR, Equity and Belonging Office, OII, NUICE, Provost	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Assess the level of the HR & E senior role to confirm level	HR	VP Finance and Administration, President	HR & E Office	Senate, Board of Governors, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	- SWOT analysis completed - Annual training cycles are coordinated - Review 100% of policies for bias and exclusion - The level of the HR & E senior level role is assessed - Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #6 Increase capabilities for equity and belonging

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Implement progressive, ongoing EDIA training and peer models for faculty, staff, and leadership	HR	HR & E Office	Equity and Belonging Office,	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty, Senior Leadership	Sept. 2028
Implement progressive, ongoing EDIA training and peer models for students	Equity and Belonging Office	HR & E Office, SDS	HR	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty, Senior Leadership	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• EDIA training and peer models are implemented for faculty, staff, leadership, and students; attendance is measured; and session feedback is used to improve training • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #7 Reorient Human Resources systems rooted in justice

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Continue to collect and report on identity-based data	Institutional Planning and Analysis, HR	VP Finance and Administration, HR & E Office	N/A	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty, Senior Leadership	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• Data continues to be collected and reported on • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Recommendation #8 Communicate with greater transparency and accountability to reflect a new focus

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Develop a regular reporting cycle (e.g., quarterly) to share EDIA updates through APOP	Institutional Planning and Analysis, Provost	VP Finance and Administration, HR & E Office	N/A	Senate, Board of Governors, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty, Senior Leadership	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• Quarterly EDIA reports launched and shared with internal and external audiences on APOP website				

Recommendation #9 Strengthen data collection for reflection & mutual learning

Action item	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Milestone
Use EDIA data to guide resource allocation and policy reform	Senior Leadership, UMG, Institutional Planning and Analysis	Board of Governors, VP Finance and Administration	HR & E Office	Senate, NUICE, OII, Students, Staff, Faculty	Sept. 2028
Performance Measures	• Key metrics from EDIA Audit Survey show positive changes in trends • Progress demonstrated on APOP website				

Closing thoughts

Many areas of Nipissing University appear to be infusing EDIA and Indigenization and decolonization into their work in a good way. No, they are not perfect. But they stand out as efforts to move the needle and gently nudge the community toward a better way of functioning.

Other areas at the University require hard work to bring them to a place where EDIA and Indigenization and decolonization are championed. In these areas, those with lived experiences, particularly those tied to equity-deserving communities, have pointed towards deep, structural inequities and harm. In these spaces, many in the Nipissing University community are asking for action and growth.

The Nipissing University community knows very well that EDIA and Indigenization and decolonization issues can be messy, uncomfortable, and conflicting. They also offer a unique venue for communities to come together and create meaningful change. Here, the University has an opportunity to cultivate nurturing relationships and foster a culture that celebrates its people and draws everyone in.

These recommendations and the implementation plan are a good place to start, but they require fulsome consideration, and a deep commitment to change. The University must forge its own path to action and bring everyone along on the way.

This report should be used to advocate for accountability from the University, but it is also a call to every single Nipissing University community member - EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization work can only move forward when everyone shares the responsibilities to make changes.

There is good work to be done.

> *"The anti-EDI rhetoric may be growing louder—but so is our determination to lead with purpose."*
>
> - Audit participant

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Appendices

Appendix A - Definitions

Equity is about fairness and justice. It is about taking deliberate actions to remove systemic, group, and individual barriers that hinder opportunities, disrupt well-being and create and reinforce unfair outcomes. Although both equity and equality promote fairness, equality achieves this through treating everyone the same, regardless of need and circumstances. Equity achieves this through treating people differently dependent on need, circumstance and consideration of historical and systemic inequities. *Adapted from the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks*

Diversity refers to the variety of similarities and differences among people including but not limited to: gender, sex, gender identity and expression, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous identity/origin, age, generation, disability, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, socio-economic status/caste, appearance, language and accent, mental health, education, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role and function, thinking style, and personality type. Representation of various diversity dimensions within organizations may vary by geography, time, or organization. *Adapted from the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks*

Inclusion is a dynamic state of feeling, belonging, and operating in which diversity is leveraged and valued to create a fair, healthy, and high-performing organization or community. An inclusive culture and environment ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It also enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, heard, engaged, motivated, and valued for who they are. *Adapted from the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks*

Accessibility is the quality of being able to be entered or used by everyone, including people who have a disability, reflected in the design and implementation of products, devices, websites and communication, services, vehicles, facilities, or environments. *ParriagGroup*

Indigenization has not been defined by Nipissing University. A possible definition for the purposes of this survey is provided here. The term Indigenization has emerged since the early 2000s to signal the process of increasing the presence of Indigenous peoples and knowledges in traditionally Euro-Western institutions. *University of Western Ontario*

Decolonization has not been defined at Nipissing University. A possible definition for the purposes of this survey is provided here. The term decolonization can describe an ongoing process that aims to deconstruct settler colonial ideologies such as white supremacy, give value to Indigenous knowledge, and dismantle power imbalances. Decolonization is the active work to give back the colonized territory's independence and undo the effects of colonialism on the social, political, and economic aspects of a people's life. *Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion*

Microaggressions are small interactions with people or the environment that communicate bias towards equity deserving groups. While microaggressions may be unintentional, they can have cumulative negative effects on an individual's well-being and sense of belonging. *Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion*
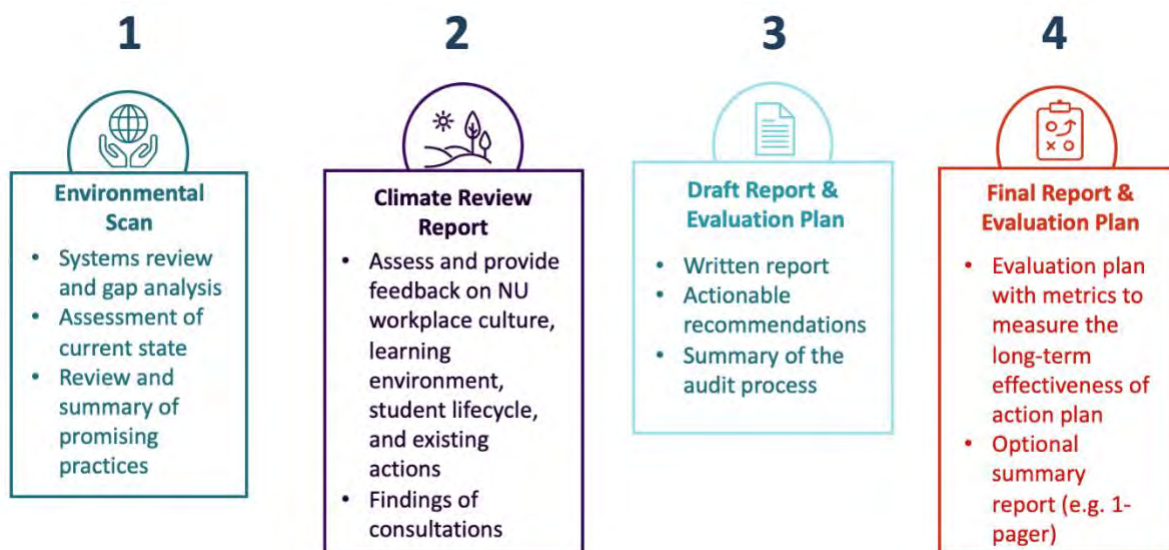
Appendix B – Overview of Audit components

The Audit team was tasked to complete a fulsome overview of Nipissing University in a multi-staged and multi-dimensional way (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Stages of the EDIA Audit

Figure 2: Overview of four EDIA Audit deliverables

1. **Environmental Scan, Systems Review, and Gap Analysis:** A review of current EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization-related policies and practices across the University.
2. **Climate Review:** A deeper look at the everyday experience of being part of the Nipissing University community—what it feels like to learn here, work here, and belong here. This report includes conversations, engagements, and community input, especially from people whose voices

have not always been heard. This report will also include a comparison of EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization at Nipissing University to relevant emerging sector-leading approaches.

3. **Draft Report and Evaluation Plan**: A draft version of the Final Report.
4. **Final Report and Evaluation Plan:** A set of clear, practical, and meaningful recommendations, an action/implementation plan, and an evaluation and accountability framework to help Nipissing University become a more inclusive and equitable place. These pieces will be a roadmap for tracking progress over time, with tools to help the University stay on course, measure change, and stay accountable to the communities it serves.

Environmental Scan

The Environmental Scan, Systems Review, and Gap Analysis consisted of a review of current EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization-related policies, practices, institutional data, and guiding documents across the University. This examination used an intersectional lens to determine the ways in which the data could potentially impact the NU community, and in particular, specific equity-deserving groups.

We also compared EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization at Nipissing University to relevant emerging sector-leading approaches. The goal was to understand how EDIA, Indigenization and decolonization currently show up in the University's systems and where there may be room to grow, shift, or build something new.

Please reference the Abridged Environmental Scan in Appendix C for more information.

Climate Review

The Climate Review reflected a deeper dive into the everyday experience of being part of the Nipissing University community—what it feels like to learn here, work here, and belong here. This report included conversations, engagements, and community input, especially from people whose voices have not always been heard. It also included a review of syllabi evaluated in four categories (Indigenous ways of learning, Indigenization, decolonization, and reconciliation) to determine where there were strengths and room for growth.

Please reference the Abridged Climate Review in Appendix D for more information.

Appendix C - Environmental Scan (Abridged)

Appendix D - Climate Review (Abridged)