Thompson Rivers University Canada Research Chairs Equity Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan: Preamble

Context and Background Informing the Action Plan

TRU has great diversity amongst its student body, with a very complex and varied demographic profile given the diversity of its campuses: Kamloops, Williams Lake and online. On an annual basis, approximately 10% of students are Indigenous and 19% are international. However, each of the campuses has a unique student profile. For instance, the Williams Lake campus student body is 29% Indigenous, and at the Kamloops campus 33% of the student body is international. Whilst to date diversity statistics have not been collected fully with an EDI lens, the university reports gender, Indigenous ancestry, and domestic/international status widely. Information on students with diverse needs/strengths is collected through self-declaration/access to services, but it is not reported.

Utilizing the CRCP best practices guide, TRU established the *University Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for Faculty Recruitment* specifically to conduct the institutional self-assessment and develop a Canada Research Chair EDI Action Plan. The University Committee was sponsored by the Provost and Vice-President Academic and the Associate Vice-President (AVP) Research and Graduate Studies—and the committee membership strove for the following: representation of women, Indigenous peoples, people with diverse needs, racialized minorities, LGBTQ2+, and people with intersectional identities. The University Committee included two current Canada Research Chairs (Dr. Heather Price and Dr. Shelly Johnson), two Faculty Deans (Prof. Airini and Dr. Mike Henry), the Executive Director of Human Resources designate (Amanda Ellison), the Director of Research and Graduate Studies (Troy Fuller), the Executive Director of Integrated Planning and Effectiveness (IPE) (Dorys Crespin-Mueller), and faculty members with recognized expertise in EDI (Dr. Jennifer Woodrow, Samuel Singer, Dr. Amie McLean, and Dr. Mónica Sánchez-Flores).

As part of TRU's EDI Action Plan development, the University's EDI Committee identified existing data and reports providing insights on the institutional environment, including a university-wide *Engagement Survey* (2017), existing institutional EDI data, student demographic data, and the results of faculty exit surveys. The Committee recognized that existing data and reports are limited in the specific collection of EDI relevant information, and the Committee thus identified the need to collect this information in a more systematic way to inform decision-making.

In 2018, TRU commissioned an internal comprehensive study that concluded in 2019 called *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Thompson Rivers University*. This report provides a review of institutional and policy models at other universities for addressing EDI and a detailed scan of TRU's existing EDI landscape, including an initial assessment of TRU's organizational arrangements, strategic plans, policies, collective agreements, and institutional culture to identify gaps. The study includes a preliminary cataloguing of interculturalization, internationalization, and Indigenization initiatives already underway. It further provides a preliminary analysis of the strengths and limitations of TRU's existing EDI institutional landscape, which takes into account applicable provincial and federal legal frameworks. The study's recommendations focus on three key areas – governance, policy, and training. It concludes that TRU needs to create a system of EDI governance in order to address deficits in the content, scope, and implementation in existing EDI policies, and to inform administrative, research, and training functions. The Committee and TRU's senior administration are circulating the findings of this report as part of our ongoing consultation, with the aim of furthering EDI in our institution.

The University's Action Plan specifically addresses the EDI needs of its Canada Research Chairs, yet recognizes that CRCs are part of the wider university. The 2019 comprehensive study shows that the TRU EDI culture should have the capacity to adapt and be supportive of all individuals in equity-seeking groups and with intersectional identities. This includes addressing challenges such as implicit or unconscious bias, stereotype threat, epistemic and social injustice, moral licensing, and systemic discrimination. As such, the development of this Action Plan is one facet of a broader institutional commitment to fostering EDI at TRU. The University's aim is not simply to meet minimum targets for representation. Rather, we aspire to create a culture of inclusion that empowers all TRU faculty, staff, and students who are members of equity-seeking groups to succeed and thrive.

In order to do this, TRU has committed funding to establish an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, with the aim of building on best practices at other institutions while being responsive to local and institution-specific contexts. The EDI Officer will report jointly to Human Resources and the Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research, and be tasked with working with other institutional stakeholders to meet CRC monitoring and reporting obligations, including self-identification data collection, conducting an annual equity, diversity, and inclusion report, monitoring of recruitment processes, establishing equity and diversity targets, and conducting program evaluations. Our intention is for this EDI Officer to assist collaboratively in the creation and improvement of existing EDI policies and institutional statements including but not limited to: the protection of rights and freedoms, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment,

anti-racism, sexualized violence prevention, accommodations provision, barrier identification, removal and monitoring, as well as training and education.

Additionally, the TRU EDI officer will further develop and expand our institutional EDI training and education Action Plan for senior administration, staff, faculty, and students. This strategy will include a commitment to ongoing training, institutional monitoring, research into good practices, and events, workshops, and seminars that will be co-sponsored and collaboratively undertaken with key stakeholders and partners across the TRU community.

The appointment of the EDI Officer will lead to the establishment of an EDI Office by January 2023. An EDI Office was a key recommendation of the 2019 comprehensive study and a recommendation of Faculty Focus Groups within the Engagement Survey. In that spirit, and toward these ends, we will initiate immediately a 'Fellows model,' where disciplinary experts in EDI among faculty at TRU are seconded to advise and work with the EDI Officer, so as to take advantage of contextual expertise in the diverse issues facing our Faculties, Schools and Divisions.

Thus, over the next two years, TRU will collaboratively develop a governance and resourcing model for the EDI Office. Once in place, TRU's EDI office will be at arm's length from other structures of authority at the University and supported by appropriate resources, administrative infrastructure, and support personnel.

For the purposes of this Action Plan, and to collect information relevant to the CRC EDI needs, the University Committee organized a Talking Circle facilitated by an Elder. Seven TRU Research Chairs participated in this Circle, four of whom are CRCs. Broad questions were posed to the Research Chairs in relation to challenges, successes, strategies, and institutional recommendations in general and also specifically with respect to EDI in TRU. The Talking Circle identified several key areas that affect Research Chairs. They reported that many administrative policies and practices (e.g., in Finance, Human Resources, and Purchasing) are challenging. Additionally, these policies and procedures are viewed as overly burdensome, and do not actively enable culturally-sensitive research methodologies and practices. The Circle also reported that uneven development of research cultures at TRU serves, in some cases, to create a sense of exclusion among CRCs. Also identified as problematic were elements of the collective agreement between TRU and TRUFA, which were seen as inhibiting certain culturally specific hiring practices as well as protocols for tenure and promotion. Participants in the Talking Circle identified a need for a greater access to advanced training opportunities for graduate students who belong to equity-seeking groups.

This draft EDI Action Plan was shared with key stakeholders to provide an opportunity for feedback. This included the Senate Research Committee, Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association (TRUFA), current CRCs and Provost's Council. The University Committee collected the feedback and provided a final draft of the EDI Action Plan to the Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research and to the AVP Research and Graduate Studies, who in turn recommended it to the President and Vice-Chancellor.

**Thompson Rivers University Canada Research Chairs
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan**

Thompson Rivers University humbly acknowledges the location of its campuses in the traditional and unceded territories of Indigenous peoples of the Secwépemc Nation. The Tk'emlúps territory is host to the TRU Kamloops campus; the T'exelcemc is host to the TRU Williams Lake Campus; Tsq'escenemc hosts the 100 Mile House regional centre; the Ashcroft First Nation of the Nlaka'pmx Nation hosts the Ashcroft regional centre; the Simpcw territory hosts the Barriere and Clearwater regional; and the St'át'imc Nation which includes Nxwisten, Ts'kw'aylacw, Sekw'el'was, Líl'wat, Tsal'álh, T'it'q'et, Xáxl'ip, N'quatqua, Xa'xtsa, Skatin and Samahquam hosts the Lillooet regional centre. Thompson Rivers University recognizes the need for research, teaching and service responsive to all Indigenous communities, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learners.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) is committed to the changes in policy, practice, organization, and culture necessary to support the advancement of equity, diversity, and inclusion at the university. This represents a commitment on the part of the university to strive beyond EDI compliance, in order to create an inclusive environment that nurtures academic and employment success for all. This commitment is reflective of the aspirations of the campus community as a whole. In 2019, TRU launched the Envision TRU initiative to develop a guiding vision for the institution over the next ten years. The initiative is currently underway and stakeholders have consistently expressed a vision of TRU as an institution that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

As a public declaration of this intention, TRU has endorsed Canada's new Dimensions Charter committing to embed its eight principles into institutional policies, practices, and action plans. Under TRU's Employment Equity Policy (ADM 04-1), the university is responsible for promoting the interests of women, Indigenous peoples, people with diverse needs, and racialized minorities. TRU's Strategic Plan identifies five specific priorities, one of which commits to increasing diversity, inclusivity, and intercultural understanding among Indigenous, global, regional, and local communities. We note that we include members LGBTQ2+ communities in this commitment and we intend in this plan to delineate ways to promote the inclusion of these members at TRU. TRU is committed to fostering inclusive environments for everyone in the community and all equity seeking groups. We are committed to developing and implementing an Action Plan that guides our efforts toward achieving these important goals.

Management of Canada Research Chair Allocations

The University's Strategic Research Plan (SRP) reflects current research strengths and provides a framework to guide the development of priority research areas. TRU's process for developing a new research area and selecting candidates to be nominated to the CRC program follows several steps designed to ensure the collegiality of the process. The Faculty, School, or Division, in concert with the Faculty Council (or equivalent) and the Research Office, develops an initial proposal for the vacant chair which aligns with TRU's Strategic Plan, the SRP, and the requirements of the CRC program. This proposal is presented to the Research Committee of Senate for review and recommendation, and the revised proposal is presented to Provost's Council, which makes a recommendation to the Provost on the proposed research area. Once approved, the sponsor Faculty, School, or Division, in concert with the Research Office, and on behalf of the University, prepares recruitment material for Human Resources. The Research Committee of Senate initiates the call and selects members of the search committee.

Canada Research Chair positions are recruited according to a letter of understanding contained in the TRU and Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association (TRUFA) collective agreement, Letter of Understanding #3, and the guidelines governing CRCs as established or amended by the Federal Government. The search committee follows the interview process outlined in the collective agreement between TRU and TRUFA, which includes EDI and implicit bias training. The search committee recommends the selected candidate to the President of the University, who makes the final recommendation to the funding agency following its guidelines.

TRU has been allocated six CRC positions, including two new positions that were announced in 2018. Recruitment is currently under way for the two new positions. In accordance with the CRC Program's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, TRU is committed to ensuring full CRC occupancy with no equity gaps following the completion of the 2019-20 recruitment process. The CRC program has provided a target-setting tool for all institutions to determine whether there is an underrepresentation of any of the four designated groups among the Chairs. In evaluating CRC candidates, TRU considers candidates' diverse research needs, and their expertise relevant to the diverse EDI issues of women, Indigenous peoples, people with diverse needs, racialized minorities, LGBTQ2+, and those with intersectional identities.

As TRU currently has only four Chairs, specific identifying information has been withheld from the action plan. However, TRU has been utilizing the CRC target setting tool to ensure that, as our CRC numbers grow, we will be able to ensure we avoid gaps in our equity and diversity targets.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Objectives and Measurement Strategies

Our Canada Research Chair program at TRU has the following general EDI objectives:

- Create the conditions where awareness about and consideration of EDI are priorities for hiring and retention.
- Support a diverse population of CRCs that reflect the diversity of TRU and our local community, as well as the Canadian society.
- Provide the conditions for research chair holders to see themselves as included, supported, integrated, and at home at TRU.

Employment Systems Review

Preliminary employment systems reviews have included an evaluation of the recommendations of the 2019 EDI at TRU comprehensive study and an overview of related policy, procedures, and collective agreement language. The Research and Graduate Studies Office coordinates specific tasks in the nomination of CRC positions, while recruitment processes are led jointly and in conjunction with the collective agreement between TRU and TRUFA. Conversations and reflection amongst current leaders have highlighted deficiencies in two key areas: 1) hiring committees require further EDI and implicit bias training and support, and 2) there is a need to improve our capacity to know whether candidates self-identify as belonging to equity seeking groups.

In October of 2019, the Senate Research Committee (which reviewed and recommended to Provost's Council the CRC proposals) and the CRC Selection Committee members received implicit bias and EDI training from Human Resources before short-listing and interviewing CRC candidates. By November 1, 2020, we will have reviewed best practices for EDI training for all aspects and stages of the EDI recruiting process: from the writing and approval of the positions, through to the recruiting, interviewing and selection of the nominee.

In addition, the self-declaration process for CRCs has been actioned, but still requires implementation across other employee groups and automation within TRU's applicant tracking system.

Action Items to be completed by November 1, 2020 are:

a) Complete a broad consultative process on governance and resourcing model for TRU's EDI office that is responsive to and informed by the 2019 comprehensive study *Equity Diversity and Inclusion at Thompson Rivers University.*

Responsibility: President and Vice-Chancellor, Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research, Vice-President Administration and Finance.

b) i. Provide mandatory training on EDI and implicit bias to CRC selection committee members.

ii. Review and expand EDI and implicit bias training based on best practices for all faculty selection committee members.

   Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources.

c) Expand the CRC self-declaration process to all TRU employment application processes consistent with best practices.
   Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources.

d) Conduct a follow-up employment systems review to identify further barriers.
   Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources, AVP Research and Graduate Studies.

Employment Equity Policy

Review is necessary to ensure an organization-wide approach to equity, diversity and inclusion [for CRCs]. Our intention is that the TRU EDI Officer, in concert with the EDI Faculty Fellows, will take a leading role in this review. Board Policy ADM 04-1 states that the goal of the Employment Equity program at TRU is to establish a qualified and diverse workforce that is representative of the labour market(s) to which TRU draws its employees (Preamble). All employees of TRU have the responsibility to apply the principles employment equity and actively participate in the implementation of this policy (III.1).

Action items to be completed by November 1, 2020 are:

e) Revise employment equity policy so that it describes procedures to monitor the progress and ensure results achieved in implementing Employment Equity will be adopted as noted in current policy section V.1. Specifically, the current policy notes a required review of progress reports at the Vice-President, AVP, Dean and Director levels (V.1.d). Detailed and consistent reporting can advance improved EDI outcomes in employment equity.
   Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources.

f) Ensure reporting and accountability conforms to existing EDI-relevant policies at TRU by increasing awareness and education including but not limited to:

- Annual Reports: Provost's Council member Annual Performance Reports will include reporting on agreed EDI goals and the Employment Equity Action Plan (ADM 0401, IV.4).
- Annual and five-year plans by Provost's Council members will include contributions towards agreed EDI goals and the Employment Equity Action Plan (ADM 0401, IV.4).
- TRU Strategic Plans (Academic, Research, Teaching and Learning, Indigenous) will include reporting on agreed EDI goals and the Employment Equity Action Plan (ADM 0401, IV.4).
- Senate Committee annual reports will include reporting on agreed EDI goals and the Employment Equity Action Plan (ADM 0401, IV.4) where relevant.
- The President will report to the TRU Board on the annual report they receive on the program and results achieved in implementing Employment Equity (ADM 04-01, V1.f).
  Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources.

Comparative Review

A comparative review was undertaken with available data from the Human Resources office. Given that the current sample size of CRC positions is less than five, it is difficult to identify conclusive evidence. The comparative review included an analysis of the recruitment and selection processes, including initial salary placements. Further evaluation will be required to obtain a broader understanding of equitable practices, and this evaluation should include senior administration (Deans) and the Research Office to ensure other items (not tracked by HR; such as space, dedicated research time, recognition of community work, grants, or external funding) are aligning with EDI best practices.

Action items to be completed by November 1, 2020 are:

g) Complete an intensive comparative review of EDI factors experienced by CRCs with the Office of the Provost, Deans, Office of Research Graduate Studies, and Human Resources, and CRCs.
   Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources, AVP Research and Graduate Studies.

h) Explore an expansion of supervisory opportunities at the doctoral level in collaboration with other universities to enable CRC Chairs, notably those from equity-seeking groups, to succeed in their roles.
   Responsibility: AVP Research and Graduate Studies.

i) Review the language in the CRC Letter of Understanding in the collective agreement between TRU and TRUFA, as well as in the collective agreement as

a whole, for the next round of bargaining. The latter, to ensure inclusive language, application of agreements between TRU and Secwepemc Nation, and to identify barriers to EDI at TRU (for example, expand 5.3.1. b. to state: "One representative from a professional body, a community group, or an equity-seeking group, with voting rights").

> **Responsibility**: Executive Director Human Resources, TRU Faculty Association.

j) Expand promotion and tenure discipline-specific standards to recognise EDI contributions, including community-based work.

> **Responsibility**: Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research with Deans, Faculty Councils, and Senate Committees.

Environmental Scan

The environmental scan conducted by the EDI Faculty Recruitment committee included a review of existing survey data (employee engagement, exit interview, and diversity and inclusion), as well as a Talking Circle facilitated by an Elder with participation of seven Research Chairs, including four CRCs (already presented above).

Exit Survey:

The Human Resources department does complete exit interviews. Data was compiled summarizing thirty-nine faculty departures (75% of whom were retiring faculty) from the University. The current exit survey does not ask for feedback or information from an EDI lens and is out-dated in the collection of gender data.

Action item to be completed by November 1, 2020 is:

k) Revise Exit Survey with lens on EDI.

> **Responsibility**: Executive Director Human Resources.

Diversity and Inclusion Survey:

Thompson Rivers University introduced a Diversity and Inclusion Survey for all staff to voluntarily complete in January 2015, to support goals of the Employment Equity Policy. To date there are a total of 571 respondents, or approximately 23% of all employees. Given the low response rate, there is difficulty in creating any statistical analysis or conclusion in terms of representation of underrepresented groups within the University community. Our focus will shift to understanding the low response rate, that is, an understanding of what is preventing faculty and staff from participating in confidential, self-identification - for the purposes of improving our practices.

Action item to be completed by November 1, 2020:

l) Develop strategies to significantly improve the response rate and to enhance the collection of EDI data to allow for greater understanding and the ability to track progress. Engage in discussion with stakeholder groups to understand how we can improve general self-identification across campus.
   Responsibility: Executive Director Human Resources, Executive Director IPE.

Talking Circle:

The Talking Circle highlighted a need to build upon the culture and understanding of the role of CRC's within the university, to enhance the level of overall inclusion and understanding.

Action item to be completed by November 1, 2020 is:

m) Improve the culture and understanding of research and the role of Canada Research Chairs within the university.
   Responsibility: Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research, AVP Research and Graduate Studies.

Gender Audit

Additionally, TRU recently completed (February 2020) a gender diversity audit with an outside consultant that specializes in trans inclusion work with organizations and institutions, with a particular focus on education. This entailed a comprehensive study of policies and practices that impact trans, non-binary, and two spirit people. The audit includes a review of TRU facilities, data collection and use, policies, programming, and communications. The audit provides recommendations for concrete changes that TRU can implement to better serve and include trans, two-spirit, and non-binary people. TRU has reported on the audit findings and is now considering how to implement its recommendations in our subsequent EDI plan reports. In evaluating proposed Canada Research Chairs going forward, and in order to be inclusive of LGBTQ2+ perspectives, TRU will proactively consider whether proposed CRCs account for LGBTQ2+ research needs and realities, amongst the other factors used in assessing proposals.

Action item to be completed by November 1, 2020 is:

n) Review and implement initial recommendations from the Gender Diversity Audit, supporting inclusion on campus.
   Responsibility: Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research, VP Administration and Finance.

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