

What We Heard

Mount Royal University

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

July 31, 2024



This document was compiled by the EDIA Plan Working Group in consultation with the Advisory Committee and reflects findings from the external consultant (IDEA Advocacy Group) and institutional documents.

Land Acknowledgement

Mount Royal University is situated on an ancient and storied land steeped in ceremony and history that, until recently, was occupied exclusively by people indigenous to this place. With gratitude and reciprocity, Mount Royal acknowledges the relationships to the land and all beings, and the songs, stories and teachings of the Siksika Nation, the Piikani Nation, the Kainai Nation, the Îethka Stoney Nakoda Nation (consisting of the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Goodstoney Nations), the people of the Tsuut'ina Nation, and the Métis.

As such, Mount Royal University is committed to advancing the success of Indigenous learners and respectfully supporting Indigenous cultural identities and integrity, leading to a good life in all its aspects. Mount Royal will challenge settler colonialism and systemic racism and discrimination by addressing the legacy of broken promises and rebuilding the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This includes those who now live at the confluence of the Elbow and Bow rivers, a place referred to by the Siksika Nation, the Piikani Nation and the Kainai Nation as Moh'kinstsis, by the Îethka Stoney Nakoda Nations as Wîcîspa, and by the Tsuut'ina Nation as Guts'ists'i. Mount Royal will meet these goals by committing to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and adopting and applying the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Report Overview

- 1. Introduction..... 3**
 - Purpose of the “What We Heard” Report..... 4
- 2. How We Consulted the Community..... 5**
- 3. What We Heard: Supporting Themes.....6**
 - Theme 1: Enhancing a Sense of Belonging..... 7
 - Theme 2: Promoting a Safe and Respectful Culture..... 7
 - Theme 3: Fostering Equity Through Accessibility..... 8
 - Theme 4: Strengthening Institutional Commitments to EDIA..... 9
 - Theme 5: Improving Institutional Communication..... 10
- 4. What is Next?..... 11**
- 5. Related Source Documents..... 12**
- Appendix..... 13**

1. Introduction

At Mount Royal University, we recognize that simply acknowledging and celebrating diversity is not enough. We are committed to advancing Goal 4 of the University Strategic Plan (USP) to **embed the principles of intersectional equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) and be a welcoming environment free from discrimination and systemic racism.**

The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility (EDIA) Plan will support MRU's *Vision 2030* in an intersectional and cross-institutional manner. EDIA influences every goal and direction of each department, affecting all of our people because our community is inherently intersectional.

Creating an effective EDIA Plan that supports the needs of MRU's diverse community involves significant community engagement. This process includes consulting with a broad range of people to ensure various demographic groups and perspectives are represented. Actively involving students, faculty, staff, and community partners for insights and feedback is crucial. The 'What We Heard' report is an opportunity to share the insights and learnings from the first phase of community consultations.

It is important to understand that this document is not the EDIA Plan. 'What We Heard' presents information on community ideas and suggestions for enhancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility at MRU. Moving forward, community feedback gathered in this report will inform the development of the EDIA Plan.

"Our focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) is not a burden or something that pits 'us' against 'them,' but rather, as a gift of humanity we give to one another as human beings. EDIA is for all of us." – Dr. Moussa Magassa

[Learn more about the EDIA planning process.](#)

Purpose of the “What We Heard” Report

The 'What We Heard' report is an intermediate step in the EDIA planning process and reflects areas the community believes Mount Royal needs to focus on to achieve meaningful change. It summarizes the insights and feedback gathered during the community consultations and information from institutional source documents, as shown in the following diagram.



This report, while reflecting community views, is situated in the context of the University Strategic Plan. It also considers other cross-institutional initiatives, reports, and institutional commitments related to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

To learn more about the next steps in our planning process, please see [section four](#). For a complete list of supporting documents, please refer to [section five](#).

Understanding EDIA terminology

We recognize that EDIA is a complex and evolving field. This report uses various terms to describe different aspects of EDIA. To better understand these terms, please refer to the [glossary developed by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#).

2. How We Consulted the Community

During the first phase of the EDIA planning process, MRU worked with an external consultant from the IDEA Advocacy Group to conduct focus group sessions with the community and analyze participants' confidential feedback. The goal was to actively engage with various campus groups, gather diverse perspectives, and understand the unique needs of our community members.

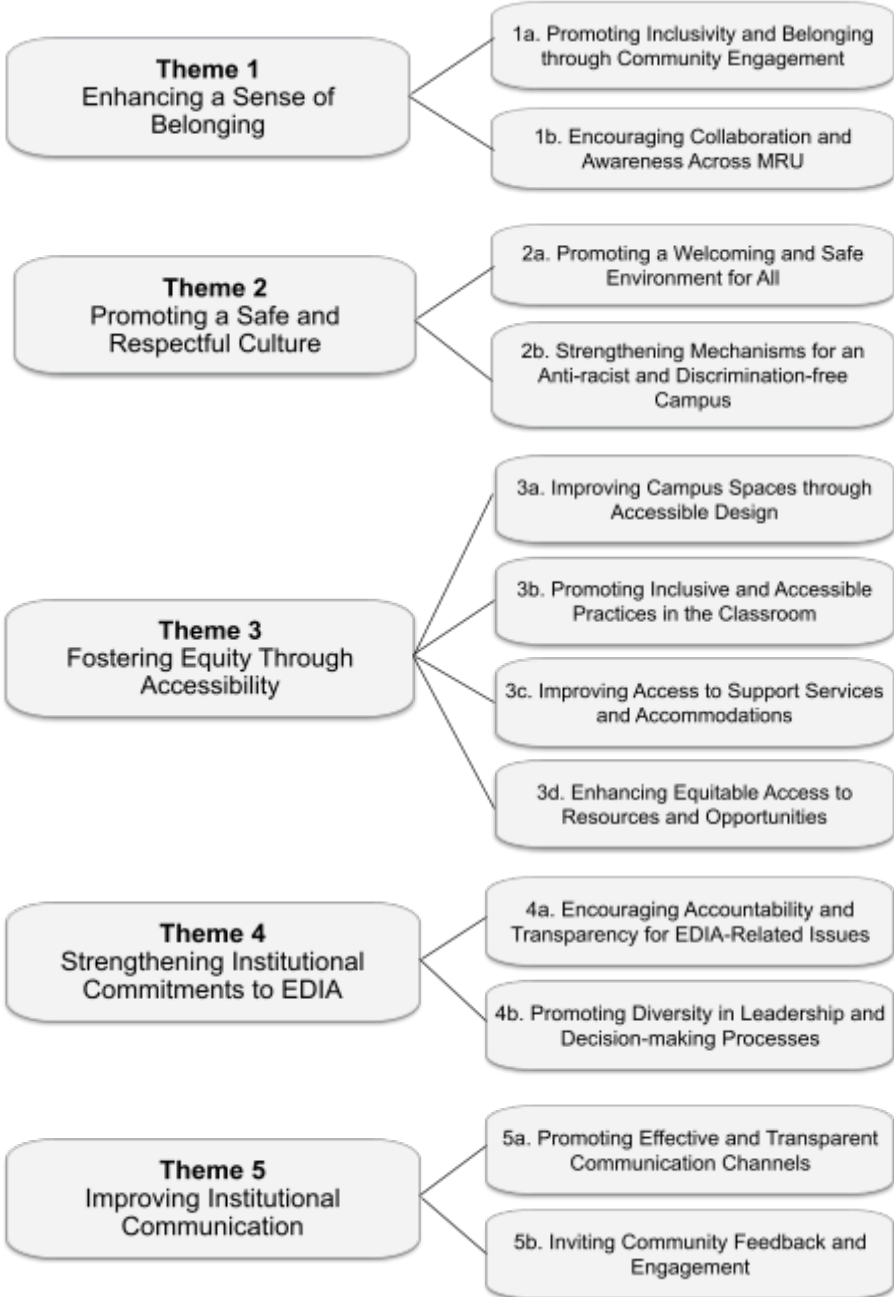
Consultations took place over **six weeks**, involving **552 MRU community members** (employees, students and alumni) through **27 sessions** and an **online form for anonymous feedback**. All consultations were structured around five open-ended questions, which participants received in advance. These discussions helped identify priority areas for fostering a more inclusive campus culture where everyone feels valued and supported. For more details about this phase of consultation, [please visit the EDIA Plan website](#).

While this summary report may not capture every nuance of the suggestions provided, it reflects the collective input of the community. Overall, the feedback highlighted a collective desire to ensure every member of the MRU community feels included, experiences a strong sense of belonging and has equitable access to resources and opportunities, while addressing systemic barriers that may exist here at MRU.

3. What We Heard: Supporting Themes

Feedback from consultations showed that the MRU community is invested in improving the campus environment to create a more inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible place for all. What follows are key themes based on the feedback received.

The following diagram provides a summary of the themes and subthemes identified from *what we heard*.



Theme 1: Enhancing a Sense of Belonging

Consultations highlighted the need to foster an environment where every community member feels valued, supported, and included. Participants emphasized the importance of recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of students and employees, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. There was consensus about expanding community engagement initiatives and promoting collaboration between academic units and support services to ensure fair treatment for all students.

1a. Promoting Inclusivity and Belonging through Community Engagement

- Enhance support networks for employees facing challenges, including discrimination or cultural marginalization
- Strengthen and expand orientation programs, mentorship programs, and peer support networks for underrepresented and international students
- Cultivate robust partnerships with community organizations and promote dialogue between diverse groups to collaboratively address EDIA issues on campus

1b. Encouraging Collaboration and Awareness Across MRU

- Promote collaboration between academic units and support services to ensure students receive holistic support for their diverse academic, social, and emotional needs without stigma or discrimination
- Expand employee awareness of campus services and implement innovative approaches to ensure students experience seamless and barrier-free service delivery

Theme 2: Promoting a Safe and Respectful Culture

Participants emphasized the importance of fostering a campus culture that prioritizes safety, respect, and integrating EDIA principles in all aspects of campus life. There was a strong consensus on addressing issues such as gendered language, stereotypes and biases, while also promoting understanding and celebrating diversity. Participants also considered clarifying institutional policies and procedures for reporting and addressing EDIA-related concerns to be essential.

2a. Promoting a Welcoming and Safe Environment for All

- Promote cultural awareness and inclusivity by recognizing diverse cultural traditions, acts of empathy and allyship, and Indigenous ways of knowing alongside Western knowledge systems
- Enhance dialogue and understanding by fostering interactions across diverse identities and providing training on anti-racism, anti-discrimination, how to navigate biases, self-reflection and empathy

- Create a safe environment for students to express their thoughts in and outside of the classroom, and enhance institutional responses to harassment, discrimination, and safety concerns on campus
- Continue involving the campus community in emergency preparedness and improve safety procedures through practice drills, simulations, and partnerships with local law enforcement and emergency services

2b. Strengthening Mechanisms for an Anti-racist and Discrimination-free Campus

- Develop clear policies and procedures for addressing and resolving EDIA-related concerns and complaints, outlining consequences for those who cause harm
- Explore ways to support individuals experiencing EDIA-related concerns who do not want to go through a formal process
- Implement ongoing training on cultural humility and sensitivity, complemented by resources for correct pronunciations and understanding cultural nuances

Theme 3: Fostering Equity Through Accessibility

Participants emphasized the importance of equity through improved accessibility practices across campus. They stressed the need to design inclusive and accessible spaces, integrate inclusive teaching practices, enhance resources and funding for support services, improve access to resources, and ensure equitable opportunities for all students and employees to succeed. These efforts, and more, are vital for promoting equity and full participation of all community members.

3a. Improving Campus Spaces through Accessible Design

- Emphasize inclusive and accessible infrastructure, incorporating accessibility best practices and regular space audits
- Promote the engagement of marginalized communities by developing integrated community areas and designated spaces

3b. Promoting Inclusive and Accessible Practices in the Classroom

- Promote the integration of Universal Design for Learning and its principles, ensuring course materials and delivery provide students with multiple ways to demonstrate learning
- Promote inclusive assessment practices by designing and conducting academic assessments through an EDIA lens

3c. Improving Access to Support Services and Accommodations

- Enhance counselling services with culturally relevant support for international students and other equity-deserving groups

- Ensure individuals with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and diverse needs receive appropriate accommodations to support their full participation at the university
- Support the expansion of Access and Inclusion services to strengthen students' well-being and academic success

3d. Enhancing Equitable Access to Resources and Opportunities

- Support programs aimed at alleviating hardships for equity-denied and low-income students accessing essential services such as transportation and childcare
- Promote dedicated equity scholarships, fellowships, and other resource opportunities for persons from equity-denied groups
- Explore cohort hiring strategies to promote equity for underrepresented groups in employee recruitment
- Reimagine human resources approaches to ensure equitable treatment for all employees, addressing systemic barriers to inclusion

Theme 4: Strengthening Institutional Commitments to EDIA

Consultations underscored leadership's crucial role in advancing EDIA at all levels of the institution. Participants highlighted the need for practices and training that foster collaboration and ongoing dialogue between leaders and the campus community. They also emphasized the importance of providing resources and mentorship for emerging leaders. Concerns were raised about the institution's dedication to EDIA initiatives, with a call for meaningful engagement of students and employees in decision-making processes.

4a. Encouraging Accountability and Transparency for EDIA-Related Issues

- Promote accountability for EDIA goals through clear policies, procedures, and consequences, supported by anti-racist benchmarking mechanisms
- Regularly report on anti-racist benchmarking mechanisms, such as diversity censuses, to track and share progress
- Support initiatives to implement ethical data practices that foster inclusive and equitable environments, while upholding human rights principles

4b. Promoting Diversity in Leadership and Decision-making Processes

- Ensure transparent hiring and promotion processes that encourage diversity, with specific targets for equity-denied groups
- Review and expand admissions pathways to support learners from equity-denied groups, with specific targets for different groups

- Provide resources and mentorship for current and emerging leaders to develop inclusive leadership practices and advocacy skills
- Develop pathways to address underrepresentation and support equity-denied groups in leadership and governance roles
- Encourage participation of racialized groups in committees and decision-making to mitigate racism
- Involve student voices in policy development, implementation, and advocacy efforts

Theme 5: Improving Institutional Communication

The community stressed the critical need to enhance transparent communication to foster an inclusive environment. Key priorities included establishing effective channels for sharing information widely and regularly seeking and responding to feedback. Participants also emphasized providing ongoing education and support to integrate EDIA principles across institutional communication channels.

5a. Promoting Effective and Transparent Communication Channels

- Promote transparent and inclusive communication practices, such as using plain language and visual aids
- Consistently evaluate and adapt communication channels (e.g., the MRU website) to ensure information sharing is effective and accessible for diverse audiences
- Provide timely updates on institutional policies and decisions to the community
- Support clear and transparent communication with training to enhance employees' cross-cultural communication skills

5b. Inviting Community Feedback and Engagement

- Seek community feedback through climate surveys and town hall meetings to assess EDIA-related strengths and areas for improvement
- Foster a culture of open dialogue, collaboration and understanding by establishing clear channels for collecting ongoing feedback on EDIA matters and responding to input with meaningful action
- Promote and expand awareness of opportunities for campus community input on relevant institutional policies and initiatives

4. What is Next?

This report is the outcome of our second planning phase. The EDIA Plan Working Group consulted closely with the EDIA Strategic Plan Advisory Committee to develop this report (see Appendix for membership). The themes and subthemes will be used as a framework for identifying strategic priorities in consultation with university leadership, relevant departments, and the broader university community.

After this report is published, the community feedback we receive will be used to refine the strategic priorities. Once they are developed, a draft of the EDIA Plan will be shared with the MRU community for additional input and feedback. Following these consultation phases, we will finalize and publish the EDIA Plan.

The diagram below is a visual outline of the next steps in the [EDIA planning process](#).



Thank you for your participation, contributions, and commitment to working together to meet our *Vision 2030* goal to embed the principles of intersectional EDIA and be a welcoming environment free from discrimination and systemic racism.

5. Related Source Documents

Several documents were referenced to help confirm and expand on the themes we heard from the first phase of community consultations. These documents are listed below, with a link to the source document where possible.

Supporting source documents

- [Mount Royal University Strategic Plan: Vision 2030](#)
- [2023–2030 Academic Plan](#)
- JEDIC EDI Task Force Final Report & Appendices, March 21, 2023
- [Students Division Strategic Plan 2024–2030](#)
- [Research & Scholarship Plan 2024–2030](#)
- [Faculty of Continuing Education Strategic Plan 2023–2030](#)
- [Embracing the Opportunity Human Resources & Faculty Relations Update, April 2024](#)
- MRU Department of Education EDIA Survey Report, March 6, 2024
- [Scarborough Charter](#)
- Lessons from other universities who are signatories to the Scarborough Charter

Appendix

EDIA Strategic Plan Advisory Committee Membership

Category	Member
Chair - AVP, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion ➤ <i>EDIA Plan Working Group</i>	Moussa Magassa (EDIAC)
Vice-Chair - Special Advisor, Equity, Diversity & Inclusive Excellence ➤ <i>EDIA Plan Working Group</i>	Michael Uzoka (EDIAC)
Ex Officio	
AVP, Human Resources	Arleen Gallo (EDIAC)
AVP, Indigenization & Decolonization	John Fischer (EDIAC)
AVP, Student Experience & Success	Chris Rogerson (EDIAC)
AVP, Research, Scholarship & Community Engagement	Connie Van der Byl
Director, Office of Institutional Research and Planning	Mohammad Amin
Student Members	
President, SAMRU	Joseph Nguyen 2023-24 (EDIAC) Tala Abu Hayyaneh 2024-25 (EDIAC)
VP Student Affairs, SAMRU	Anisa Tilston (EDIAC)
Student Member-at-Large	Malaadh Baadel
Student Member-at-Large	Marcedes Moosewaypayo
Student Member-at-Large	Mason Weakley
Student Member-at-Large	Sammy Ansari
Faculty Members	
Faculty Member-at-Large, Faculty of Arts	Rob Boschman, Professor and Chair of

Category	Member
	English, Languages & Cultures
Faculty Member-at-Large, Faculty of Business & Communication Studies	Uthpala Tennakoon, Associate Professor, General Management & Human Resources (EDIAC)
Faculty Member-at-Large, Faculty of Health, Community & Education	Liza Choi, Associate Professor, Faculty of Health, Community and Education, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Faculty Member-at-Large, Faculty of Science & Technology	Jon Mee, Associate Professor, Department of Biology
University Library	Alieka Rudder, Manager, Maker and Media Commons
Staff Members	
University Advancement	Mikayla Kardynal, Strategist, University Marketing and Communications
Exempt Staff Member-at-Large	Ben Hall, Office of General Counsel & University Secretary
Staff Member-at-Large	Taran Chohan, Field Experience & Practicum Coordinator, Department of Education
Access & Inclusion Services	Michelle Dow, Director, Access & Inclusion (EDIAC)
Staff Member-at-Large	Tiffany Hansen, Space Strategist, Facilities Management, Planning & Project Delivery
Other	
Dean	Jennifer Pettit, Dean, Faculty of Arts (EDIAC)
Resources	
External EDIA Consultant ➤ <i>EDIA Plan Working Group</i>	Anton Joseph, IDEA Advocacy Group
Office of Institutional Research & Planning ➤ <i>EDIA Plan Working Group</i>	Kimberly Smith, Research & Planning Consultant

Category	Member
Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion ➤ <i>EDIA Plan Working Group</i>	Kit Turner, Administrative Assistant to the AVP, EDI
Office of the President (advisor as needed)	Andrea Hennel, Chief of Staff
Office of the President (advisor as needed)	Isha Thompson, Senior Executive Communications Strategist