

# President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Equity and Decolonization

**Annual Report**  
2023-2024

Collaboratively Submitted by PACHRED Executive Members: Margot Francis, Andrew Bassingthwaite, Rabia Choudhary

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## **Introduction**

We are delighted to submit this final report about the work of PACHRED during an exceptional year in our five-year history.

During 2023-2024, PACHRED has hosted a wide range of events and taken up concerns which range from university supports and services for 2SLGBTQQIA+ and BIPOC students, to austerity measures impacting graduate student funding, to international solidarity movements against decolonization.

The PACHRED Working Groups have engaged with an even wider range of issues. This report will provide an overview and an archive of this work.

## Thematic Focus for 2023/24

PACHRED's thematic focus for 2023-24 is grounded in the following quote by Audre Lorde *"There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."*

At the start of the fall, PACHRED was monitoring the hateful rhetoric against Trans, two-spirit, and non-binary youth, which has resulted in restrictions against their accessing appropriate health services ([view article](#)) in Canada and the US. This concern was only heightened by the horrific stabbing of a Gender Studies professor, Katy Fulfer, and two students who came to her aid, at the University of Waterloo on June 28th, 2023. The police confirmed that this attack was motivated by hate regarding gender expression and identity ([view article](#)).

We believe university leaders have a responsibility to speak out against a growing movement that wants to delegitimize the human rights of trans, two-spirit, nonbinary and queer people. This movement's local impact became painfully clear on September 21, and for several months thereafter, when the One Million March for Children, in concert with thousands of others across Canada, mounted demonstrations against education on gender identity and expression in public schools ([view article](#)).

As a result, our initial list of priorities included the following:

- Educational campaign to increase the visibility of trans/2S/queer perspectives in the public life of the university.
- Lobby for Brock to provide gender-affirming care for students through Health Services.
- Educational campaign to support a referendum on establishing a 2S&LGBTQQIA+ Student Centre at Brock.

In addition, students and faculty approached us about a series of equity related concerns regarding the flat tuition fee model, which we then added to our agenda. ([view article](#)). PACHRED pursued each of these priorities and achieved important successes.

However, after the Oct. 7th attack by members of Hamas, and the ongoing bombardment of Gaza by Israel, it became clear that many PACHRED members wanted us to take a leadership role in presenting scholarly and decolonial analysis about these seismic political events that continue to impact Brock communities. Consequently, we also hosted two events to provide a forum for distinguished experts in the field and local activists, to speak about the historical, legal and contemporary context of the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

In late December, shortly before the fall term ended, the Faculty of Graduate Studies announced a series of cuts to graduate student funding, which are having profoundly unequal impacts on incoming graduate student cohorts and graduate programs in the FoSS, FoH, and FoE. Hence, working closely with student activists, we wrote to decision-makers to express our concerns and represented these to the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, Senate, and several students presented to the Brock Board of Trustees.

## **PACHRED Workflow**

The PACHRED Executive met on a weekly basis throughout the year, and monthly with the PACHRED Coordinating Committee. The work of the Executive included preparing the new membership for tasks ahead through the orientation, developing ideas to support working groups members and coordinating committee chairs in the flow of their activities.

The Executive also met with Senior Administration including the President and AVP EDI to discuss pressing concerns to the university including Islamophobia and antisemitism on campus.

Below we provide more details on these activities.



## **PACHRED Meetings**

During the academic year there were six meetings held of the broader PACHRED committee and were focused on providing education and awareness of various topics as well as updates from working groups.

These meetings included the following information:

- **September 26th** – Orientation
- **October 17th** – Undergraduate tuition model – Presentations from BUSU and Brock Academic Advising Team
- **November 14th** – Student Speak Out – An opportunity to hear from students about supports and services on campus.
- **December 6th** – Panel on the Intersections of Injustice – Centering Queer and Trans Voices
- **February 13th** – Presentation on the EDI Appreciative Inquiry / MRP Funding Presentation and Discussion
- **April 2nd** – Pay Equity and Disability Justice

These meetings were held in a hybrid environment and are open to all; readers can learn more details about these meetings below as well as on the [PACHRED website](#).

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## **PACHRED's Work**

### **Educational events and raising awareness**

Consistent with our thematic focus for 2023-2024, PACHRED had a series of events on the priorities mapped out above. We highlight the key events below:

- In October, we highlighted the concerns raised by students, staff and faculty about the **flat tuition fee model**, and welcomed Alyssa Hall, VP, Student Affairs, from BUSU, and a team of academic advisors, Lindsay Shaw, Liz Hay, Samantha Morris, and Diana DeMan, who critiqued the disproportionate impacts of this model on students who have financial, mental health, and disability related challenges, and thus need to proceed through their degree at a slower pace. ([view article](#)).
- In November, we hosted a **Student Speak Out** which highlighted the challenges for 2S, Trans, non-binary and queer students in accessing health services and dealing with the intersection of racism and homophobic, transphobic and misogynistic harassment in public

spaces. Student speakers particularly highlighted that Student Health Services did not provide gender affirming care, and instead referred students to community health centers in St. Catharines or Niagara Falls, where they face a 6-9 month waiting list. Research confirms that this delay puts students at increased risk of a variety of serious mental and physical health challenges ([view article](#)).

- On December 6<sup>th</sup>, we hosted ***A Panel on the Intersections of Injustice: Centering Queer and Trans Voices***, as one highlight of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender based Violence. Moderated by Sherri Vansickle (Onondaga; Assistant Professor, FoE), a series of powerful speakers critiqued the moral panic now unfolding against trans and queer youth, (including the One Million March 4 Children and the anti-trans legislation in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick), and the differential harms faced by QTBIPOC communities ([view event page](#)).
- In February, Dolana Mogagime highlighted insights from an **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion appreciative inquiry research study** completed at Brock and now available on the PACHRED website. Secondly, Margot Francis (faculty co-chair) presented about the **cuts to graduate student funding, and their profoundly unequal impacts on incoming graduate student cohorts and graduate programs in the FoSS, FoH, and FoE**.
- Based on this discussion, our PACHRED research assistants were asked to investigate the rates of pay for TA's & RAs at Brock, relative to other universities in southern Ontario to determine whether these funds might mitigate the impact of cuts to graduate studies. This research confirmed that Brock, on average, pays student TA's and RAs between 30-50% less than other universities, and consequently these TA and RA positions would not be sufficient to mitigate the planned funding shortfall. This research was then incorporated into the PACHRED presentation at Senate in March.
- In April, in collaboration with the Social Justice Research Institute, we hosted a wrap-up event on QTBIPOC themes which refused the victim narrative. Titled, ***Trans Joy Through Art and Cultural Production***, the event highlighted the work of **Vivek Shraya**, a Canadian Screen Award winner whose body of work crosses the boundaries of music, literature, visual art, theatre, TV, film, and fashion, and **Rabia Choudhary** a multidisciplinary artist, activist, educator, and Brock graduate student whose work addresses gender/sexual violence prevention, and racial and disability justice ([view article](#)).

## **Community Outreach/Events**

While many of the events highlighted above were open and advertised in Brock and in the Niagara community, those that drew the widest audience were two events on Palestine and Israel. Starting with our commitment to decolonization, we invited distinguished experts working in a range of disciplines to analyze the roots of the current crisis, hosting ***A PANEL ON PALESTINE: Decolonization, International Law, Gender, Media and Solidarity, on Nov. 27, 2023.***

(<https://experiencebu.brocku.ca/event/248839>). The event was co-sponsored by the MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies, the PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities, the Social Justice Research Institute, the Department of Sociology, and the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, and included an extremely accomplished group of speakers including:

- **Dr. Abigail Bakan**, (OISE/UT; Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies) and co-author, with Yasmine Abu-Laban, of *Israel, Palestine and the Politics of Race* (2019);
- **Patty Krawec** (Lac Seul First Nation) and author of *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future* (2022);
- **Michael Lynk**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, Western University, the 7<sup>th</sup> UN Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in Palestinian; and,
- **Shree Paradkar**, the racial justice columnist for the Toronto Star and the winner of two Amnesty Awards for Human Rights reporting and the Racial Justice in Media award by the Urban Alliance of Race Relations.

The event drew 149 people and a robust range of questions from the audience.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, we hosted **Decolonizing International Women's Day: From Turtle Island to Gaza** (<https://brocku.ca/social-sciences/womens-studies/2024/02/26/from-turtle-island-to-gaza/>).

This event brought into conversation the "political intimacies" between Indigenous and Palestinian struggles (Lowe, 2015), and through global/local perspectives, named how settler violence is enacted and the possibilities for decolonial feminist insights to sustain new solidarities. Once again, the event was co-sponsored by a wide range of groups including the Indigenous Educational Studies Programs, Independent Jewish Voices, Hamilton, the Social Justice Research Institute, the Social Justice and Equity Studies, MA, the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, Niagara Palestine Coalition and CUPE 4207 Political Action & International Solidarity Committee.

The evening was moderated by Samah Sabra, PhD, a Brock alumnus. Our keynote speakers were: **Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel**, Turtle Clan from the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) territory, who is a human rights and environmental activist and artist from Kanehsatà:ke and who was the official spokesperson, chosen by the People of the Longhouse, during the 1990 Mohawk Crisis; and **Nahala Abdo**, the Chancellor's Professor,

**CUPE 4207**

**Decolonizing International Women's Day**  
**FROM TURTLE ISLAND TO GAZA**

This event brings into conversation the "political intimacies" between Indigenous & Palestinian struggles (Lowe, 2015). Through global/local perspectives, we name how settler violence is enacted and the possibilities for decolonial feminist insights to sustain new solidarities.

**GUEST SPEAKERS**

**KATSI'TSAKWAS ELLEN GABRIEL**  
Artist, Human Rights & Environmental Activist

**NAHLA ABDO**  
Chancellor's Professor, Department of Sociology, Carleton University

**MODERATED BY Samah Sabra, PhD**  
Alumni, Brock University & Carleton University

**FRIDAY, 8TH MAR. 2024** **7:30PM** **GOODMAN ATRIUM**

**Local Voices, Local Impact**  
a conversational circle, will take place after the speaker's presentations

Scan this QR code to RSVP on ExperienceBU

**CO-SPONSORED BY**

- President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Equity, and Decolonization (PACHRED) ●
- Indigenous Educational Studies Programs ● Social Justice Research Institute ●
- Social Justice & Equity Studies, MA ● Centre for Women's & Gender Studies ●
- Niagara Palestine Coalition ● Independent Jewish Voices, Hamilton ●
- CUPE 4207 Political Action & International Solidarity Committee ●



Department of Sociology, Carleton University, who has written 10 books and many articles on Palestinian women's struggles in Israel/Palestine.

After the keynote speakers, a **Local Voices, Local Impact**, conversational circle, with Jana Bataineh, Munajat Najmudin, and Haley Bateman provided an engaging analysis of work by St. Catharines activists to foreground these same struggles. The event drew a crowd of approximately 75 people.

## **Providing feedback on EDI Matters**

### **Successes**

As noted above, at the start of the 2023–2024-year, Brock did not provide gender-affirming care for students through Health Services. We are delighted to announce that as a result of the feedback provided by our Student Speak-Out panel in November, and follow-up discussions by the 2SLGBTQIA+ Working Group with Allison Drew-Hassling the new Executive Director of the Student Wellness & Accessibility Centre, that policy has now changed, and physicians at Brock will now provide gender affirming care for Brock students that request it.

Our initial goal of hosting a referendum on core funding for a 2SLGBTQIA+ student center underwent several revisions in the fall. First, we learned that the Black Student Success Center did not have ongoing core funding. As a result, we will ensure both the 2S&LGBTQIA+ student center and the Black Student Success Center are included in the student referendum for core funding.

Through meeting with BUSU executive, we realized that they required notification of a referendum by May 2023. As we'd been unaware of this, we postponed our joint referendum to the winter of 2025. This project will be a key priority for PACHRED in 2024-2025.

Foregrounding the voices of QTBIPOC students, artists, scholars to fight-back against the moral panic unfolding against trans, two-spirit, non-binary and queer youth through multiple events across the campus including on December 6<sup>th</sup>, and on Trans Day of Visibility;

Working collaboratively with a host of academic departments, community groups, and unions to host two events (Nov. 27<sup>th</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup>) which highlighted expert decolonial scholarship on Palestine/Israel.

Raising questions of equity in relation to proposed cuts in graduate student funding that have particularly devastating impacts on FoSS, FoH, FoE.

## **RWLEP**

In coordination with the Provost's Office, Student Life and Success, the Office of Human Rights and Equity, Legal Services, and PACHRED, a working group was assembled to review the existing RWLEP and make recommendations for approval by the Board of Trustees.

During this review, it became clear that there were several issues to address, including identifying how individuals interact with the policy and determining which services or departments are responsible for different aspects of the policy. While there is still work to be done on the policy, it is important to recognize that we cannot rush this process and must ensure that the communities this policy affects have a say.

We are also pleased that with these changes to the overall ownership and implementation of the policy, an agreement has been made to ensure that adequate staffing is available to facilitate this new policy and its impact on the university community.

## **Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference for PACHRED were first established five years ago. Since that time the Terms has been revised only once, three years ago. Due to the changing nature of the post-secondary and political landscape and new challenges within PACHRED, the Executive Committee recognized it was time to update these terms.

Since January, the Executive has been working with the AVP EDI and the Office of the President to ensure that these terms reflect the most recent best practices around university processes and ensure we can regularly advise the President on many challenges. We are hopeful as the process continues to be able to launch these new Terms of Reference in the Fall.

## **Nominations Committee Report**

The Nomination Committee is comprised of Staff, Faculty and Students drawn from the membership of PACHRED to oversee annual changes within the PACHRED membership including making recommendations to the AVP EDI and President's Office for the Executive Committee.

## **Changes to the Executive**

At the end of the 2022/2023 academic year, we said farewell to Dolana Mogadime after her three-year term as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Faculty Co-Chair for PACHRED. During her tenure Dolana made several major contributions to PACHRED including her recent work on [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Brock University: An Appreciative Inquiry \(PDF\)](#) which continues to be discussed by PACHRED, community members and faculty at Brock University.

In the Spring of 2023, a new executive committee was appointed to help lead PACHRED through the 2023-2024 academic year.

- Margot Francis – Faculty Co-Chair
- Andrew Bassingthwaighe – Staff Co-Chair
- Rabia Choudhry – Student Co-Chair

At the end of 2024 Rabia concluded her one-year term and PACHRED extends their thanks for the many contributions they have made to PACHRED over the past year. For 2024-2025 the Nominations Committee received applications from students across a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, all of which demonstrated their commitment to seeking change at Brock University. As such we are excited to welcome Tiffany Muhindi (B.A. Poli Sci) and Noah Xiao (Ph.D. Biotechnology) as joint Student Co-Chairs. The committee believes that the perspectives these students possess from varied intersectional lens including their undergraduate and graduate perspectives will bring great value to the PACHRED team for this coming year.

## **PACHRED Membership**

As people step down, graduate from Brock and move into new chapters of their lives, new appointments are extended to incoming Staff, Faculty and Students. We offer our deep gratitude to those who have and continue to be the heart and soul of PACHRED, that is, the membership itself. Realizing the PACHRED membership body is largely comprised of volunteers, many of whom have been engaged in advocacy work on and off campus for decades, we are humbled by their efforts and appreciate their contributions to PACHRED.



## **2S&LGBTQIA+ Working Group**

Faculty Co-Chair: Kathryn Halverson, Assistant Professor, Department of Nursing

Student Co-Chair: Meech Mfoafo-M'Carthy

### **Committee Members**

We do not currently share a member list to protect participant privacy. Meetings typically had approx. 10 members in attendance.

### **Introduction**

The 2S&LGBTQIA+ Working Group aims to improve the lives of Two-Spirit and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual members of the Brock community through programming, resources, and support. The 2S&LGBTQIA+ Working Group acts as a centralized hub for conversations and initiatives that serve to identify and respond to emerging concerns and/or opportunities to amplify presence and increase inclusiveness at Brock.

### **Meetings**

- November 13, 2023
- December 11, 2023
- February 7, 2024
- March 27, 2024

### **Recommendations that the Working Group addressed during the year**

Highlight of recommendations the working group has focused on this year and how they connect with PACHRED's thematic focus for 2023-24 based on the following quote by Audre Lorde:

*"There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."*

The 2S&LGBTQIA+ Working Group has:

- Supported and advocated for student access to the Gender Affirmation Fund and for smooth and efficient name change processes
- Acquired additional 2SLGBTQ+ library resources

- Supported and advocated for inclusive and gender-affirming care from Student Health Services
- Advocated for all-gender and accessible signage on 53 washrooms on-campus to promote inclusivity and accessibility
- Supported training opportunities for students, faculty, and staff (70 people have been supported/sponsored to take the 2SLGBTQ+ Foundations Course offered by Rainbow Health Ontario; co-sponsored Dr. Lewis as a visiting scholar for students in the Dept of History, open to all)

### **Action Items**

- Signage on Brock’s 53 all-gender and accessible washrooms was updated with the leadership of HRE and the support of Facilities Management. This change has been well received. New signage:



#### **All-Gender Accessible Washroom Sign Brock University**

- HRE has also been accepting applications for the Gender Affirmation Fund and have been facilitating name change requests including for changes associated with a student’s identity. The working group has advocated over the past year for these opportunities to be made accessible to students (e.g. promoted to all students, available online, easy to find/access).
- Several new 2SLGBTQ+ resources have been recently requested and acquired by our Library staff, making Brock’s collection one of the most robust and comprehensive. Our library proudly presented a featured collection of these resources for Brock Pride Week, as well as showcasing a flag display.
- Co-sponsored a visiting scholar, Dr. Brian Lewis, who was invited by the Department of History with support from the Dean of Humanities to host a talk on the queering of McGill’s campus since the 1970s. This event took place on March 7th and included many students from the Department of History and others from across campus.

- Supported a training request for 6 employees in the Registrars office and hope to identify and support other 2SLGBTQ+ training opportunities for staff and others who work directly with students.
- Engaged in advocacy efforts with Student Health Services to promote gender-affirming and inclusive health care. We are excited about the plans they have underway to enhance service provision for our 2SLGBTQ+ students. Thank you to Allison and her team for their commitment to EDI and ensuring SWAC is meeting the needs of all students.
- Met with Brock Pride President and Professional and Continuing Studies on December 18, 2023 to discuss the possibility of a Microcredential for 2SLGBTQ+ Health and Health Care (interdisciplinary).
- To enhance the knowledge and capacity of our students and future graduates, we extended an invitation to all students, staff, and faculty in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences to take the 2SLGBTQ+ Foundations Course offered by Rainbow Health Ontario. 64 participants were registered for this training course. Recruitment flyer:



### **2SLGBTQ+ Foundations Course offered by Rainbow Health Ontario Poster Brock University**

- A Qualtrics survey was created by the faculty chair and disseminated to the membership list for the working group. The purpose of this survey was/is to gather ideas and suggestions from the membership regarding priorities and opportunities for future initiatives and activities. Responses to this survey have informed agenda items, discussions, and the activities and initiatives outlined above.

## **Community Outreach/Events**

- The 2S&LGBTQIA+ working group supported the Brock Pride Week activities (March 18-April 3), with members of the working group also serving on the Brock Pride Week Planning Committee.
- The 2S&LGBTQIA+ working group participated in the student-led Queer Rights Solidarity March which took place on-campus on October 16th (collaboration with Niagara College Rainbow Knights, Brock Pride and Pride Niagara).

## **Lessons learned**

Our work in 2023-2024 was enriched by collaboration and consultation with the office of HRE, the Student Justice Centre, Library Services, Student Health Services, and PACHRED. Continued collaboration will be essential moving forward to optimize capacity, intersectionality, impact, reach, and resource utilization.

Recruiting and maintaining a robust membership representative of the Brock community may require a more strategic approach in the future.

## **What progress has been made**

Student Health Services has been receptive to feedback from students and the faculty chair of the working group and has taken the initiative to train staff in the areas of EDI, HRE, 2SLGBTQ+ health, gender-affirming care, etc. beginning in Spring 2024. There is also an interest in a strategic partnership with Quest Community Health Centre to enhance access to comprehensive and inclusive care for Brock students.

## **Goals for the coming year**

The 2S&LGBTQ+ working group will continue to support the completion and dissemination of the Trans Inclusion Guide and the work of the Gender Affirmation Fund and the associated Gender and Sexual Violence Adjudication Committee (GSVAC).

The 2S&LGBTQ+ working group will strive to increase membership and enhance engagement from students, staff, and faculty and to hear and understand the priorities and ideas members of the working group and Brock Community. Strategic recruitment to enhance membership in the working group would ensure representation from members of the 2S&LGBTQIA+ Brock Community, their allies, and the faculty/staff who work with our students in their various professional roles.

The working group envisions opportunities to continue to collaborate on initiatives (e.g. PRIDE week events) with community partners to support the visibility and engagement of 2S&LGBTQ+ faculty, staff, and students, (and their allies). The working group aims to support those working to achieve similar goals in the Niagara region for the benefit of the broader community (e.g. Pride Niagara, Quest, Rainbow Health, and P-Flag) by sponsoring events and educational opportunities and participating in joint initiatives.

We hope to see a map or list of where the 53 all-gender and accessible washrooms are located on campus shared broadly with students and staff to enhance awareness and accessibility.

### **Recommendations to President Lesley Rigg**

- Consider an allocation of funds for research and issue a call for proposals/applications for projects of an intersectional nature that will help to inform future initiatives that would advance and inform the work of PACHRED. Applications would need to align with PACHRED's mission and ideally engage key stakeholders beyond the organization. Projects would need to involve or inform the work of 1+ working groups, etc.
- Continue to fund PACHRED and the working groups with the same budget as was previously allocated.
- Continue to attend PACHRED meetings a minimum of once/term. The presence and engagement of President Rigg at two of our meetings in 2023/24 was valued by the membership and did not go unnoticed.



## **Anti-Ableism and Mental Health Working Group**

Chair (or Co-Chair): Maureen Connolly

Vice chair (or Co-Chair): Alison Rothwell

### **Committee Members**

Sandra Kroeker, Tricia Vause, Jennifer Thiessen, Marion Barbas, Anne Readhead, Julie Fennell, Adele Orr, Ashley Giroux, Ben Johnson, Vincent Ferro, Emily Good, Stacy Ann Williams, Diana DeMann, Alex Wilder, Stacey Duncan, Syna Thakur, Aishah Sonekan, Martina Ciglonecki, Behnaz Mirzai, Andrew Bassingthwaite, Kathryn Mathyssen, Ann Gagne, Daniel Oguejiofor, GSA Equity (Samrath Singh), Elyse Lappano, Allison Drew-Hassling, Demi Toms.

### **Introduction**

AAMH commits to raising awareness and providing education about ableism, enlightened ableism, disableism, and mundane disableism as well as addressing how to foster anti-ableism and pro-mental health attitudes and actions in the everyday workings and interactions of the university. We endorse the premises of the Ontario Human Rights Code and work to promote and support the principles of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its implementation beyond minimum standards.

### **Meetings**

All our meetings have been held online and we may continue with this format even as we return to in person engagement on campus. It is often easier for committee members to join a meeting from home remotely and now that we know this is possible and that we can function this way we will keep the online format as an ongoing option. It is, after all, a form of inclusion that is important.

- April 16, 2024
- March 5, 2024
- February 6, 2024
- January 16, 2024
- November 7, 2023
- October 3, 2023

## **Recommendations that the Working Group addressed during the year**

Workshops for Ableism audits/anti-ableism advocacy at the departmental level—we had minimal success with uptake on this initiative. We will continue with this in 2024-25 since we believe that the impending 2025 AODA deadline may provide more motivation for anti-ableism engagement, or at the very least more focus on UDL (universal design for learning)

A Road Show that visits departments/faculties/retreats and/or other university functions—we also had minimal uptake in this opportunity as well. However, we believe that this format may be more attractive than individual department visits. “POP UPS” at various locations across campus might also be effective.

Resurrecting the ‘Making a Difference’ Award luncheon. While we did not resurrect the luncheon component, we were able to host an event in December that brought a large group of university and community members together to celebrate the Accessibility and Inclusion Recognition Awards (AIRA).

Commit to preferred vendor status for service providers with inclusion and anti-ableist mandates. We are making progress on this—more events are using interpreters as an accepted practice and our tender processes seem to be making progress on preferring designs from a Universal Design (UD) perspective.

Grad students and Undergraduate students on AAMH have also been instrumental in bringing anti-ableism and mental health awareness to their respective student governance contexts. Students have recommended that AAMH be involved in Graduate Studies Orientation.

Continue to be involved in co-sponsoring and supporting the President’s Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Equity and Decolonization (PACHRED) initiatives and working groups and to work with other offices on campus actively engaging in anti-ableism initiatives. We have been able to work with other committees to address issues of mutual concern, eg, personal safety, trauma informed pedagogy, pay equity.

## **Action items**

Our commitments for the 2023-24 year included:

- Creating an Accessibility Toolkit resource. This is not a ‘new’ resource, but rather a compilation of services that support accessibility across many constituencies on campus, including research services, graduate studies, parking, Library, SAS, SWAC, Registrar’s office, Library, TA’s, among other services.
- Engaging with the Registrar’s office to remain connected to ongoing accessibility issues related to scheduling and implementation of classes and exams. Supported the development of De-escalation awareness supports in the Registrar’ office.

- Engaging with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to remain connected to ongoing accessibility issues related to teaching and learning.
- Reviewing the Brock Accessibility Policy and the Multi Year Accessibility Plan
- Adjudicating the Accessibility and Inclusion Recognition Award (AIRA) terms of reference and submissions
- Supporting Ability Empowerment Day with both financial and human support
- Engaging with other PACHRED working groups in collaboration on events and consultations
- Collaboration with Research Services on relevance of inclusion awareness in adjudication of CRCs, STEM research, EDI research teams. Research Services has been a leader in workshop development in inclusion awareness and relevance.
- Collaborating with other centres and departments on campus
- Disseminating information on the AODA review by R. Donovan and on the Post Secondary Standards as they apply to universities.
- Increasing awareness of the need to include the HRE Accessibility Advisor in decision making at Brock University
- Engaging in supporting faculty, staff, and students in the mundane acts of inclusion, notably, accessible documents.

## **Community Outreach/Events**

- International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) December 4, 2023. Pond Inlet, Noon - 2:00 pm. Presented the AIRA awards (Staff-Anne Readhead, CPI; Mitch Baird, FAHS; Student-Ben Johnson, CHYS), facilitated workshops, demonstrations, a remote keynote speaker (Danielle Peers, CRC Disability Cultures, University of Alberta), and a round-table discussion.
- Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) May 16, 2024. POP UP coffee in the Market. May 21, 2024, Workshop on the Microsoft product SWAY, an accessibility tool for documents and other presentation modalities. Updates on accessibility standards and tools.
- National Accessibility Awareness Week (NAAW) May 29, 2024. Student Panel on Accessibility ups and downs in becoming a student, being a student and navigating the campus.

- Ability Empowerment Day (AED) May 14, 2024. In person event with Concurrent sessions on Candy DNA, Makerspace and Library, Learning Services, Digital Humanities; lunch in Decew; keynote session on intersectionality and learning; large group session on SAS services. High school students from Niagara and from W. Ross McDonald School for the Blind attended.

## **Lessons learned**

- Compliance means meeting minimum standard. Having compliance as a goal is neither aspirational as an institutional position nor respectful of the complexities of disabled life. Compliance need not mean accessible.
- 2025 AODA deadlines seem to be making an impact as motivators.
- Anti-ableism work requires constant, consistent, and persistent messaging, reminders and follow up.
- UDL (universal design for learning) has lots of promise for making inroads with teaching and learning without causing too much distress for teachers and learners.

## **What progress has been made**

- Good uptake of authentic engagement with accessibility and inclusion in Registrar's Office, Research Services, Senate Teaching and Learning Committee; significant uptake in more reflective practices regarding content warnings across all faculties—very encouraging. More awareness generally about the intersected nature /character of discrimination. We are stronger together and many issues crossover different groups' mandates.
- The events that we sponsored were well attended by internal attendees and community members outside of the university.

## **What were the challenges?**

- We continue to lose good people to other institutions, to medical leaves, and mental health leaves.
- A general lack of understanding of what constitutes undue hardship.
- Seemingly unresolvable tensions between academic freedom and accommodation.
- Return to in person teaching and learning has been stressful in new ways. The shift to Brightspace D2L also brings some transition and new learning anxieties for professors and learners. There seems to be a more intense felt sense of 'being too busy' and 'urgency'. This means that many people may want to participate in improving their engagement with anti-ableist practices, but their day-to-day stressors are the demands that require the most attention.
- Dismantling/ re-assigning the roles associated with the Office of HRE services.

## **Goals for the coming year**

- Maintain the three events (AIRA celebration with community engagement on or around IDPD; GAAD, NAAW) and use the IDPD event as a larger celebration of diversity.
- Offer the AED event as a hybrid event. Include scenarios and 'fishbowl' formats.
- Continue to engage with initiatives that foster UDL and valid assessment as well as mundane acts of anti-ableism, eg, document accessibility and other everyday practices.
- Offer accessibility road show and other workshop options for departments, faculties, and other university offices /groups, especially regarding the Post Secondary Education Accessibility Standards. Bring the Toolkit into more public awareness.
- Maintain our positive relationships with Registrar's office, Research Services, CPI, Senate T&L

## **Recommendations to President Lesley Rigg**

- Encourage, nay, DEMAND, consultation before decisions—after the fact consideration of anti-ableism is always more inconvenient and more costly, both financially and reputationally.
- Disability legislation is a helpful lever for other equity desiring groups; disablement is an existential possibility for anyone with a body. It is a tide which floats all boats. It can be a way forward in EDI that can be more comprehensive and effective.
- Hire more accessibility specialists in SAS, CPI, HR, MARCOM. Document and digital accessibility are huge concerns. We have thousands of inaccessible documents, websites, and public facing materials.

## Anti-Racism Committee

Co-Chairs: Marla Terreberry-Portfilio & Richard Ndayizigamiye

### Committee Members

Ayena Ahad, Aliya Aragon, Anteneh Ayanso, Rabia Choudhary, Joanne Crawford, Zach DeBruyne, Tassia Gabiddon, Kelsey Hall, Yasmine Hejazi, Charlotte Henay, Clelia Kimana, Shaka Licorish, Ayesha Masood, Koreen McCullough, Dolana Mogadime, Jean Ntakirutimana, Abdul Rahimi, Aishah Sonekan, Ester Stanley, Syna Thakur, Kay Nwakerundu Wabaso.

### Introduction

ARC advocates for the development of programs, services, policies, procedures, and protocols at the unit level and campus-wide, which educate, encourage, and promote a culture of anti-racism on campus. The committee identifies and facilitates opportunities for increased collaboration, cooperation and synergy amongst campus units, groups, and committees with an interest in anti-racism systemic change. We promote activities intended to inform the on and off-campus Brock communities about anti-racism initiatives intended to effect systemic anti-racist cultural transformation. It assesses the impact of Anti-Racism Committee initiatives and its collaborative engagements.

### Meetings

- October 27, 2023
- January 12, 2024
- March 15, 2024
- April 12, 2024

### Recommendations and action items that the Working Group addressed during the year 2023-2024

- Support the Black Student Success Centre (BSSC). As an affinity space, it focuses on meeting the needs of Black students, uplifting them through supports of various kinds. The BSSC is centered around Blackness; IBPOC students and allies are welcomed to participate.
- Intersectionality was the guiding principle for ARC activities for this academic year, given this was the PACHRED overall theme for 2023-2024. Finding ways to apply it within the work and mandate of the ARC group; incorporate this theme in more anti-racism-based programming. There needs to be mobilization against all kinds of hate-motivated acts directed at

marginalized communities, whether these are based on religion, culture, race, sexual orientation, etc. There is an urgent necessity for creating/highlighting spaces for multiple equity-denied identities and providing resources to support them.

- For Black History Month/African Heritage Month: Include events that are intersectional (e.g. disability justice of 2S&LGBTQ+). Incorporate intersectionality in the planning process and center disability justice and blackness. ARC is in support of organizing events related to the removal of systemic barriers.
- How ARC can be more supportive of the work that students do:
  - Funding campus initiatives is always helpful: encourage students to connect with ARC to do a presentation on submitting a funding proposal.
  - Engage students to determine the types of events they want to see happen.
  - Ensure BHM/AHM programming is connected to the theme: address the lack of programming for certain focused themes such as disability justice.
  - d. Help students overcome barriers within the university that prevent them from expressing their distress and grief at certain local and world issues that impact their health and well-being: ARC can do so by advocating on their behalf to the appropriate administrative channels.
- Address the disconnect between the Faculties at Brock and the work that the Anti- Racism Committee does, as well as with the HRE Office:
  - Invite Deans of the different Faculties to present what their faculties are doing to advance anti-racism initiatives within their departments; have a discussion with them around barriers at the faculty level regarding Anti-Racism/EDI programming and how ARC can support them realize tangible actions.
  - Explore measures to hold Brock University Senior Administration accountable in their response to anti-racism and anti-oppressive initiatives led by ARC, HREO, and other institutions within Brock.
  - Track our progress and follow-through on initiatives via metrics.
  - We also need dis-aggregated data on the demographic of Brock for students, faculty, and staff per country of origin. Terreberry-Portfilio (Associate Director, International Services) provided valuable data detailing this information.

Workday has the potential to capture faculty/staff demographic information. An Equity Census has been initiated, which will hopefully capture this data. There is also a need to collect data on student visa refusals for applications from Africa and find a way to check-in with the progress of

our initiatives. The Headcount Enrolment Report Academic Year 2022-23 from Institutional Planning, Analysis and Performance, provides country of citizenship for international students.

## **Community Events & Outreach**

- **Black History/African Heritage Month (February 2024)**

The Anti-Racism Committee co-sponsored a panel on Black Mental Health Matters (February 15, 2024 – 2:00-3:30pm, Sankey Chambers) featuring BLSA & HRO – featuring Tassia Gabbidon (Community Councillor of Anti-Oppression and Justice (HREO) and Hillaree Alliman (Associate Therapist, Jhanelle Peters Psychotherapy): connecting with a Black counselor and psychotherapist for an enlightening and supportive conversation on Black mental health that aims to address the unique challenges, experiences, and strategies for mental health and well-being within the Black community.

- **Collaboration with the Equity and Social Justice Committee**

A standing committee of the Faculty of Education – was initiated with their two co-chairs, Dr. Lynne Taylor, and Dane Di Cesare, respectively Chair and Co-Chair of ESJC. A meeting between Lynne Taylor and Richard was held on Wednesday July 18, where they discussed avenues of collaboration between the two committees, and participation in the Anti-Racism Committee. Follow-up will be forthcoming later in September 2024, and further cooperation will be strengthened at the start of 2024-2025 academic year.

## **What progress has been made**

- Establishment and support of the Black Students Success Centre: ARC worked with those who spearheaded the project (VP Students Brad Clarke, Monique Beauregard, Tassia Gabiddon, HREO staff, etc.), providing support when and where it could to ensure the initiative sees the light of day.
- In the area of Research, Tim Kenyon has been meeting with a number of Black faculty to consolidate EDI discussions into actions, such as internal opportunities regarding funding, which are a precursor to external success. The process in place was flagged as not being inclusive, such as Associate Deans having de facto adjudication member status; for internal awards for the Explore Award, the committee members are not known, neither are the criteria for choosing its members. When internal opportunities are not awarded to equity seeking faculty members (due to unjustified decline, favoritism, etc.), they have no leverage to compete for external funding.
  - A committee was formed within the VP Research Office to address such barriers faced by Black faculty within this adjudication process (such as no clear measures to evaluate research excellence). Syna is happy to share progress that has been achieved, as well as suggestions moving forward.



- Regarding the Prioritization of staff equity hiring policies and practices within the Office of People & Culture, there is a big unknown. Given DEDI principles are clearly outlined in Pillar 4 of the University's 5-year Strategic Plan, tangible results are expected to materialize.
  - Presentations to SAC by BCFAB and ARC Members in the Fall of 2021 strongly emphasized *setting up a body to assess progress (or lack thereof) of recommendations. Nothing has been done by SAC in that regard. The university is encouraged to support ongoing engagement with Black stakeholders at Brock, to seek their input in establishing a clear plan on how to achieve this goal.*

## **What were the challenges**

- The major challenge was undertaking an anti-racism agenda aiming at making structural changes within a framework of deep-seeded beliefs and practices in the context of White-dominated academic environments that have been the norm for decades at most universities located in small cities like St. Catharines, in Canada. Brock University has not been immune to this country-wide and continental status-quo.
- Reviewing key analysis and goals to address Anti-Black and Anti-BIPOC racism in view of engaging a discussion on how SAC and equity seeking groups could become agents of change.
- Narrowing the Gaps concerning the Racial Diversification of the Student Wellness and Accessibility Services. This was emphasized in Recommendation 4 from the 2022-2023 final report.
  - The need to remedy this disparity is paramount to contributing to the overall wellness of a segment of the campus population in great need of achieving better mental and emotional health. BIPOC students often feel alienated from confiding in White counsellors who may not relate to them due to differences in worldview and life experiences.
  - Multiple studies have shown that students identify better with mentors they can easier relate to. In the context of university students experiencing racial and cultural marginalization, it is therefore particularly important that counsellors be recruited to reflect and serve the increasingly diverse student population at Brock.
- Mapping a well thought out strategy addressing gaps in the implementation of EDID policies, via an enforceable employment equity policy, is still a challenge.

## Lessons learned

Continued advocacy through education and learning is key to any meaningful change in belief systems, and they benefit all parts of the academic community. Therefore, continuous consultation, dialogue, and collaboration between all levels of academic society is key to progress within our university.

## Goals for the coming year

**Building Better Research series** was presented by Syna Thakur – Equity Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Research Advisor – as an option for creating an opportunity for student researchers (including BIPOC possibly) so as to bring attention to these issues. It would be enriching to present a perspective from international students who are doing research as well. Advocate for Community Engaged Research and how researchers are trying to combat the model minority.

- A Round table discussion regarding the students' research experience could be held within a timely schedule.
- Create an event for networking and provide the cultural space for it.
- Brock International is willing to support any of the events that derive from this.
- The "Building Better Research Series" (see minutes from January 12, 2024, meeting) could be planned early in the Fall 2024 for the 2024-2025 academic year. Syna is open to connecting with students who can share their experiences in research.
- Syna will continue to run EDI training sessions across campus through the CRC program and their grant portfolio to see to it that the research enterprise is committed to ensuring that EDI's requirements are met for any of the awards they would be reviewing. Syna will run training on inclusive adjudication for several ADRs and members of such committees continually: this is another opportunity where she can engage EDI on multiple forms of Anti-Racism. The next step would be to reach out to all faculties and departments to share that she has training ready on inclusive adjudication for faculty, staff and students involved in peer review or adjudication, mirroring what she did during her third student seminar on Biology Professional Development: she met with students to explain what EDI is, what the benefits are, how to engage EDI in their research.

## Recommendations to President Lesley Rigg

- Support for hiring Indigenous/BPOC counsellors and Access to diverse mental health services at Brock (student presentations were made to Brock President Lesley Rigg at Sankey Chamber in the fall 2023):
  - We recommend that Brock allocate funds for the creation of *new Indigenous and BPOC Counsellor positions*. We note that the ‘solutions-focused’ model now used by counselling staff at Brock is not trauma-informed and often does not work for marginalized Indigenous and BPOC students. Funds need to be programmed in the Brock budget and allocated in a timely manner as *this is an urgent need*.
- We reiterate the Importance of having Academic and Guidance Counsellors from racially diverse backgrounds. Representation matters: lived experiences help to create a bridge and understanding between students and those who provide this kind of support. Therefore, diversifying mental health supports is important: in fact, diversity amongst counsellors is critical for understanding the lived experiences of BIPOC students and for creating a sense of comfort for them.

There is staunch support within the Brock community for encouraging the hiring of counselling and advising staff who reflect the student population and for providing a more diversified staff complement. Hence, Brock should include the hiring of such staff across all faculties at Brock: A Black Academic Advisor, an Indigenous Academic Advisor, and an Asian Academic Advisor would be a good a start.

- We advocate for holding a series of roundtable discussions with SAC concerning how to develop collaboration to create meaningful Anti-Racist systemic change at Brock. The following issues would need to be addressed: identify what is happening in each Faculty to promote Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization; how the Anti-Racism Committee can work with SAC towards collaborative approaches; establishing the Processes and Timeline for developing equitable employment policies for BIPOC staff; designate who can be involved in designing and implementing a multi-layered Promotion and Retention strategy of Black faculty and staff. Of paramount importance as well is putting in place a mechanism ensuring Accountability and Consistent Follow Up on the part of Senior Administration.
- Create a Special Fund dedicated to “celebrating and elevating” year-round contributions of BIPOC students, faculty, and staff in February, during Black History/African Heritage Month and beyond.
  - We must remain aware that EDI goals are under attack around the world, especially in the USA. Canada is not immune to this trend. This is a possibility coming our way as budget cuts might impact EDI initiatives: hence, although such push-back reactions can be expected when we press for equity ideals, it is imperative to ensure that all EDI needs and requests be advanced with as much support as possible. EDI is sometimes

blamed as a deficit, and equity-seeking practices will be first to be cut, as has been seen in some institutions.

- For Brock university as an institution, being EDI-inclusive is an attainable goal. One example stands out in support of EDI. For instance, Brock can emulate what the University of Toronto has achieved: they are so far ahead in the game that no institution in Canada matches the kind of EDID policies they are implementing across their university. This shows that when EDI is respected (by being inclusive, diverse, and understanding the cores values of the institution), every other aspect benefits: there are better educational outcomes, as indicated by the new research activities which are blossoming at University of Toronto. It is important to stay strong on these arguments at the faculty level at Brock, in any program design, decision-making discussion where funding cuts are happening.

## **Decolonization Working Group of PACHRED**

Chair: Lyn Trudeau

Co-Chair: Willow Shawanoo-Keechego (December – March)

### **Committee Members**

Members: Sheila Cote-Meek; Mariana Garrido de Castro; Melissa Wilson; Koreen McCullough; Diana Deman; Elizabeth Anderson; Sandra Kroeker; Patrik Nath; James Maxwell-Barillas; Rabia Choudhary

### **Introduction**

The Decolonization Working Group seeks to challenge, reframe, and co-create narratives by and for the Indigenous populace. This year we situated these values with the overall theme of PACHRED which prioritized creating safer spaces for women and LGBTQ2S+ people. Our main event this year was an end of the year symposium entitled '*Indigenous De/Criminalization Symposium*'. This event included local Indigenous community; held space for Indigenous artistic expression; and exhibited decolonization in practice.

### **Meetings**

- October 4, 2023 – 11 am – 12 pm
- October 24, 2023 – 10 am – 12 pm
- November 23, 2023 – 10 am – 12 pm
- December 7, 2023 – 10 am – 11 am
- January 12, 2024 – 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm
- January 26, 2024 – 3:30 pm – 4 pm
- January 31, 2024 – 1:00 pm – 2 pm
- February 9, 2024 – 3:30 – 4 pm
- March 15, 2024 – 3:30 – 4 pm

## **Recommendations that the Working Group addressed during the year**

*“There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”*

The *Indigenous De/Criminalization Symposium* was a public event held on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, in Pond Inlet at Brock University. We added ‘De’ in the title alongside Criminalization as we believe that starting and holding dialogue begins the road to decriminalization. The presenters ranged from Indigenous experts in law and local community outreach programs to artists and performers. We explored numerous facets of criminalization and held space for Two-Spirit peoples to share their perspectives. Overall invited speakers addressed: the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, the Gladue Report and how this effects Indigenous communities/peoples and Land/Water defenders. Speakers spoke to moving forward and we did not want to contain their talk.

The symposium was attended by three classes both virtually and in-person. The aim was to advance student’s and the public’s understanding of the various elements of criminalization as associated to Indigenous Peoples within Canada. We felt it necessary to delve into not only how criminalization impacts Indigenous communities but also the why, when, and the ripple effects (victimization, mis/non/representation). We felt it also necessary to not be complicit and showcased the strength of spirit and wealth of traditional knowledge of our nations throughout the symposium; thus, artists/performers were woven throughout the day. We believe this contributed to PACHRED’s overall aim and supported knowledge mobilization and translation working towards decolonization and countering the colonial structures that impact Indigenous communities.

### **Action items**

#### List of speakers/guests:

- Shawana Dodem (Big Drum)
- Beverly Jacobs (Indigenous Law)
- Edna Campos (Gladue Report)
- Strong Water Singers Community Drum
- Megan Scribe (Community-based advocacy)
- Sean Kinsella (Two-Spirit)
- Layla Staats (Filmmaker, Activist)
- Joe Shawana (Dancer) – part of Big Drum

- Lucas Shawana (Dancer) – part of Big Drum
- Jessica Riel (Community Support)

Our event was the recipient of a CRISS Award from the Faculty of Social Sciences for \$1000 as well as a Campus Safety Grant of \$5000. We also received support and funding from:

PACHRED (Coordinating Committee); the Social Justice Research Institute; Indigenous Education Department; the LGBTQ2+ and Employment Equity Working Groups of PACHRED.

### **Community Outreach/Events**

- Indigenous De/Criminalization Symposium.
- Wednesday, March 20, 2024, in Pond Inlet at Brock University
- 10 am – 4 pm

### **Lessons learned**

Lessons learned seems to imply struggle; however, there were many positive lessons shared in hosting this event. Our working group was pleasantly surprised that other working groups (particularly Employment and Equity and the LGBTQ2S) were eager to support our initiative both financially and emotionally by letting us know that they were there to offer encouragement and work collaboratively if needed. Working groups supporting each other and helping collectively within PACHRED explicitly displays the strength and unification of the overall presence of PACHRED.

### **What progress has been made**

This was the first Indigenous De/Criminalization Symposium held at Brock. At the same time, Lyn Trudeau has also taught the first Indigenous Criminalization course (CRIM/INDG/SOCI 3P69) and many of these students attended the symposium. These events are certainly a benefit to Brock and also support the Strategic Plan.

### **What were the challenges?**

Members often fell away from the group after committing. This was managed but the work was felt by those left to carry the weight.

## **Goals for the coming year**

### Website:

- Resources with specific sub-headings/titles for easy accessibility
- Event page - keep updated
- Spirit Bear (reawaken the impact of Dr. Cindy Blackstock's Spirit Bear project)

## **Recommendations to President Lesley Rigg**

Remind the University of:

- November 4 – 8th – Treaties Recognition Week in Ontario
- November 7th – Inuit Day
- November 8th – Commemorating Indigenous Veterans Day
- November 16th – Louis Riel Day (Canada acknowledges two days - the other being the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in February - Manitoba).

How can we make these events more prominent?

Have greater participation from students on decolonization (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).

Our working group made space at the onset of the term for our student BUSU representative to express their initiatives and perspective on decolonization in a meeting (October 4, 2023) – the hope was to include their voice in our final report. James Maxwell-Barillas presented the work and efforts of BUSU towards decolonization and their connection to Canadian Alliance Student Association (CASA) alongside National Indigenous Advocacy Council (NIAC). James also noted future consultation with Hadiya'dagénhahs First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Student Centre regarding Indigenous student council/union.

Increase positive visual representation around campus of Indigenous Peoples.

Continue to support/advocate efforts and work towards decriminalizing all Indigenous Peoples.

Miigwech/Thank you.



## **Employment Equity Committee**

Co-Chairs: Alana Lowe & Diana DeMan

### **Committee Members**

Antonietta Rugiano, Beatrice Ombuki-Berman, Behnaz Mirzai, Ben Johnson, Carleigh Charlton, Nadia Ganesh, Sandra Kroeker, Sandra Kroeker, Wanda Gilmore.

### **Introduction**

The Employment Equity Working Group (EEWG) advises the President of Brock University and provides expertise and analysis to PACHRED on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in employment, including, but not limited to, performance assessment, workplace culture, workload, and scheduling. Members of the EEWG provide a very wide range of expertise, and the issues discussed at EEWG meetings are relevant to all of PACHRED's other working groups.

### **Meetings**

- November 9, 2023
- December 12, 2023
- January 26, 2024
- March 1, 2024
- March 28, 2024

### **Recommendations that the Working Group addressed during the year**

- Proposal to provide self-care packages and resources to staff affected by budget constraints.
- Review of recently collected census data from People and Culture.
- Open consultation and review of the RWLEP policy and procedure.
- Follow-up on previous recommendations submitted to the President's Office.
- Equity training for the Office of People and Culture.

## **Action items**

- Researching the flat fee tuition model at Brock and its impact on students.
- Consultation on the RWLEP.
- Review of the Hiring & Evaluation Process in People & Culture.
- Examination of the climate at Brock and how financial challenges impact employee wellness.

## **Lessons learned**

- **Effective, equitable communication is crucial:** Ensuring clear and consistent communication within the committee, across committees and with other stakeholders is essential for progress and collaboration.
- **Importance of historical context:** Understanding the institutional history and previous efforts in employment equity provides valuable insights and guides current initiatives.
- **Balancing knowledge sharing and action:** Striking a balance between discussing issues and implementing solutions is critical for maintaining momentum and achieving tangible outcomes.

## **What progress has been made**

- In-depth learning on historical issues and barriers to employment equity at Brock. Senior committee members shared institutional knowledge and history with new members.
- Election of a new chair and co-chair.
- Near completion of RWLEP consultation.

## **What were the challenges?**

- Navigating the prioritization of projects and balancing knowledge sharing with actionable steps.
- Managing workloads and committee schedules amid growing pains due to new Committee chairs and members that need to balance existing heavy workloads.
- Defining the committee's identity, priorities, and ways to honour members' experiences and knowledge.

- Difficulty prioritizing removal of the flat tuition fee while staff were losing jobs, leading to a focus on improving workplace culture and employment equity.

### **Goals for the coming year**

- **RWLEP:** Continue to provide input into the RWLEP review process by participating in the RWLEP Working Group coordinated via the Provost's Office.
- **Equity/Demographic Census:** Review data once released and draft a more in-depth and inclusive census survey to enrich data.
- **Improving Workplace Culture:** Identify and share resources/events to enhance supportive workplace cultures across departments.

### **Recommendations to President Lesley Rigg**

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:**
  - Utilize data from the Equity/Demographic Census (when available) to inform policy changes and initiatives aimed at improving workplace equity.
  - Establish metrics to track progress and measure the impact of implemented policies and programs.
- **Improving Workplace Culture:**
  - Promote initiatives that celebrate diversity and foster an inclusive, supportive work environment.
  - Encourage departments to develop action plans tailored to their specific needs and challenges in promoting equity.
- **Increased Opportunities for Connection and Knowledge Sharing:**
  - Increased opportunities to connect with the president and to share updates and trends.
- **Enhanced Support for Affected Staff:**
  - Advise on comprehensive support programs for staff affected by budget constraints, including mental health resources and career transition services.
  - Share feedback mechanisms to continuously improve these support programs based on staff input.

## **Sexual Violence Prevention Committee**

Co-Chair: Katie Keays

Student Co-Chairs: Ishraq Malik and Muskaan Waraich

### **Committee Members**

Athena Colman; Aishah Sonekan; Alison Rothwell; Amanda Villella; Amanda Ziegler; Brittany Gallant; Carleigh Charlton; Courtney Falardeau; Curtis Fogel; Catharine Pelletier; Donna Moody; Fatma Asdemir; Heidi Huber; Hijin Park; Jenna Meier; Julie Fennell; Julie Domitrek; Katie Pickles; Krista Hilton; Leigh Harold; Mariana Garrido de Castro; Michael Savage; Natalee Caple; Pratik Nath; Rabia Choudhary; Sandra Kroeker; Snezana Ratkovic; Tassia Gabbidon.

### **Introduction**

The Brock University Sexual Violence Prevention Committee is an advisory committee with the purpose of identifying and recommending strategies to improve Brock's policies and processes in relation to sexual violence awareness, prevention and response.

### **Meetings**

- November 10, 2023
- December 22, 2023
- February 9, 2024
- April 12, 2024

### **Recommendations that the Working Group addressed during the year**

This year members of the SVPC developed 4 goals: support student activists; support the December 6th memorial; support Pride Week and increased visibility of queer and trans identities; and encouraging more people to sit at the committee table by spreading awareness in attempts to recruit more (student) members. These goals align with PACHRED's 2023-24 goals and with the theme based on the following quote by Audre Lorde:

*"There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."*

This quote emphasizes the necessity of an intersectional lens.

Our goal of supporting student activism led us to sponsor an event that centred intersectionality, specifically intersectional responses to gender-based violence. Further, we hope to bring more folks to the SVPC table so we have more diverse perspectives and identities on the committee, so we can continue to use an intersectional lens in the work we do.

## **Action items**

Key actions this year included running monthly tabling sessions to spread awareness about the SVPC and encourage broader participation, developing and distributing infocards, and creating information packs with resources related to gender and sexual violence. We supported a student-led event, "Break the Silence: An Intersectional Approach to Combating Gender-Based Violence," which provided a forum for discussing gender-based violence and its intersections with other social identities. The event, held in April, was a success with approximately 30 engaged participants, indicating strong interest in the topic.

## **Community Outreach/Events**

This year, the SVPC decided to support a student-led event called Break the Silence: An Intersectional Approach to Combating Gender-Based Violence Forum on Tuesday, April 2, from 5 pm to 8:30 pm. This forum was organized by student staff on the Gender & Sexual Violence Support & Prevention team to provide an opportunity for dialogue about the importance of developing responses to gender-based violence that address its intersections with race, class, gender identity, and other forms of social identity. It offered networking and educational opportunities for students, activists, and scholars. With a lineup of diverse speakers and panelists, this event showcased the GSV P2P team and Brock's dedication to fostering a safe environment and preventing gender-based violence within Brock and the greater Niagara community.

This event was well-attended and very interactive. The participants were engaged in discussion with our expert panel during this event. Dinner was served, and swag bags were provided. The self-care station participants enjoyed also offered an opportunity to use the P2P swag items and provided further resources and support. This event offered an opportunity to highlight our gender-based violence services, such as our drop-in. We had approximately 30 participants, with many bringing positive feedback about the event. Furthermore, students and the greater Niagara community were satisfied that it did not run longer than 4 hours, and there were enough in-between breaks. The event was a success and was entirely student-led, honoring our goal of supporting student activists.

## **Lessons learned**

This term we did not have an opportunity to meet all our goals, mostly for time's sake. We were not able to support Pride week as we did not have representation on the planning committee. This highlighted the fact that we must be more strategic in the way we set out our goals in the initial

months of meeting. We should also have met earlier and more frequently in the Fall term. This would have allowed us to develop strategies more fully around meeting all of our goals.

## **What progress has been made**

The most significant area where we saw progress this year was in the publishing of the new Sexual Violence Policy (SVP). The SVPC has been following the review of this policy since it began in May 2022, provided their own feedback through focus groups and we were now able to see the fruit of that work with the newly published policy.

## **Challenges**

One key challenge the committee identified this term relates to the new SVP. Some of the committee members were present when the committee was first established, and the Sexual Assault & Harassment Policy was being developed. They noted that a key theme in the development of the policy was to ensure that when it came to matters of sexual violence that the university is not investigating itself. When we reviewed the new SVP as a committee, it was noted that section 15.2 of the policy, Interpretation and application, shifts the responsibility of interpreting and applying this policy more toward the university:

“The interpretation and application of this Policy is the joint responsibility of HRE, Student Affairs, and the Office of People & Culture, with the advice of University legal counsel.”

The committee did not have an opportunity to give input about this point on the policy and notes that this essentially means the university will be investigating itself in matters related to sexual violence. This is a shift in the wrong direction, the committee feels.

## **Goals for the coming year**

Looking ahead, our goals for the coming year include supporting the December 6th memorial, supporting Pride Week, and continuing our recruitment efforts to bring more diverse voices to the SVPC. We aim to collaborate with Human Rights and Equity (HRE) to improve our outreach and tabling efforts. With our established infocards and swag, we are ready to start recruiting early in the Fall term to ensure we can meet our goals and expand our impact in the coming year.

## **Recommendations to President Lesley Rigg**

Revisit section 15.2 of the SVP and review the interpretation and application of the SVP. This committee recommends that HRE alone be responsible for the interpretation and application of this Policy, as they have the expertise in trauma informed approaches to sexual violence.

## **Contact information**

**President's Advisory Committee on Human Rights, Equity and Decolonization**

E [pachred@brocku.ca](mailto:pachred@brocku.ca)

Brock University  
Niagara Region  
1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way  
St. Catharines, ON  
L2S 3A1

**[brocku.ca/president/pachred/](https://brocku.ca/president/pachred/)**