



**University
of Victoria**

**Submission by the University of Victoria
On the Status of the Employment Equity Program
for the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal
Pursuant to Section 42 of the B.C. Human Rights Code
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As a community, UVic students, faculty and staff all share responsibility, individually and collectively, for achieving the goals of inclusiveness. When we recognize discrimination happening to a member of a group, let each of us have the courage to speak up for them. Speaking up, even in a small way can often make a difference. Even if the situation doesn't change, the person or group affected will feel and be strengthened by the support. Every issue counts.

Grace Wong-Sneddon, Diversity Advisor
(*"Equity and Diversity at UVic"* Multiplicity Newsletter: Spring/Summer 2008)

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Overview: Changes and New Developments

This report on the status of the employment equity program at the University of Victoria updates the report on progress submitted in January 2008. It reports on systemic equity initiatives at UVic including the development of a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, recruitment and hiring for equity, training, retention and accommodation. The report goes on to look at existing data on the workforce at UVic, summarize equity progress with respect to students and identify current challenges and constraints affecting progress on equity.

Also provided in this report is an update about the ongoing database upgrade at UVic and the impact it has had on the availability of workforce data. In August 2008, the UVic Systems department was able to dedicate consistent resources to addressing data extraction issues and as a result, these issues are on the verge of being resolved. At the same time, a protocol has been established to validate these statistics to ensure consistent reporting.

In June 2008, UVic's Equity Director, Linda Sproule-Jones retired after making an immeasurable contribution to Employment Equity and to the UVic campus community as a whole. This prompted a restructuring of the Equity and Human Rights office and the resulting team is primarily a new one. Three of six of the positions have been held for less than one year. Of the 3 hires, 1 was preferential and 2 were equity planning hires which resulted in increasing diversity on the EQHR team. Pamela Brown was hired into the position of Equity Advisor (part time) and Cindy Player, who had been the Director of Human Rights, became the Director of Equity and Human Rights. A list of all EQHR staff is included as Appendix #1. In February 2009, all six members of the team participated in a staff retreat to help focus the mandate of the EQHR (Equity and Human Rights) office and identify short and long-term priorities.

Priorities for the next two years include the revision of the employment equity policy (and a review of related policies) and updating the employment equity plan; upgrading of reporting systems and schedules; tracking database extraction methods; mapping and strengthening the existing structure of equity at UVic; enhancing the collaborative relationship with Human Resources and cultivating representation of employment equity at the executive level to further promote a consistent and integrated approach to employment equity across the campus.

In fall 2008, the new equity advisor contacted twelve Canadian Universities to research the structures used to further employment equity across the country. She visited Simon Fraser University to meet with Brenda Taylor, Director of Human Rights and Equity. Gathering this information made it possible to see that UVic has a sound equity structure that is the legacy of the commitment of many students, staff and faculty, past and present, who contributed to the ongoing process of creating inclusive, respectful and welcoming work and study environments.

The next step is to integrate equity planning and reporting into existing planning and reporting schedules. Since employment equity is a pan-campus issue, developing campus-wide initiatives will be a priority. It is important to recognize that the status of employment equity at UVic varies considerably from unit to unit. Continued capacity building of employment equity at UVic will be supported by A) identifying the regions of the university that require specialized support through training, engaging, providing resources and consultation and, at the same time, B) strengthening collaboration between all equity regions and the Equity and Human Rights Office.

In October 2008, the Human Rights Educator, Moussa Magassa, released a comprehensive Educator's Workplan (Appendix #2). This document reflects a shift from Human Rights education being provided primarily in response to requests to "a more proactive approach"¹ that grows out of the first objective in UVic's Strategic Plan: *To be a diverse, welcoming learning community, with a strong commitment to equity.*

The core principal EQHR is using to establish a consistent theme in its service to students, staff and faculty is *inclusion*. This theme will provide EQHR with a flexible platform for addressing key issues as they are identified and/or emerge. From the perspective of Human Resources and Social Development Canada's Federal Contractors Program, UVic's biggest challenge is addressing the gap of workforce representation of employees who identify as people of colour ("visible minorities"). Using the theme of *inclusion* to address this gap will be one of EQHR's priorities as it collaborates with the rest of the university in developing policy, plans and programming.

I. Systemic Equity: Collaborating and Integrating

1) Campus Culture and Brand Message

As mentioned in previous reports to the BCHRT, UVic's strategic plan, updated in February 2007, firmly establishes the integration of inclusion and equity as a campus-wide priority. As budgets, policies and plans throughout the campus undergo natural revision, they are being brought into alignment with the strategic plan. In a large, decentralized organization like UVic, a consistent message is crucial for cultivating a campus culture in which inclusion and equity become fully integrated into budgets, decision making, event planning and all employment systems.

In 2008, External Relations released UVic's first Brand Guidelines (Appendix #3) with five key brand components. While all five components can dovetail with UVic's employment equity agenda, the fifth component is, from an equity perspective, the most potent:

A Welcoming And Diverse Community: *We seek to attract students, staff and faculty from all backgrounds and stages of life. More than two-thirds of our students come from outside greater Victoria, creating a vibrant and welcoming campus community. Our university also extends beyond the campus through programs of research, teaching and outreach that engage the wider community.*²

The status of employment equity at UVic varies from department to unit to faculty. The strategic plan, combined with the brand guidelines, challenges everyone on campus to prioritize equity and inclusion.

2) Recruitment and Hiring

How We Hire

As UVic develops its new equity plan it is working with campus equity stakeholders to shift some of the emphasis from numeric hiring goals *to the hiring process*. It is anticipated that increased focus will be placed on *how* we hire and a little less on *who* we hire. In terms of accountability, a more proactive approach to identifying opportunities to utilize equity planning, preferential and limited hiring is being considered for the revised equity policy. By placing emphasis on best practices for recruitment and hiring, and supporting that emphasis with training, UVic will be able to fulfill its goal to "recruit and retain a diverse group of exceptionally talented students, faculty and staff..."³

Currently, consultation has begun on a new framework for policies related to equity, human rights and fairness. Input is being solicited from the campus community and ultimately the revised equity policy and plan will establish best practices for accountability, transparency and fairness in hiring processes.

The Power of Incoming Self-Declaration

UVic's web-based hiring system, uHire, has been in place throughout 2008. As uHire was only completely integrated in December 2008, the data provided in this report is not statistically consistent; however, the table, "uHire Applications for Employment with Self-Declaration January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008" (Appendix #4) is included in order to demonstrate its value as a means for tracking who is applying to,

and being hired for, staff positions at the university. Over time, analysis of trends will provide a key means of identifying potential barriers to equity. As a result, Human Resources, Equity and Human Rights and other stakeholder departments can collaborate to support and promote best practices in specific “equity regions” of the university.

Fortunately, the data regarding the use of limited and preferential hiring was not compromised by the ongoing configuration.

In uHire, the response rate of applicants self-declaring is excellent and it is believed that this will further support the response rate of the Employment Equity Survey that is provided to all new employees as per UVic’s participation in the Federal Contractors Program.

Limited and Preferential Hire

In the outgoing Equity Director’s *Report on Progress: University Hiring Goals 2003 to 2008*, (Appendix #5) released in June 2008, it was reported that in regards to hiring goals established in 2003, significant progress has been made, particularly in recruiting Indigenous faculty.

The June 2008 report also identified the need for addressing the lack of workforce representation and/or employment equity self-identification of people of colour (“visible minorities”). As part of the development of the new equity plan, an inquiry into this gap will be initiated. Using an appreciative inquiry model, EQHR will work with the campus community to identify barriers faced by racialized people and use the results to develop the priorities for the next equity plan.

The Staff + Faculty Equity Searches Report: Jan 1 to December 31, 2008 (Appendix #6) indicates an opportunity for Preferential and Limited Hiring processes to be used more for faculty hiring and, in general, to address the gap in representation of “visible minorities.” As a result of consistent promoting, the equity planning hiring process is being used primarily for filling staff positions. It will be important to promote this process for use by faculty hiring committees as well.

In the coming months it is recommended that UVic examine the success of all equity hiring processes with regard to hiring Indigenous employees and determine if it is possible to translate that success to hiring employees who would be categorized as “visible minorities.”

3) Training

EQHR Human Rights Education

As mentioned in the introduction, EQHR’s Human Rights Educator, Moussa Magassa, has co-facilitated workshops throughout 2008. Issues addressed include: personal harassment and inclusion and conflict resolution. He works with Rachel Reaugh (Human Rights Advisor, Complaints) and Cindy Player (Director, EQHR) and together they are able to be proactive and responsive in designing Human Rights Education at UVic.

The main goal of the Human Rights Educator position is: to enhance understanding of, and commitment to, the university’s human rights and equity goals by raising the awareness of students, staff and faculty, supervisory personnel and administrators on a range of human rights issues with the end goal of increasing diversity and creating fair and inclusive work and study environments at UVic.⁴

A sample of workshops includes:

- ◆Disability and Inclusion Awareness
- ◆Managers, Supervisors and Diversity
- ◆Inclusive and Respectful Workplace
- ◆Rooting Out Personal Harassment

◆Creating Spaces (an ongoing workshop offered to staff, students and faculty that provides the opportunity to explore inclusive thinking and challenges assumptions) Please see Appendix #7 for more details.

Human Resources Training

Human Resources has developed and implemented a comprehensive training program to support UVic's efforts to develop "core competencies" in all employees. The following statistics on attendance at Human Resources Training programs were provided by Lynda Cochrane, Human Resources & Organizational Development.

Effective Workplace Relations Certificate Program	134
Management Skills Certificate Program	126
Administrative Certificate Program	466
Manager's How To Series	196
Essentials of Supervision	0

NOTE: These numbers indicate the cumulative total numbers of attendees at all workshops offered in each specific program. Some individuals have taken multiple workshops within each program.

Responding to Emerging Issues

In March 2008, the Muslim Students Association and a member of the Interfaith Chaplaincy contacted EQHR about an escalation of isolation and fear among campus members of the Muslim community following an article against Muslims published in the Martlet (campus paper) that gave rise to further racist commentary and hate messages. EQHR organized a meeting of diverse campus partners who were committed to inclusive and welcoming environments for all at UVic. Many positive initiatives have followed from this meeting. EQHR met with the Martlet staff and has continued working with them into 2009. The Interfaith Chaplaincy organized a series of presentations and conversations regarding difficult issues that cut across religions. EQHR co-sponsored an Iftar to mark the end of Ramadan with the Muslim Students' Association. UVic's strategic plan outlines the campus' commitment to "environments for work and study that are safe, supportive, inclusive and healthy, foster mutual respect and civility, recognizing that people are our primary strength."

Having the resources to respond to emerging issues like this is key to maintaining a safe and welcoming work and study environment.

Learning and Teaching Centre

In June 2008, the Learning and Teaching Centre offered a new course called "Curriculum: Diversity by Design" with Grace Wong-Sneddon, Diversity Advisor, Department of the Vice-President Academic & Provost.

*The 3-day "interactive and experiential workshop builds on the model of the successful Course Redesign Workshop. This redesign workshop assists instructors in promoting an understanding of diversity and Indigenous teaching and learning as they relate to overall student success, and in the development of effective academic strategies. This course will provide opportunities for dialogue related to ways in which diversity can affect the atmosphere of the classroom and teaching styles for reaching students with a variety of learning styles."*⁵

Collaborating to Raise Awareness about Personal Harassment

In November 2008, CUPE locals at UVic and Royal Roads co-sponsored a conference called "Creating Respectful Workplaces" with EQHR. Keynote speakers, Barbara Coloroso and Dr. Gary Namie addressed workplace bullying. Workshops and panel discussions explored "the impact of bullying and

harassment on individuals and organizations, strategies to address bullying and harassment and create respectful workplaces and alternatives for unions to the traditional grievance and arbitration processes.” (excerpt from promotional material circulated on campus).

4) Retention

Using the Tools

Addressing retention issues is key to understanding the needs of employees and UVic’s ability to do this expands daily. EQHR and HR now meet regularly to identify trends, chronic and emerging issues and co-develop strategies to improve and resolve issues. As of 2009, the new database system will provide “flow data” that enables tracking of employees throughout their UVic careers. EQHR and HR are working together to revise and update the exit survey process to reach all employees in a timely manner and quickly capture the results.

Human Rights Complaints

An effective and timely response to human rights complaints is essential to retaining members of UVic’s diverse communities. Selected statistics on complaints received between July 2007 and June 2008 are included in (Appendix #8). The number of complaints received under the discrimination and harassment policy increased slightly in 2007-08 from figures recorded in 2006-07; however, the 65 complaints received in 07-08 are still less than the number received in 2004-05. The trend towards more complex complaints (often dealing with multiple grounds) appears to be continuing.

The most frequent category of complaints is personal harassment which was cited in 28 complaints; however, 14, of the personal harassment complaints cited various human rights code grounds as a factor but characterized the complaint primarily as one of personal harassment. Again consistent with the previous year, the categories of disability and gender were the next most frequently cited categories (after personal harassment).

Most complaints continue to be resolved informally (61% in 2007-08). No formal complaints were made in 07-08. The number of complaints that EQHR has been unable to resolve remains small at 2%.

Responding

In 2008, UVic’s Management Forum followed-up on retention issues addressed in the previous year’s forum. Discussion of implementation of retention strategies like mentoring focused on addressing specific issues faced by members of the four designated groups and included sexual and gender diversity. The forum identified a need for a formal mentoring program. HR is developing this now; diversity is still a consideration but is not a priority of the program.

An initiative co-developed with Human Resources and CUPE 951 aims to improve retention by “improving the success rate for employees settling into a new position.” The probationary process now includes a form that allows employees and supervisors to respond quickly to any problems that arise during the “settling-in period.” Along with the form, a new series of performance feedback and coaching workshops have been developed and delivered by HR and CUPE 951. These workshops will emphasize the importance of timely and effective communication between managers and employees that is the key to success in the probation and trial period.”

UVic Human Resources released *Human Resources: Strategic Directions* in 2008 (Appendix #9). This document outlines HR’s Mission and Vision; describes the promises it is making to the university; defines its values and identifies how it will work to promote the objectives of UVic’s Strategic Plan.

Exit Surveys

At this time, EQHR provides an exit survey to all outgoing staff and faculty with a 15% response rate and Jan Nolan (Director, Faculty Renewal & Academic Leadership Initiatives) anonymously interviews each departing faculty member (excluding retirements) six months after they leave the university.

Disruption in EQHR's exit survey system, because of database upgrades, meant that in 2007 no surveys were sent. The process resumed in April 2008. Currently EQHR and HR are working together, in consultation with the Vice-President, Academic office, to develop a single exit survey that will be web based and emailed immediately to departing staff. Projected results of this change include increased response rate and consistent data for evaluating trends effecting retention.

A summary of trends gathered from faculty exit interviews is submitted to the Vice-President, Academic and from that a report is created for UVic's Executive. Initiatives required to address faculty retention issues are launched at this level.

5) Accommodation

Since Human Resources has increased staffing in regards to accommodation, the campus community has benefited from a more consistent approach and wider acceptance of people's unique needs. UVic faculty members continue to raise issues regarding faculty accommodation processes and arrangements. At the recent Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) employment equity conference, a recommendation was made that all Faculty Association boards include a member whose role is devoted to accommodation issues. This might be something for the Faculty Association to consider at UVic.

The Employee Accommodation 2008 report (Appendix #10) contains statistics provided by work life consultants in Human Resources. Return to work statistics reflect UVic's expanding response to employee needs. Compared to 2007, the numbers overall show no notable increases or decreases.

Emerging issues at UVic related to accommodation include an increase in mental health concerns. The human resources advisory committee established a mental health task force in 2005 which is currently planning a series of events/activities to reduce stigma and eliminate discrimination against staff, faculty and students who live with mental illness. The task force recently redefined its purpose as bringing together staff, students and faculty to coordinate and initiate activities to promote mental health and to support people in our community living with mental illness and those who deliver mental health services. The University Human Rights Committee (UHRC) also formed a disability sub-committee to examine and review issues across campus for all populations.

CanAssist, is a program at UVic dedicated to development and distribution of unique and customized assistive technologies, research focused on solutions for those with extremely challenging physical and/or cognitive disabilities and developing and implementing specialty programs. It is "a unique and innovative university-community-government partnership" that was initiated in 1999. Since then, funding and success have grown the project to the point where it is reaching its long-term goal "to becoming a national resource that will provide services to people and agencies across Canada."

"CanAssist's core objective is to help bring about the increased inclusion and accessibility in society of those with special needs. As a program at the University of Victoria, we work to achieve this goal by developing innovative technologies, programs and services that make life easier and more rewarding for those with disabilities. At the same time, we focus on increasing awareness of disability issues throughout the campus and in the wider community."⁶

The presence of CanAssist at UVic benefits the campus immeasurably in terms of creating a climate of inclusion and raising awareness about the unique issues that face people with disabilities. For more information please see *Inspired*, the Fall 2008 CanAssist Newsletter (Appendix #11).

6) Communication, Consultation, Community and Climate

Equity Committees

The equity structure at UVic includes a network of equity committees serving multiple departments and units on campus. Over the last five years, some committees have become dynamically integrated into the area they serve while others have disbanded. An evaluation of this structure was initiated in 2008 as a part of the larger process of integrating equity planning and reporting into existing UVic planning/reporting schedules.

The establishment of the equity and diversity steering committee chaired by the Diversity Advisor to the Provost has done much to revitalize a core of equity committees by bringing them together several times a term to share ideas, challenges and best practices.

UVic libraries equity and diversity committee continued to meet and celebrated its first full year in existence in April 2008. It has developed a survey for libraries staff to help ascertain diversity and equity issues that need to be addressed. The committee is a key node in the university's equity structure. Not only do committee members work to improve employment equity within their department, they participate in training provided by EQHR's Human Rights Educator.

UVic Campus Responds

As a result of the film on Ambient Violence, "Graffiti or Ambient Violence?" (created by Jenny Shaw, Jen Yurchak, Heather Clarry, Amber Streukens and Saori Tsukamoto) (Appendix #12), the University Human Rights Committee established a subcommittee to eliminate ambient violence on campus. Action followed: Facilities Management introduced procedures for systemically recording and documenting all unwelcome ambient messages (messages that discriminate based on protected grounds) and reporting incidents to the Accessibility Coordinator. Campus Security also photographs and removes incidents.

In response to the film, President David Turpin was quoted in the campus newspaper, The Ring, saying "the real message is that each of us has a responsibility to help create an inclusive environment. We have to act when we see or hear 'ambient violence' and work to eliminate it. Feeling unwelcome on campus—whether as an international student or a member of a marginalized group—can be one of the most damaging outcomes of this unacceptable behaviour."

A Sample of Events, Activities and Offerings

Critical Conversations about Diversity, held February 6, 2008 in the Student Union Building at the University of Victoria, provided an opportunity for UVic faculty members and students to share their research in areas of diversity including innovative research methods, Indigenous studies, sexualities, marginalization, gender and disability studies. The event began with a traditional First Nations welcome and an address from BC's Lieutenant Governor, Steven L. Point.

A Day in the Life - monthly column in UVic's The Ring (initiated by the outgoing Equity Director who researched and wrote the column for each issue) is now managed and written entirely by The Ring staff - one excellent example of integrating equity at UVic. The column promotes UVic's key messages of diversity and inclusion by profiling individual staff members with a goal of shining an equitable light into the sectors of the campus that are sometimes taken for granted.

Feedback from the more than 100 participants indicated they liked the welcoming atmosphere, range of panel presentations, student involvement and opportunity to hear about research being done in the area of diversity. The 2009 conference took place early in February.

A transcript of the forum was published in July 2008. The event will be held again in 2009.

Deaf Awareness Week was a part of Diversity Month in 2008. It was attended by 124 people. This included a cross section of staff, students, faculty and community members. Diversity month also included lectures on Gender and Multi-Culturalism, Pride Coffee House and "Intersections of Identity: Indigenous Perspectives." The president sponsored 2 distinguished lectures, one with Maher Arar, Monia Mazigh and Stephen Toope on "Civil Liberties and National

Security,” and a second where Shirin Ebadi (the first Iranian and first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize) spoke about women’s equality in Islam.

Another outcome of the previously mentioned Martlet article concerning the Qur’an was the *Unicornian Faith Based Ritual* (Appendix #13) performed by UVic theatre students. This performance art event took place in front of the McPherson Library and provided a means of raising awareness about religious inclusion. Events such as these engage people who would not normally attend a workshop or event concerning diversity and contribute to an overall climate of inclusion.

In August of 2008, the Victoria Times Colonist published an article about UVic’s gender-neutral washrooms located in 17 buildings around campus. “It’s something that the diversity office has been promoting for about two years,” said Grace Wong Sneddon, UVic’s Diversity Advisor to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic. The gender-neutral washrooms -- those not designated for either sex -- can be used by the transgendered and others with privacy or accessibility concerns, she said.

“Many students are still not that comfortable ‘self-identifying’, but it’s not just for the transgendered students. It’s for students who are a bit more modest, it’s sometimes for people needing a little bit more room.” The concept is also being looked at for change rooms, Wong Sneddon said.⁷

A list of the washrooms is available on the UVic website.

The Minority and Indigenous Women’s Instructor Network (MiWin) met regularly in 2008 and hosted speakers and explored topics like “Teaching Critical Content: Minimizing Resistance, Maximizing Learning.”

The Fall 2008 Human Resources Newsletter promoted *Being There* - a guide “to help those who have a loved one, friend or colleague suffering from mental illness.”

In December 2008, the equity advisor presented a proposal to staff, students and faculty to launch a Positive Space Network (LGBT+) at UVic. The session was well attended and participants agreed to begin the work. The network will be launched in January 2010 in conjunction with the Canadian University Services Queer Conference that UVic Pride will be hosting at that time.

II. Workforce Analysis

Previous reports to the BCHRT describe the ongoing database upgrades that have interrupted the availability of accurate workforce data. At the time of writing this report, EQHR is days away from printing its first fully-automated reports using HRSDC’s EECRS software. A cross-check process with Human Resources has been designed to validate statistics but will also extend the date of the report’s availability and as a result, it will not be included in this report.

New for UVic will be the availability of “flow data” – which will provide valuable information regarding the movement of employees throughout their UVic career. This should enable investigation of issues like the relationship between promotion, salary and designated group membership. For example a local weekly called Monday Magazine published a list of UVic employees earning over \$115,000. Although it is not possible to guarantee gender based on name, an analysis of the list showed 126 people with typical male names, 34 people with typical female names and 28 people with names that could not be categorized. The total number of people listed was 188. There are many possible explanations for this apparent anomaly and flow data should be of assistance in further exploration.

The outgoing Equity Director’s June 2008 Report on Hiring Goals contains a narrative Workforce Analysis that has been included in this report. As mentioned in the introduction, UVic’s primary concern is regarding representation of “visible minorities.”

A conspicuous lack of progress is seen in our representation of members of visible minorities, who remain well below their availability in our workforce. In setting new goals, attention should be paid to strategies needed to achieve them. The Preferential and Limited Hiring guidelines are available and can be justified particularly in those categories where their under-representation is significant, e.g. Middle Managers, where there was a net loss of five visible minority employees over the past five years and their percentage would need to double to reach availability, as it would in EEOGs 03b (Professionals) and 04 (Semi-professional/Technical) as two examples. In faculty ranks, an increase of 30 would be required to match availability in this occupational category.⁸

III. Students

Representation

The Report, from UVic Institutional Analysis entitled *Percentage of Students in Self-Declared Equity Groups by Session, Faculty and by Degree Expected* (Appendix #14), provides an overview of representation at UVic. These are the same statistics provided for last year's BCHRT report so there is no means of analyzing changes from 2007 to 2008. Institutional Analysis will have 2008 numbers available later this year as, like EQHR, database upgrades have compromised their ability to provide up-to-date numbers.

Initiatives and Programming

◆UVic Pride hosted UVic Unity - an Inclusive Youth Leadership Retreat in May 2008. It was a series of interactive presentations and workshops designed to engage youth interested in community activism and advocacy.

◆In 2008, the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies Community-Based Graduate Programs launched its Counselling Psychology for Aboriginal Communities MEd Counselling program (Part-time) (Appendix #15).

In partnership with the Faculty of Education Aboriginal Education Office and community educators, the counselling faculty in the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership studies have been engaged in a collaborative initiative to develop and deliver a graduate counselling program relevant to, and consistent with, many of the values and traditions of Aboriginal communities. The key values and principles that guide the vision of this program acknowledge:

- . The Indigenous paradigm as central
- . The sacred and the spiritual dimension
- . The ancestral dimension
- . Stories, ceremony, culture, language, and communal healing
- . The earth and our relatives
- . The circle
- . The vocation and practice of professional helping

UVIC Grad intends to fight human rights injustices

In November 2008, *The Ring* published an article about Alex Fielding, a law student who graduated that month and headed up the university's International and Human Rights Law Association for a year. Fielding won the David Roberts Prize in Legal Writing for a paper on Constitutional law and freedom of religion. Fielding says, "I think my skills are best used in a courtroom setting, because that decision has more weight than just leaning across the table and trying to convince a government or company to change their practices." Although he is articling with Stikeman Elliott LLP, he would "eventually love to work abroad as a lawyer with the International Criminal Court or the United Nations."
(excerpted from article by David Karp, Nov 2008 Issue of *The Ring*.)

The department offers a Developmental Standard Term Certificate in First Nations Language and Culture (DSTC). This is a ladderred program that allows First Nations language learners and speakers to receive

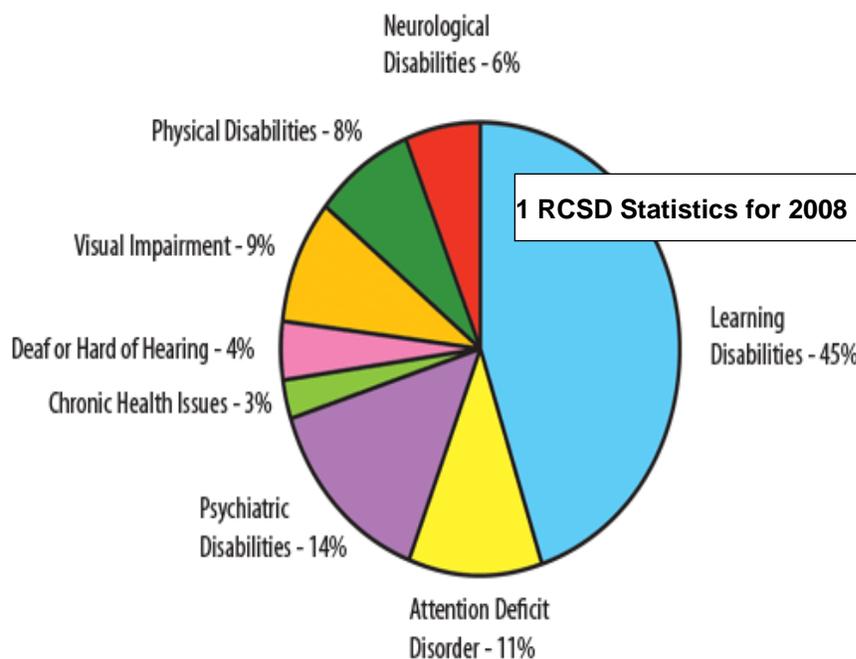
training and the opportunity to teach First Nations languages in schools and communities, and eventually earn a Bachelor of Education degree and a Professional Teaching Certificate.

Currently, the Faculty of Education has one DSTC program pilot project offered in Campbell River for the languages of —Kwak'walla/Liq'walla, and the Coast Salish language of the Klahoose, and Homolco and Sliammon peoples. These students have completed the requirements for the First Nations Language Certificate and the Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization and are working on completing requirements for the DSTC.

◆ **Inclusive Learning: Accommodation Statement for School of Social Work:** In 2008, the School of Social Work released an Accommodation Statement for students stating it, “appreciates that students may require specific academic accommodation,” and then lists specific examples. This is an example of “best practices” that potentially other departments may adopt (Appendix #16).

◆ In February 2008, the Ombudsperson at UVic, Martine Conway, released her report for the previous year. The total number of student cases increased from 391 (2006) to 436 (2007). Cases relating to Accommodation of Disability more than doubled (from 6 in 2006 to 14 in 2007). It is also worth noting that cases related to Employment decreased (from 12 in 2006 to 10 in 2007) (Appendix #17).

◆ UVic's *Resource Centre for Students with a Disability* (RCSd) has grown into a comprehensive service with seven staff including four advisors. Resources available include information about *universal design* which is supported by the diversity advisor and the Learning and Teaching Centre. This is one way instructors are supported in accommodating students. The pie chart below illustrates the wide range of disabilities experienced by the students using the Centre (Appendix #18).



“The RCSd is a division of Student Services at the University of Victoria. In partnership with faculty, staff, and students, we promote educational equity for students with disabilities and support those students in achieving their academic goals. We provide services and coordinate academic accommodations to students. We also act as a resource to faculty and work with the University community to help create a more accessible learning environment.”

We support the principles of Universal Design, which is the process of creating environments that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities and other characteristics. This includes the communication of information. Application of these principles minimizes the need for individual adaptations or accommodations.”⁹

◆ The LE,NONET Project (A Pilot Research Project to Support the Success of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Students) wrapped up at the end of 2008. The Executive Summary (Interim Evaluation Report) (Appendix #19) indicates that between September 2005 and December 2007, 139 students participated in this

project. LE,NONET provided Bursary and Emergency Relief Funds, a Preparation Seminar, Research Apprenticeships, Community Internships, Peer Mentoring and Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training. Seventy-seven percent of students reported that their participation contributed to the development of their sense of self as an Aboriginal person. Seventy-one percent said that LE,NONET contributed to their understanding of Aboriginal culture and traditions.

Efforts are being made to extend the staff and faculty training component and make it available on line. In addition, discussions are underway to explore strategies for continuing the positive work that began with LE,NONET.

IV. Identifying Barriers, Challenges & Constraints

Recruitment and Retention

One issue facing UVic that has an impact on both recruitment and retention is a shortage of adequate child care services both on campus and in the community. This issue is being addressed at many levels. A partnership has been initiated with a community childcare referral service to provide training, equipment and support to residents of UVic family housing so that they can provide in-home child care. In addition, part time childcare will begin to be offered on campus by the existing UVic childcare service beginning in September 2009.

In order to dissolve barriers to employment equity, it was identified at UVic's Management Forum, as well as at the recent Canadian Association of University Teacher's conference, that employers need to move away from one-size-fits-all diversity and equity. By developing a strategic approach to focus specific support toward regions of the university that demonstrate chronic gaps in workforce representation, UVic will make better use of its resources. One way this can be achieved is by utilizing a "community development model" and positioning the equity advisor as a resource and, at the same time, delivering a clear and consistent message to the campus community about the importance of addressing equity issues. By raising awareness, and at the same time providing resources, it will be possible to respond to specific chronic and emerging issues, rather than imposing a vision of equity that may not fit.

Availability of sufficient resources is an issue that is a constant when doing equity work. This arises in many different ways including funding for accommodation. This may affect decisions around hiring people with disabilities and inadequate accommodation affects retention. It was recommended at the Management Forum that UVic develop strategies to lessen gaps between resources and commitments. This priority was also reflected in key recommendations made to CAUT by conference participants. Given the current economic situation, careful thought and planning will be needed in order to maintain our strategic plan commitments to equity in the coming years.

The gap in representation of people of colour at UVic is in many ways a retention issue. Being one in many is, at best, uncomfortable. Increasing the use of preferential and limited hires will make a difference by increasing the overall population of people of colour. At the same time, a review of the climate for racialized peoples at UVic would indicate steps to take to increase retention.

There are barriers facing people who speak English as an additional language. For example, issues have come to EQHR's attention regarding the provision of mandatory training and testing for employees that is limited to the English language and requests from students speaking English as an additional language for additional time to complete exams.

With a focus to increase recruitment of international students and narrow the gap in workforce representation of "visible minorities", it would make sense for UVic to initiate a review of key website information.

Silos of Equity

The evolution of equity in the academic sector is arriving at a new threshold. At a recent conference hosted by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), it quickly became clear that across Canada most universities are recognizing the need to decompartmentalize equity.

Equity has evolved since the Employment Equity Act was first written and one of the most important aspects of that evolution is the recognition of intersectionalities. Equity is about people and each person is an individual with a unique and complex identity and multiple roles. At UVic it will be important in the coming years to cultivate a version of equity that supports partnership, mutual support, solidarity and empowerment.

Having Difficult Conversations

Addressing issues of discrimination and marginalization is never easy. One of the most elusive barriers to employment equity is the inability to have the difficult conversations about barriers with the people that face them. If UVic can continue to work from the top down to make the campus a place where all voices are heard, where defensive responses are exchanged for respectful curiosity and meaningful information sharing, then it will have made one of the most important steps toward its goals for equity and diversity.

ENDNOTES

¹ Magassa, Moussa: *Creating Inclusive, Respectful and Welcoming Work and Study Environments*. The UVic Human Rights Educator's Work Plan 2008 to 2009. p3.

² UVic Brand Guidelines ©University of Victoria 2008. p5.

³ UVic Strategic Plan *A Vision for the Future – Building on Strength* ©University of Victoria 2007. p.14.

⁴ Magassa, Moussa. op.cit. p2.

⁵ Excerpted from Learning and Teaching Centre listing - <http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/events/2008/June.php>

⁶ Excerpted from CanAssist website: <http://www.canassist.ca/about-us>

⁷ Excerpted from "Gender-neutral washrooms installed at UVic" by Jeff Bell. Sat Aug 30, 2008 Times Colonist.

⁸ Sproule-Jones, Linda: Report on Progress, University Hiring Goals 2003-2008. p3.

⁹ Excerpted from RCSD website: <http://rcsd.uvic.ca/about.html>