

## A message from Dr. Janet Morrison



### Our steadfast commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

January 29, 2021

Dear Sheridan community,

Just over six months ago, Sheridan made six commitments to respond to anti-Black racism and advance our efforts to create an inclusive environment where everyone can bring their full potential and experiences -- knowing their unique contributions are valued. Inclusion and equity is a core enabler of Sheridan's 2024 Strategic Plan -- which articulates our community's collective vision and action plan for transforming higher education.

I am writing today to share a progress update on those commitments, and to reaffirm our unwavering stance that diversity fuels excellence.

**1. We will ensure every employee at Sheridan receives unconscious bias, anti-oppression and anti-racism training. We are committed to examining barriers in our culture, policies, practices, curriculum, pedagogy, and interpersonal relationships**

Our online mandatory training course, *Foundations of Equitable Practice* (Human Rights 101, Unconscious Bias, and Anti-Oppression & Anti-Racism) was launched in August 2020. By the end of 2020, 72% of employees had completed the training.

In 2020, the Centre for Equity and Inclusion conducted an Equity Assessment of the Bachelor of Film and Television Program, due to specific equity concerns that had been raised in that area. Equity assessments are information-gathering exercises (not investigations or disciplinary processes) that identify organizational issues from an equity and inclusion lens and develop recommendations for positive change. The Centre for Equity and Inclusion issued a report that identified key themes / concerns and made recommendations for positive change.

As a further part of our effort to examine barriers, an Equity Assessment was undertaken in the Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design. Approximately 400 voices from current students, former students, staff members, faculty members, and individuals who previously attended a show at FAAD contributed to the process through an online survey. Another 48 follow-up interviews took place with students, staff, faculty, and members of the Faculty administration. The now completed report identified areas for improvement relating to culture and lack of diversity. Its recommendations to address any inequitable practices and dynamics, diversify the work and learning environments, and improve standardized processes are being reviewed and prioritized.

**2. Over the next two academic years, in the Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design, we will hire six professors who self-identify as Black or Indigenous. We will disrupt our normal hiring processes, which are built on a legacy of racial bias that must be upended.**

The Faculty has implemented recruitment processes for two full-time faculty positions within the Honours Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance program; both under the auspices of a "special program" framework to attract Black and Indigenous faculty. One of these recruitments is completed and the second is well underway.

**3. To facilitate access to our programming, we will launch a scholarship program to promote the recruitment and enrolment of Black and Indigenous applicants.**

Across Sheridan in the fall 2020 term, 513 students benefitted for the first time from a new bursary for Black students. One hundred and fifty (150) students in most need received \$1,500 each, 67 students received \$1,000 each, and the remaining 296 students received a bursary in the amount of \$250. Altogether, a total of \$366,000 was distributed.

**4. We will work with our community partners to facilitate skill and interest development related to our disciplinary strengths such as engineering, music theatre, and animation at the primary school level, regardless of economic status or race.**

Sheridan has formed partnerships with a number of youth-serving organizations in our community including Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel, Black Boys Code, Eclipse Youth Centre, and Black Mentorship Inc. to empower youth to reach their full potential through education. Our institutional strategy to give-back to our local communities, with a focus on facilitating access and sightline to post-secondary education for underrepresented youth, has been formalized. Through the inspiration stage of our institutional Open Innovation Challenge and ongoing relationship building with community partners, Sheridan has been reaching out to engage local youth voices to understand their perspectives on access to higher education and build connections for future partnership opportunities.

**5. Sheridan's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council -- which includes faculty, staff and student members who identify as BIPOC and racialized -- will continue to inform Sheridan's future actions and assess the efficacy of our change agenda. Their perspectives are fundamental to creating meaningful change.**

The membership and terms of reference of the EDI Advisory Council were reviewed this fall to better reflect the diverse perspectives of the Sheridan community. The EDI Council has met regularly since its inception with the last meeting having taken place in November 2020.

**6. We will continue to report our progress to our Board of Governors (whose meeting minutes are public) on a quarterly basis.**

Sheridan's Vice President, Inclusive Communities -- Dr. Jane Ngobia presented to the Board on October 7, 2020 and will continue to report on a quarterly basis.

Last July, Sheridan also became a signatory to the Black North Initiative, whose tenets echoed many of the commitments above. In December we joined Industry Canada's 50-30 challenge which calls on organizations to diversify the members of their boards and senior management positions to achieve gender parity -- or 50% representation - and to attain significant representation -- 30% - of other under-represented groups, including racialized persons, people living with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), and members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I am pleased to report that we have reached these targets on both our President and Vice Presidents Committee (PVP) and our Board of Governors.

I am tremendously proud to lead at Sheridan, surrounded by colleagues who care. We will continue to embrace the rich diversity of Sheridan's community to foster a strong sense of connection and demonstrate respect for people's rights to belong and have equal access to opportunity.

As this work is a shared responsibility, please: actively embed inclusion and equity into your spheres of influence. Together, we will ensure that dignity, individualization, integration and full participation are valued and respected across Sheridan.

Sincerely,

Janet Morrison, PhD  
President and Vice Chancellor

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