

**Algoma University  
Strategic Plan for Research  
Short Version**

**Preamble**

Since 2008, when the provincial legislature granted Algoma University (AU) status as an independent institution, we have made significant progress in growing a culture of research and empowering our researchers with the resources to explore questions focused within four research themes or 'clusters'. The overarching goal of this Strategic Plan is to leverage our unique location in Northern Ontario to generate multidisciplinary and innovative research of value to Canada and to global communities who experience similar challenges and opportunities. At Algoma, our historical and living connections to regional Anishinaabe people and peoples<sup>1</sup> and other Indigenous communities are foundational to all of our activities.

This Research Plan is linked to the legacy of the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School located on campus, and to the cultural and geographical history of a region that includes traditional lands of several First Nations communities. The University accomplishes this special mission through its partnership with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, an independent Anishinaabe post-secondary institution developed by the Shingwauk Education Trust. The Shingwauk Education Trust was founded based on a vision of the Ojibway Chief Shingwauk, to create a "Teaching Wigwam" with an overall goal of providing culture-based education and research opportunities to students. Recognizing that research related to Anishinaabe and Indigenous communities, cultures, and contexts has implications for all areas of scholarship, Algoma University has made the strategic decision to identify this cluster as a priority area. The University acknowledges a special responsibility in terms of supporting Anishinaabe communities in their self-determination initiatives, in creating meaningful opportunities for knowledge exchange, and for enhancing our collective understanding of different ways of being and knowing the world. The other three clusters described in this plan, **'Cultures and Creativity'**, **'Life and the Environment'**, and **'Socio-economic Issues of Northern, Rural, and Remote Areas'** are linked to the core cluster of **'Anishinaabe and Indigenous communities'** and form part of the fabric of our regional heritage and landscape within Northern Ontario, Canada and the world. The concept of 'northern, rural and remote' resonates with many circumboreal world cultures that share a rich heritage embodied within indigenous peoples globally.

Although the charter of Algoma University currently states that we are an undergraduate teaching institution, without graduate level programming, researchers at AU have leveraged partnerships with other provincial institutions to create a system of shared supervision of graduate students who enroll elsewhere, but are co-

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<sup>1</sup> Anishinaabe being the Ojibway word for Aboriginal – that is, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis in Canada – and Indigenous people.

supervised by faculty at AU. Given our success in attracting research funding since 2008, we intend to pursue graduate programming in the future, while maintaining our firm commitment to training undergraduate students in research skills of value in securing high-paying jobs post graduation.

### **Achievements**

AU has garnered \$1.37M in Tri-Council funding over the past seven years. Since 2012, AU has earned both a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair and a Tier 1 Special Allocation Chair. With regards to infrastructure, AU secured \$16M in funding from the Knowledge Infrastructure Fund (KIP) and additional funding from NOHFC and FEDNOR, to construct research laboratories and an animal care facility, housed in the new Essar Convergence Centre. AU has invested a total of circa \$1.6M in combined CFI-LOF funding, provincial ORF-RI matching funding and cash and in-kind contribution from AU to support the research efforts of faculty, Research Chairs and three research institutes.

In 2015, AU prepared an updated version of our institutional Strategic Plan for Research (SPR) that reflects recent progress and goals for the future. The major objectives of Algoma University's Strategic Plan for Research are to:

- Contribute to the resilience and cultural restoration of First Nation communities;
- Strengthen research training for our undergraduate student population;
- Facilitate increased publication of scholarly works in high impact journals;
- Enrich the faculty research experience through adjunct professorships, research clusters involving outside experts, and revamped institutional policies;
- Across clusters, grow our percentage of Tri-Council funded faculty and CRCs;
- Accelerate economic development of our region, and the national 'innovation ecosystem', through commercialization of research, where feasible; and,
- Cultivate partnerships to support applied research of regional economic benefit.

### **Major Strategic Research Directions (Clusters)**

#### *Cluster 1: Anishinaabe and Indigenous Communities*

The University is a unique institution, physically located on the site of the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School. As noted in the Preamble, AU has adopted a special mission, entrenched in the University Charter, for teaching and research in relation to Anishinaabe peoples. The University and its partners are committed to research that develops and disseminates knowledge in **core areas of relevance to indigenous communities and to all Canadians, including:** health and wellness; traditional knowledge; indigenous methodologies; decolonization; archival studies; epistemologies and pedagogy; history and philosophy; culture, language, literature, music, and visual arts; governance and law; and, land use.

Between 2010 and 2015, the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre and faculty members attracted over one million dollars in research funding. The University is dedicated to the study of Residential Schools, with a particular focus on resilience and reconciliation. In its Declaration of Partnership with the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association, AU pledged “to use the site as a vehicle for education about residential schools” and “to make the history and legacy of Residential Schools and the promotion of the Sharing, Healing and Learning Vision a central, identifying characteristic of Algoma University.”

Since 1979 Algoma University has operated the unique, internationally renowned Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (originally the ‘Shingwauk Project’), a research, education, archive, and community service initiative with a research mandate related to the history and legacy of Indian Residential Schools and their wider colonial and international contexts. In 2010, the Centre became the repository for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation’s project and research records, making Algoma University the destination for research on community-based healing initiatives.

Cluster 1 goals include attracting new funding to undertake research into resilience and reconciliation, providing support to increase scholarly publications, and promoting and funding interdisciplinary projects that will impact Anishinaabe economic self-determination.

### *Cluster 2: Cultures and Creativity*

Situated in the District of Algoma, a place of inspiration for Canadian artists, and a traditional meeting place for Anishinaabe peoples, Algoma University researchers build upon the rich history and cultures of the area and work to connect the local community with international cultural networks. Researchers in this cluster are committed to exploring new and innovative methods of inquiry that extend the traditional foundations of their disciplines. Research foci include: literature, philosophy, and the histories of peoples and ideas; Indigenous and Anishinaabe ways of knowing and language; theories and practices of studio art production and exhibition; music composition, recording, and performance; and advancing business processes through organizational culture and workforce diversity.

Algoma researchers employ both traditional methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches to advance knowledge in gender, class, race, politics, power, space, place, identity, narrative, language, culture, community, and nationality as well as other aspects of the human experience. Research in this cluster includes collaboration and partnerships across disciplines and within the regional community. For example, in Digital Humanities, researchers create online archives and develop information management systems. Faculty partners with the Algoma Conservatory of Music, the Art Gallery of Algoma and local museums to present innovative performances and exhibitions. Archival research, philosophy, creative interaction, and production represent interconnected threads within this cluster and support the study of culture and community. Access to the rich archives of Algoma University and the Shingwauk

Residential Schools Centre provide faculty, visiting scholars, and student researchers with a research experience relevant to all Canadians.

Faculty working in this cluster has brought in approximately \$380,000 in external funding since 2008.

### *Cluster 3: Life and the Environment*

Algoma University is situated at the hub of the upper three Great Lakes, the largest global freshwater ecosystem, and is in proximity to vast aquatic/terrestrial habitats, including wetlands and boreal biomes. The University leveraged its geographic location and the proximity of federal and provincial government laboratories to build a research cluster in the study of the natural environment and life sciences. Multidisciplinary research efforts in this cluster have created collaborations with psychologists, geographers, computer scientists, and local private sector businesses that focus on the environment.

Strengths in this cluster include: molecular genetics; ecosystems services, competition and biodiversity (NSERC funded); Research in soil and plant-microbial interactions (NSERC funded); Plant biology and biochemistry (externally funded Chair – NOHFC); ecology and behavioural avian biology, (NSERC funded); Invasive species (MNR & CRC Tier 2 Chair); and, aquatic and fisheries biology. In the period 2010 to 2015, faculty in this cluster has brought in over \$4.6M in external funding and has published 57 scholarly works. AU supports a Chair in Natural Products Chemistry, funded by NOHFC, and a CRC (Tier II) in Invasive Species Biology. This cluster aims to increase numbers of international partnerships/post doctoral fellows and CRCs, seek approval for a graduate studies program, and participate in multidisciplinary projects with other clusters.

### *Cluster 4: Socio-economic Issues of Northern, Rural, and Remote Areas*

Canadians living outside of Northern Ontario often identify 'rural and remote' communities as 'peripheral'. Both geographically and economically, many northern communities have experienced recent economic declines. Researchers in this cluster are motivated to understand structural impediments to growth in rural/remote areas, and also to propose responsible, holistic solutions to these economic and social challenges. The nature of research in this cluster is inherently multidisciplinary, and an array of research methodologies and research partnerships are needed to appropriately investigate relevant questions. Research into the causes and consequences of poor/limited infrastructure, demographic factors, or over-reliance on natural resource-based industries (e.g., mining, forestry, pulp and paper production, etc.) is of immense value in understanding and proposing solutions for northern societies.

Consortia of community partners, stakeholders, and Indigenous and Anishinaabe peoples investigate local and international policy, planning practices and

transformations. AU researchers have studied pollution, single-industry communities, public transportation, tourism, health and well-being, food security and the role of Health informatics. The NORDIK institute of Algoma University (Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge), incorporated in 2007, is an integral contributor to this cluster, securing over \$2.7M in external funding since its inception. Additional key contributors in this cluster are the researchers focused on management and economics, which include a variety of areas of interest that focus on sustainable business practice. Goals of this cluster include increased SSHRC support for research that benefits and revitalizes rural and remote communities, leveraging partnerships with Anishinaabe community researchers to address goals of Cluster 1, and undertaking projects to provide uniquely 'northern' economic and social solutions.

**Approved by Algoma University Senate: October 2, 2015**