

Introduction

Within the One Basin CRC organisational environment, 'cultural load' refers to the additional pressures and responsibilities placed on First Nations employees due to their cultural background, often resulting in the need to navigate and reconcile different cultural expectations, roles, and obligations. This strategy aims to create a supportive and inclusive workplace that recognises, respects, and alleviates the cultural load on First Nations employees.

Leadership commitment and cultural competency

1. **Executive support:** Ensure that senior executives actively support initiatives to reduce cultural load, demonstrating a commitment to creating an inclusive workplace. This includes championing a Reconciliation Action Plan, as well as setting clear expectations for managers to support First Nations employees and integrate cultural considerations into business practices.
2. **Cultural competency training:** Implement mandatory cultural competency training for all employees, particularly those in leadership and management roles. This training should cover the history, cultures, and contemporary issues facing First Nations peoples, as well as the concept of cultural load and its impact on employees.
3. **Cultural champions:** Identify and empower cultural champions within the organisation who can advocate for First Nations employees, provide support, and help bridge cultural gaps between the corporate structure and ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Inclusive policies and practices

1. **Cultural leave policy:** Develop and implement a cultural leave policy that allows First Nations employees to take leave for cultural obligations, ceremonies, and other important family or community events. This policy should be flexible and acknowledge the unique cultural responsibilities of First Nations peoples.
2. **Flexible work arrangements:** Offer flexible work arrangements, such as remote work, flexible hours, or part-time options, to accommodate the cultural and community responsibilities of First Nations employees. This flexibility can help employees manage their work-life balance without feeling overburdened.
3. **Mentoring and support networks:** Establish mentoring programs and support networks specifically for First Nations employees. These programs should

connect employees with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors who can offer guidance, career development advice, and cultural support.

4. **Cultural load assessments:** Incorporate cultural load assessments into employee wellbeing programs. Regular check-ins and surveys can help identify employees who may be experiencing cultural load, allowing the organisation to offer targeted support and resources.

Recognition and valuation of cultural contributions

1. **Acknowledgment of cultural expertise:** Recognise and value the cultural knowledge and expertise that First Nations employees bring to the organisation. This includes acknowledging their role in advising on cultural matters, contributing to diversity initiatives, and representing the organisation in Indigenous communities.
2. **Compensation for cultural work:** Where First Nations employees are asked to contribute to cultural activities, such as advising on cultural protocols, participating in Indigenous engagement strategies, or leading cultural events, ensure they are compensated for this additional work. This recognises their cultural contributions as a valuable aspect of their role.
3. **Cultural consultation and decision-making:** Involve First Nations employees in decision-making processes that impact Indigenous communities or relate to Indigenous matters within the organisation. Ensure that their voices are heard and respected, and that their contributions are acknowledged in corporate outcomes.

Reducing isolation and promoting inclusion

1. **First Nations employee support groups:** Establish First Nations Employee Support Groups, where Indigenous employees can connect, share experiences, and provide mutual support. These groups can also serve as advisory bodies to the organisation on Indigenous matters.
2. **Inclusive corporate culture:** Foster an inclusive corporate culture where all employees feel respected and valued. This includes celebrating Indigenous cultures, such as through National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, and other significant cultural events, and ensuring these are integrated into the corporate calendar.
3. **Zero tolerance for discrimination:** Implement a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, racism, or cultural insensitivity. Ensure that any incidents are addressed promptly and effectively, with clear consequences for those who violate the policy.

Career development and progression

1. **Pathways to leadership:** Create clear pathways to leadership roles for First Nations employees, offering targeted leadership development programs, coaching, and succession planning. Ensure that First Nations employees have equal access to opportunities for career progression.
2. **Professional development opportunities:** Provide professional development opportunities that are tailored to the needs and aspirations of First Nations employees. This could include access to education, training, and certification programs that align with both their cultural and professional goals.
3. **Recognition and awards programs:** Introduce recognition and awards programs that specifically acknowledge the contributions of First Nations employees, both in terms of their professional achievements and their cultural leadership within the organisation.

Monitoring and accountability

1. **Regular reporting:** Establish regular reporting mechanisms to monitor the implementation of this strategy and its effectiveness in reducing cultural load on First Nations employees. Reports should include feedback from Indigenous employees and track key metrics related to their wellbeing and career progression.
2. **Cultural load audits:** Conduct periodic cultural load audits to assess the impact of corporate policies and practices on First Nations employees. Use the findings to make necessary adjustments to the strategy and address any emerging issues.
3. **Accountability structures:** Incorporate accountability structures that hold managers and leaders responsible for supporting First Nations employees and reducing cultural load. This could include incorporating cultural competency and support for Indigenous employees into performance reviews and organisational KPIs.

Continuous improvement and adaptation

1. **Feedback loops:** Create feedback loops where First Nations employees can share their experiences and suggest improvements to the strategy. Ensure feedback is acted upon and that they are kept informed of any changes made as a result.

2. **Ongoing adaptation:** Commit to regularly reviewing and updating the strategy based on feedback, emerging best practices, and changes in the organisational or cultural landscape.