

Annual Report 2024-2025

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ)

Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo

The University of Waterloo in its Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is committed to strengthening sustainable and diverse communities, facilitating a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusivity for all, and promoting and supporting Indigenous Relations, Anti-Racism, and other EDI initiatives aimed at transformative culture change, disrupting oppressive systems, dismantling institutional barriers, and embed equity-oriented principles in policies, processes, environments, and experiences on campus. The Faculty of Environment's current Strategic Plan was developed concurrently with the UW plan and is fully integrated with it that has a specific focus on the 'Ethos of Caring' as our guiding principle and value to achieve equity, diversity, inclusion and justice. Further work at the University level has led us into building more resilient and supportive environments through long-term goals such as [Global Futures](#) and [Waterloo at 100](#). The recent formulation of the institution's [Values](#) that encourage us to *Thinking Differently, Acting with Purpose, and Working Together* are in direct synergy with the core motivations to engage in the work around EDIJ.

In its third year, the office of the Associate Dean, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ) continued to deliver on the two main goals behind its creation: spearheading the EDIJ work within Environment and linking the Faculty with EDIJ initiatives, programs and activities across the campus. Synopsis of the work undertaken by AD EDIJ office are outlined below.

EDIJ WORK WITHIN ENVIRONMENT

Environment Community Gatherings: The first Environment Community Gathering was organised in July 2023, primarily as a response to the June 2023 Hagey Hall experience but also as part of our longstanding commitment to an ethos of caring and community building. Organised by the Environment AD EDIJ office, the Dean announced at this event that the Faculty of Environment will organise one Community Gathering during each academic term of the year. Since that time, we have continued to organise an Environment Community Gathering every term and there is an expressed commitment to continue this tradition into the future. The Environment EDIJ office organised a number of community gatherings during the year that were marked by strong participation by staff, faculty, students and other members of our community. The smooth organisation of all our EDIJ community events was possible through the dedicated work of over 50 students and early career researchers as volunteers. Our special thanks and appreciations to all Environment EDIJ volunteers!

Faculty of Environment EDIJ Day: In the 2023 annual EDIJ report to the Environment Council it was reported that starting in Fall 2024, the Third Thursday of September every year will be celebrated as the Faculty of Environment EDIJ Day. Through subsequent discussions and necessary approvals, the AD EDIJ office organised the first ever Environment EDIJ Day on the 19 September 2024. It took place in the Environment EDIJ Commons - The Environment Greens, which was attended by over 350 community members. It was an opportunity to welcome our newest members of the environment and it acted as a space for all Environment student bodies to set up their stands as a platform for wider interactions. The purpose of the Environment EDIJ Day is important as the Day signifies our diversity and inclusivity by creating one platform for cultures, communities, identities and histories to coexist as a collective and highlights our approach in bringing people, ideas and actions together to meaningfully engage and collaborate.

Environment EDIJ Commons: In our 2023 annual report we informed the community about EDIJ Commons initiative which made important progress during the current reporting period. Under this initiative, Environment has already designated the Environment Greens and the EV3 Living Wall as EDIJ Commons. These places and spaces are increasingly being available to the Environment community to engage in collective expressions related to EDIJ through creative means. For example, all our EDIJ community gatherings take place in the EDIJ Commons. In being so, the EDIJ Commons reflect the ways in which Environment cares, nurtures and values equity, diversity, inclusion and justice. As has already been communicated in our earlier reports, *‘these commons are intensely meaningful in our day-to-day functioning as they stand to be multidimensional, inclusive of the diversity of ideas, orientations, beliefs, cultures, values, and practices, and respectful of the complex realities of history, current and future.’* There are plans to put up descriptive and artistic plaques at each of the Environment EDIJ Commons.

Major Annual Commemorations: As part of Environment’s commitment toward a more inclusive future and nurturing diversity, several significant annual occasions were commemorated through exchange of messages from the Dean’s office as well as by joining the campus community in observing centrally organised events (e.g., February Black History Month, June Pride Month, etc.).

Rekhi-Environment Initiative on the Science of Happiness and Wellbeing: The AD EDIJ continued to support and invest significantly in the Rekhi-Environment Initiative on the Science of Happiness and Wellbeing. EDIJ connections to this initiative is straightforward: both happiness and wellbeing are integral to the notions of equity, diversity, inclusion and justice. There is much to learn from how happiness and wellbeing intersect with the work on community building, collective engagement, inclusion and cohesion. Further, the connections with this initiative is also based on a decade long relationship of the AD EDIJ with the Rekhi Foundation for the Science of Happiness. These connections culminated in stronger institutional relationships by way of signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2024 between the Waterloo Faculty of Environment and the Rekhi Foundation for the Science of Happiness, and the latter’s friendship gift of \$200K USD as a donation to further Happiness, Wellbeing and the associated EDIJ initiatives within the Faculty of Environment. It is expected that several creative activities involving our students, staff and faculty members will spring from this gift funds in the ensuing months. For example, SERS supported the development and piloting of a course focusing on the Science of Happiness as part of this initiative. Much to expect and more to come from this initiative!

Guidance and Advice on EDIJ related matters: EDIJ is an evolving topic and there were several occasions when the Environment EDIJ office was asked to provide helpful guidance and advice. Some of those include:

- ***On the request of unit head, the EDIJ office developed brief guidelines for use by the self-study groups in creating their cyclical review reports.*** This included key definitions, guiding principles and questions as a helpful template. For example, the following questions were developed as a guide to report about equity, diversity and inclusion related progress and concerns in the self study reports: (1) What does EDIJ mean in the context of the program you are responsible for? (2) What are the key elements that signify the presence of absence of EDIJ in the program? (3) What have been the main progress / achievements on the EDIJ front within the program structure, functions, operationalization, and normatively? (4) What measures and safeguards are in place to ensure that EDIJ principles are key considerations and are embedded across all levels / aspects of the program? (5) What are some of the EDI related concerns and areas of attention within the program? What advice might be helpful in setting future directions?
- ***The AD EDIJ office provided ongoing guidance and support to various recruitment processes within the Faculty of Environment.*** This included two different SSHRC/NSERC Tier 1 CRCs, both

of which were targeted towards women and gender minorities. For one of these two searches, the Associate Dean EDIJ acted as Equity Champion on the FACA whose role was to ensure EDI is considered in all aspects of the committee's work. For the second CRC search, the EDIJ office provided timely guidance on inclusive hiring processes. Similarly, there were several occasions, involving DACA, SACA and FACA, when the AD EDIJ office was contacted for support and advice on matters pertaining to equitable recruitment and selection to which appropriate responses were made.

- ***The AD EDIJ office remained a crucial point of contact by equity seeking members of the Faculty of Environment for advice, support and possible resolution.*** Shrouded with ethics of confidentiality, this work remained an active part of the roles and responsibilities of the AD EDIJ. Many of these interactions, consultations and contacts provided meaningful learning and insights for possible directions our work on EDIJ could take. These experiences also underscored the importance of humility, sensitivity and collegiality in how we engage in the work of EDIJ.
- ***The AD EDIJ was a member of the Environment Accessible Education Working Group*** that prioritizes accessibility needs and practices within the Faculty and also supports the ongoing work of the University level Accessible Education Program and Practices Committee. At least one meeting held each term.

Monthly EDIJ update meetings with the Environment Dean continued during the reporting period. A presentation, encompassing all EDIJ Initiatives and future directions, was made to the Dean.

CONNECTING WITH PAN-UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES

In addition to the work within the Faculty of Environment, the AD EDIJ office actively collaborated with several units and participated in initiatives across the UW campus, which are listed as following:

- **Research Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Council** aims to build research equity and inclusion and promoting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous Initiatives (EDII) across the research enterprise. As a council member, the AD EDIJ continued supporting the REDI Council, attended meetings every term and contributed to the discussions and decisions.
- **Faculty Indigenous, EDI-R, & Social Justice Connection** is a cross-faculty initiative to work together on matters pertaining to equity, diversity, inclusion, Justice, Anti-Racism and Indigenization. Monthly meetings are held.
- **EDI-R Community of Practice (CoP)** highlights the need for supporting the ongoing work on equity and anti-racism efforts across the multiple faculties on campus. As reported earlier, this Community of Practice offers a collaborative platform to engage, interact and learn from each other. The AD EDIJ made a presentation entitled 'Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice Initiatives in Environment: An Initial Approach' to the EDI-R CoP.
- **Program Area Lead (PAL)** program facilitates capacity building that can enable culture change through a dedicated focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. The monthly meetings are chaired by the AVP EDI-R and discussions are oriented towards transformational change.
- **EDI-R Case Studies Project** was successfully completed.
