

# Annual Report 2022

## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ) Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo

The Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ) is a brand-new portfolio within the Faculty of Environment that came into existence on May 1, 2022. The overall goal of the AD-EDIJ office is to connect the Faculty of Environment to various pan-university initiatives as well as lead and support EDIJ initiatives within Environment. Two specific objectives have been guiding the work of this office: (1) To help build an understanding, process and culture of EDIJ in the Faculty of Environment. (2) Liaise with the EDIJ focused offices at the UW Central in order to support, amplify and translate, as necessary, the key recommendations and communications for the Faculty of Environment.

During this first reporting period (May – December 2022) the EDIJ work was mainly consultative and formative. Much of the efforts were dedicated to finalising the scope and priorities of the portfolio, and putting in place key connections within Environment and across the campus.

### DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING, PROCESS AND CULTURE OF EDIJ

#### Consultation, Consolidation and Action

The work on EDIJ has followed a three-pronged approach consisting of Consultations, Consolidation and Actions to create a process and culture of EDIJ within Environment. A first round of consultations with representatives from various academic and administrative units, student associations and other individuals have already been completed. Further consultation is ongoing. The outcomes of these initial consultations have been consolidated and a few action items (reported below as EDIJ Initiatives) have been determined. Through the consultations, it is encouraging to learn that there are several EDIJ related initiatives currently in process across all units in our Faculty (please refer to the unit specific reports for details). These activities provide a strong foundation for the work on developing EDIJ process and culture.

The ongoing consultations have revealed that equity, diversity, inclusion and justice considerations rest within three interrelated domains: Functional, Structural and Normative. **Functions** are situated within the practice and the operational realities of our Faculty. These are the everyday actions that we take and the activities we do. They also pertain to how we handle problems and opportunities, how we engage in day-to-day interactions, transactions, negotiations and collaborations within and amongst ourselves. **Structural** aspects characterise our Faculty's physical disposition. It relates to the objects, the spaces, the entities we navigate in our everyday work. They constitute the material, the tangible and the perceivable aspects of our existence, our identity. The **normative** layer is important. These are the core values, the principles and the norms that define us and motivates us to work. The normative elements are non-compromisable and non-negotiable, offer consistency to our work on EDIJ and make them process-oriented.

## **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice Initiatives: An Initial Approach**

While the work on consultation, consolidation and action on the EDIJ process and culture will continue, there are some initiatives or actions in the interim that have become evident. These initiatives are not only intended to support and complement the consultation, consolidation and action processes pertaining to EDIJ but are the actions themselves, now and in the future. Below are a few EDIJ initiatives that have been conceptualised through the process of initial consultations and are at varying levels of implementation.

- **EDIJ Common Grounds**

EDIJ Common Grounds is about making the consultation process broad-based. It is focused on developing collective and shared understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion and justice. Under the EDIJ Common Grounds initiative, the ongoing consultations will continue to include more members of the Environment and it highlights the need to talk to more people and connect with them in order to get a comprehensive understanding of what EDIJ means to us as a community. In order to successfully do this, the plan is to ask a few questions to get the perspectives of each one of us, see what the answers are and in what ways those can support Environment's work on EDIJ. The areas of questions would include: (1) What do we mean by each of these terms - equity, diversity, Inclusion, justice, within the context of our work? (2) What are our strengths and areas of improvement in the EDIJ space? (3) What each one can do to create a process and culture of EDIJ within Environment? (4) Who and what others can do to create a process and culture of EDIJ within Environment? These questions will form part of the grassroots consultation process and not intended to be a formal survey. EDIJ Common Grounds initiative will address the need to find collective answers to a set of core questions about creating a process and a culture of EDIJ in Environment.

- **EDIJ Conversations**

EDIJ Conversations are a good way to promote the spirit of interaction, dialogue and sharing within the Environment community. These conversations are intended to be a series of discussions, forums, talks, deliberations, workshops focusing on the structural, functional and normative dispositions as they relate to equity, diversity, inclusion and justice considerations. They will also support the development of an inclusive understanding of our teaching, research, administrative, management and service commitments by bringing together students, staff, faculty and other members of Environment into a discursive process.

- **EDIJ Spaces**

EDIJ Spaces are visualised as both physical and metaphysical entities that situate us in the reality of things. They are meant to provide us with guidance, directions and creative energy to navigate through the dualism of material-nonmaterial, tangible-intangible, visible-invisible, real-abstract, spiritual-mechanical, and formal-informal dimensions of our being. These are places that reflect the ways in which we care, nurture and value EDIJ. It is a place to fall back on or take recourse to when the urge to reflect, introspect, connect and reconnect overpowers our imagination. In simple terms, EDIJ Spaces offer the opportunity to either be one's own-self or mingle with the 'WE' (e.g., the community) or engage as both. In overlapping situations of being happy, sad, confused, and dealing with negative challenges, both professionally and personally, one has the

option of retiring to the EDIJ Spaces in search of new meaning, positive energy and strengths to respond and revitalise. So, these Spaces are intensely meaningful in our day-to-day functioning. They are multidimensional, inclusive of the diversity of ideas, orientations, beliefs, and respectful of the complex realities of history, current and future.

- **EDIJ Knowledge and Information**

This initiative pertains to the sharing and reporting of EDIJ Knowledge and Information through existing and new channels. On the information front, this will mean compiling formal institutional information. For example, policies that pertain to EDIJ in relation to teaching, research, service, recruitment and other areas of our activities so that it can be readily available for use by everyone (i.e., student, staff, faculty and others including collaborators, guests, etc.). Initial compilation work has started mainly focusing on the resources available through the Office of Human Rights, Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism, Office of Indigenous Relations, Office of Conflict Management and Human Rights, The President's Anti-racism Taskforce, Center for Teaching Excellence, Canadian Tri-Agency Research Councils, Canada Research Chairs Program and several others.

This initiative underscores the important role of knowledge and ideas in ensuring EDIJ processes and culture within Environment. An assessment of what exists in terms of knowledge and ideas, and what can we contribute to the co-creation of new knowledge through our research, teaching, actions, activities is necessary. In that sense, EDIJ engagements with knowledge and ideas is a two-way process. Similar to the plans for information sharing, the compilation and collaborative creation of knowledge relevant to the EDIJ processes within Environment is essential (e.g., EDIJ Glossary as a living reference).

Reporting on EDIJ is a critical area requiring attention. EDIJ influenced reporting encourages us to reflect on both success and failure as sources of social learning and building adaptive capacity for future challenges. As much as we need new mechanisms for reporting on EDIJ in our work, the opportunity to use some of our existing tools for reporting EDIJ matters is immense (e.g., progress, performance and evaluation reports across all levels and activities).

- **EDIJ Friendships**

Strong relationships, interactions and connections are key elements of building robust processes and cultures, and this is certainly true for EDIJ. The EDIJ Friendships initiative will promote collaborations and a culture of working together as part of Environment's commitment to an ethos of caring. While some elements of this initiative will be similar to a mentorship program, overall, the EDIJ Friendships initiative will be more comprehensive, holistic and horizontal, and less hierarchical and unidirectional. This initiative will address the questions about: (1) how can we build long drawn friendships in the areas of our work within Environment, e.g., teaching, research, actions? (2) how do we collaborate and engage in orientations of new students, staff and faculty members? (3) what measures are effective to build and sustain strong relationships and collaborative spirit within the members of the Environment community?

- **EDIJ Teamwork and Volunteers**

Accomplishing a process and culture of EDIJ in Environment is not the job of one person. It is not also the work of an administrative committee or an unit. The EDIJ Teamwork and Volunteers

initiative aims at making equity, diversity, inclusion and justice everyone's responsibility. It highlights the importance of self-motivated participation, collaborative work and responsibility sharing as the cornerstone of EDIJ work. Relying on volunteers, this initiative will facilitate work teams, working groups, task forces to accomplish EDIJ goals of the Faculty of Environment.

## CONNECTING WITH PAN-UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES

The AD EDIJ has been actively participating in the following initiatives and programs across the UW campus:

- **Program Area Lead (PALs - PHASE I)** focuses on building an educational environment that allows every individual to reach their full potential as a collective responsibility at the University of Waterloo. The goal of the PALs program is to lead and facilitate culture change by embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism (EDI-R) into their curriculum, programs, and units. The AD, EDIJ acted as a members of the PALs group along with Prof. Steffanie Scott, Geography and Environmental Management. <https://uwaterloo.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion-anti-racism/our-initiatives/program-area-leads-pals>
- **Program Area Lead (PALs - PHASE II)** aims to support and empower new and existing Program Area Leads (PALs) to be advisors on the President's Anti-Racism Taskforce (PART) projects. This initiative combines the two cross-institutional priorities and will drive anti-racism efforts across campus. The Office of EDI-R leads and drives competency, and capacity-building opportunities and works as a source of support for PAL members to achieve transformational change.
- **EDI-R Community of Practice (CoP)** is an initiative of the EDI-RO that highlights the importance of continuing to have the support from others on-campus as one works on equity and anti-racism efforts within one's own department / faculty. It provides an opportunity to learn from what others are working on. The Community of Practice is a collective space to engage, interact and learn from each other.
- **EDI-R Case Studies Project** is designed for PAL members to apply their learnings while building advisory skills to case studies, designed by EDI-RO. PAL members are assigned to case study groups to focus on Policy Review, Process Review, Competency Building, Communications, New Program Development – all from the perspective of EDI-R. Case studies are designed to simulate institutional priorities that PALs will be advising on, in a later phase.
- **Advisory role on President's Anti-Racism Task Forces (PART):** All PAL members become advisors to the PART projects. <https://uwaterloo.ca/presidents-anti-racism-taskforce/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/part-report-final-april-22-2022.pdf>

- **Indigenous Relations and Decolonisation:** The EDIJ work in our Faculty remains strongly connected to the various initiatives, programs, policies and events of the Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Relations Office. We have sought advice from the Indigenous Relations Office on important matters (e.g., Moccasin Identifier) and are keen to continue such relationships.
- **Research Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Council:** The AD EDIJ has joined the REDI Council as its member / advisor along with the ADR from Faculty of Environment. The Council's mandate is to build research equity and inclusion and promoting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous Initiatives (EDII) across the research enterprise.
- **Faculty EDI-R and Social Justice Connection** is an initiative of Engineering, Math and Environment EDI offices to meet regularly (once a month or as needed) to connect to discuss common areas of interest and concerns with respect to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Justice, Anti-Racism and Indigenization work at the Faculty level.