

**THE CASE FOR AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO
EDI IN A LARGE RESEARCH NETWORK**

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSIÓN

**AUTHORS
DR. ANDREA MAY ROWE
DR. CORINNE SCHUSTER-WALLACE**

Global Water Futures

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

IN A LARGE RESEARCH NETWORK

Throughout Canada, universities have taken significant steps toward developing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies, programs, and strategies¹. Furthermore, the Tri-Council granting agencies (CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC) have incentivized EDI commitments throughout the research process². However, there are still many steps required for EDI to become mainstream in everyday practices³. Together we must redefine how we work as colleagues in Canadian research institutions and reform systems, policies, and structures for sustainable results.

First and foremost, successful EDI work is not measured by intention; it is measured by impact⁴. EDI work must support tangible changes that empower people who have been marginalized due to racism, colonialism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism, and more⁵. High-level policy statements are valuable because they help to signal institutional support for change and accountability. However, on an institutional level, it can be challenging to action EDI recommendations in ways that are: specific, meaningful, measurable, and impactful.

EDI work must align with an organization's goals and objectives to be transformative. GWF aims to position Canada as a global leader in water sciences for the world's cold regions, be the global partner of choice for transdisciplinary water research, and provide strategic tools to manage water futures in Canada and internationally⁶. With that in mind, it is vital to consider the case for developing an intersectional approach to EDI for the GWF research network in addition to the guidance already provided by GWF partner intuitions and granting agencies. An intersectional approach considers the different ways that power structures influence opportunities and experiences when people hold multiple intersecting identities (e.g. age, race, class, gender identity, and more)⁷. A GWF-specific approach will connect people working within the network, external partners, and

end-users of the research around a shared vision for EDI in water research networks. There must be baseline data against which change is measured. These data must reflect the fundamental inequities that the organization wishes to change and must be reviewed regularly to ensure completeness and reflect normative changes in the practice environment.



The ways that structural and institutional inequities manifest in daily life are remarkably personal, often with significant and irreparable damage to self-confidence, mental and physical well-being, financial stability, and career opportunities writ large. In recent years, Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), and unconscious bias training, have provided new analytical tools to understand inequities in theory and practice. While renewed commitments to anti-racism, and inter-cultural communication courses, have opened up meaningful conversations. Increasing knowledge must be paired with action to produce tangible changes. Taking the right action often requires an in-depth understanding of how inequities manifest in a particular field or research space. This is where the collaborative knowledge of a research network like GWF is invaluable. As leaders with vast networks and highly specialized knowledge of water research practices, GWF members are uniquely positioned to address EDI barriers. Thus, establishing new norms and standards that embed EDI principles in the very fabric of what it means to be internationally recognized in the field.

Water research is at the core of environmental, social, and economic well-being globally⁸. GWF researchers are leaders in many academic disciplines that contribute to an in-depth knowledge of water research in Canada and internationally. Working together across such an extensive research network provides a clear opportunity to accelerate knowledge sharing and implement EDI practices specific to inclusive water research methodologies, community engagement, data collection, and mitigating the differential impact of empirical and theoretical research findings on marginalized communities and individuals⁹.

Faculty, students, and staff working within GWF all have an essential role to play while incorporating EDI principles into the program's innovative research and ensuring that the experience of people working within the research network reflects the organization's commitment to EDI. Training the next generation of researchers to be fluent in EDI practices is another step towards achieving GWF's social, economic, and environmental objectives and establishing a legacy of excellence in water research¹⁰.

SELECTED RESOURCES

- ¹ NSERC Guide For Applicants: Considering Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Your Application. (2015). NSERC. ** This document contains a glossary of definitions of terms related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion used by NSERC.
- ² Tri-Agency Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). (2019). CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC.
- ³ Diversity and Inclusion Efforts that Really Work. (2020). David Pedulla. Harvard Business Review.
- ⁴ Top 10 podcasts to think about race, diversity and equity at work. (2020). Charlotte Tucker. EU-Startups.
- ⁵ Intersectionality Toolkit. (2013). Contributors: Ani Giorgadze, Dani Prisacarui, Daniela Prisacariu, Eirik Rise, Euan Platt, George-Konstantinos Charonis, Joshua McCormick, Maryam Din, Mina Tolu and Orlaith Hendron.
- ⁶ Global Water Futures. (2020). About Us.
- ⁷ What is Intersectionality? (2018). Kimberlé Crenshaw. Youtube.
She Coined the Term “Intersectionality” Over 30 Years Ago. Here’s What it Means To Her Today. (2020). Time Magazine.
- ⁸ Water For The World We Want Opportunities for Research, Practice, and Leadership in Achieving SDG 6. (2019). Schuster-Wallace C.J., Sandford, R., and Merrill, S.
- ⁹ Water in the World We Want Catalyzing National Water-Related Sustainable Development. (2015). United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health and United Nations Office for Sustainable Development. Schuster-Wallace C.J. and Sandford, R.
- ¹⁰ Why business schools will need a curriculum overhaul if corporations are going to meet their pledges for equity, inclusion and diversity. (2020). Angelyn Francis. The Toronto Star.

For Additional Information Please Contact: Dr.Andrea May Rowe, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, Global Institute for Water Security, and Global Water Futures at andrea.rowe@usask.ca or Dr. Corinne Schuster-Wallace, Associate Director Global Water Futures, Professor Geography and Planning at cschuster.wallace@usask.ca. *Please note the language in this document reflects a certain time and place, Canada in 2020. The language used in EDI work is continually evolving to reflect the preferences of people and communities. This document will be updated periodically to reflect this evolution.