

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

November 17, 2020

Understanding the concepts of equity, diversity, inclusion, and designated groups is essential to our network. What is more, these core concepts have become priorities for our research community: they are key elements of excellence that attract and retain the greatest talent and ensure the diversity of research perspectives. This is why Aquatic Resources Québec (RAQ) has guidelines in place to increase diversity and promote the integration of its members. The following statements reflect our vision for these principles.

### What is equity, diversity, and inclusion?

FRQNT's (Fonds de recherche du Québec – Nature et technologies) *proposed [definitions for strategic planning](#), 2018–2022.*

- **Equity:** Equity refers to fair treatment, including the elimination of systemic barriers that disadvantage particular groups. Fair treatment is not necessarily the same for everyone, but takes into account different personal realities, both present and historical, to provide all individuals with access to the same opportunities for the promotion and support of research.
- **Diversity:** Diversity refers to the presence within the research ecosystem of people from different groups, which promotes the expression of diverse perspectives, approaches and experiences, including those of underrepresented groups. The FRQ value the contribution of this diversity to research.
- **Inclusion:** Inclusion refers to the implementation of practices that allow all members of the research community to be and feel valued, supported, and respected, with a particular focus on under-represented groups.

### RAQ values and commitment statement

Together with FRQNT and partner universities and colleges, RAQ believes that equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) enrich the scientific research community and improve the quality, relevance, and benefits of research to society.

Although we are entirely dependent on the choices of different universities and colleges for the granting of research positions, RAQ takes care to remove any obstacles and prejudices related to gender, race, place of origin, status, and sexual orientation when conferring membership as well awarding scholarships and funding for research projects.

RAQ also wishes to promote the establishment or maintenance of welcoming, stimulating, and safe living environments for its members. With this in mind, we denounce incivilities, harassment, violence (physical or verbal), and unconscious prejudice. We also want to facilitate the integration of people from under-represented or disadvantaged groups so that they can realize their training or research objectives.

#### Expected targets and impacts

To achieve concrete results, it is essential to address systemic **barriers** to under-represented or disadvantaged groups, such as women, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, members of visible minorities or racialized groups, and people with diverse gender identities or expressions.

Establishing and maintaining inclusive workplaces are constant challenges. It is the responsibility of each member of the network to identify and denounce behaviours that are contrary to the creation of a safe and welcoming living environment. Incivility, harassment, and verbal, non-verbal, or sexual violence are unacceptable. **Microaggressions** are subtle and derogatory messages that, aggravated over time by daily repetition, can have devastating effects. All RAQ members have a responsibility to become aware of micro-aggressions and their impact on the community as a whole.

**Unconscious biases** are another major barrier to diversity, as they influence our choices in staff recruitment and help maintain the status quo. By unconscious or involuntary prejudice, we mean the natural and unconscious tendency to be comfortable with people to whom we easily identify; this has the effect of limiting our choices to what is familiar to us. It is essential to realize the existence of these biases to make truly objective assessments of the merit of applications when considering enrollment and scholarship awards.

#### Towards concrete actions

RAQ is committed to increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to contributing to a profound cultural shift within the research ecosystem. To this end, it proposes concrete, measurable, and sustainable actions to its members to address systemic barriers that may affect people belonging to an under-represented or disadvantaged group. These concrete actions will also aim to identify the problems faced by the community.

#### Actions proposed by RAQ:

- Make an EDI kit available to the community on the RAQ website containing the following information:
  - EDI contacts;
  - EDI definitions and sources of information;
  - Calendar of relevant events (e.g., awareness workshops, workplace conferences);
  - Links to self-training modules, such as:

- [Inclusive Education](#) (UQ Network),
- [Involuntary Prejudice](#) (Government of Canada),
- [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#)

- Raise awareness and train reviewing committee members, especially concerning unconscious biases. To do so, members will be invited to complete training on unconscious biases that is available [online](#);
- Inform RAQ employees of the training available for EDI;
- Educate students about the principles of EDI and encourage them to include this concept in their requests for financial support;
- Share research findings and training opportunities with indigenous communities involved in RAQ research projects;
- Offer a presentation on EDI concepts and unconscious biases at RAQ's annual general meeting;
- Offer inclusion activities to new members at the annual general meeting.