# TERMS OF REFERENCE for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee

*August 5, 2021*

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Terms of Reference document is to establish the composition and mode of operation for the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS) **Equity\***, **Diversity**, and **Inclusion** committee (EDIC) that will help ensure a consistent, unbiased, and meaningful approach is taken when addressing the needs of **marginalized** groups in the wildlife profession in Alberta, such as those based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The Wildlife Society (TWS) is committed to the identification and removal of **barriers** to recruitment, effective mentoring, retention of a diverse workforce, and to communicating with a diverse array of stakeholders. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is emphasized in TWS guiding documents, including the [strategic plan](https://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/20190517-2019-2023-TWS-Strategic-Plan-FINAL.pdf) and [standing position](https://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SP_WorkforceDiversity.pdf) statement on workforce diversity within the wildlife profession. This Terms of Reference document is consistent with the goals and objectives of TWS and the [*Charter of the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Awareness Working Group of The Wildlife Society*](https://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IDEAWG-Charter-10212020.pdf).

\*Note: bolded terms are defined as they pertain to the wildlife profession in the glossary at the end of the Terms of Reference.

**BACKGROUND**

TWS recognizes the value of including the richness of human diversity in our efforts to discover, educate, inform policy, and involve the public in wildlife science and management. The ACTWS has always been an organization that welcomes all people with an interest in participating in wildlife and habitat research and conservation. However, the intersection of visible and less apparent differences, such as culture, spiritual views, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, unapparent disabilities, and other "invisible" factors nevertheless shape an individual's life experience and thus, the unique perspectives they bring to their vocation (The Wildlife Society, 2020[[1]](#footnote-0)). Participation in our profession must be broadened if we are to include the rich palette of perspectives and approaches needed to meet current and emerging challenges.

Our members work with various communities across Alberta within the context of the legally defined Indigenous consultation processes, recommendations stemming from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and other community-based research programs. Even though the ACTWS and its members do work that addresses inequality, the ACTWS also holds responsibility to further these efforts to support and empower individual Albertans to succeed in the wildlife profession. It is critical to intentionally support various marginalized communities, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), as well as LGBTQ2+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit, and other sexuality and gender minority groups) and new Canadians in pursuing careers as wildlife professionals.

To meaningfully address equity, diversity, and inclusion in ACTWS operations, the Executive Board unanimously decided to create an EDIC. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is a complex subject involving many different marginalized groups. The EDIC should consider all marginalized groups in the Alberta wildlife profession.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE EDIC**

1. To clearly identify and describe issues that impede the participation of marginalized groups in the wildlife profession and in the ACTWS specifically.
2. To support policies, programs, and practices that advance efforts to recruit, mentor, and retain professionals from a broad spectrum of identities reflective of the overall human population in Alberta, including individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds.
3. To contribute reliable, robust information relevant to Chapter operations and the wildlife profession in Alberta that may be valuable in framing the discussion regarding EDI in ACTWS membership and the wildlife profession more broadly. This contribution will occur through coordination with the ACTWS Executive Board and individual expertise within the Chapter.
4. To provide our members and supporters with access to scientific, technical, and ethical background information in a manner that is consistent with the goals and direction of the ACTWS and TWS parent organization.
5. To provide feedback to the Canadian Section of TWS (CSTWS) on EDI that may be relevant to the Canadian context, such that the CSTWS can communicate with the parent organization to undertake its mandate sensitive to the needs of Canadian members.

**DELIVERABLES OF THE EDIC**

1. Identify the diversity of the ACTWS membership and associated gaps in membership representation based on provincial demographics.
2. Identify short- and long-term program goals that demonstrate the ACTWS’ commitment to addressing EDI of marginalized groups.
3. Identify barriers for marginalized groups to join, participate, and succeed within the wildlife profession and/or the ACTWS.
4. Recruit and nominate committee members and/or ACTWS Executive Board members that self-identify as part of an marginalized group or an **ally** aiming to elevate the voices of marginalized groups in the wildlife profession.
5. Based on current research, practices, and the identified needs of the ACTWS, create programs or initiatives that target specific marginalized groups to increase the EDI of those specific groups within the ACTWS and the Alberta wildlife profession.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The EDIC will be responsible for:

* General oversight and communication regarding EDI issues in Alberta that may impact underrepresented groups in the wildlife profession.
* Overseeing the development of an action plan to further EDI after considering recommendations contained in external review report(s), as well as the lived experience of ACTWS members.
* Acting as the Board’s champion for changes to the ACTWS that demonstrably promote a **bias-free work environment** and a fully welcoming institution for all volunteers, staff, donors, board members, and community partners.
* Identifying issues to be considered, prioritizing such issues, and deciding what specific issues the EDIC should address.
* For each issue referred to the EDIC for consideration, the committee will collect relevant information from expertise within the ACTWS and draft comments on the issue for review by the ACTWS Executive Board.
* Identifying organizations with which the ACTWS and EDIC can collaborate to address public policy and other issues relevant to EDI in the Alberta wildlife profession.
* Working with other Chapter committees and the Executive Board towards ensuring that programs and issues addressed incorporate the best available science and other ways of knowing provided by expertise within the ACTWS and beyond.
* Assessing the need for external review of EDIC commentary and coordinating such review in an open and consultative manner.
* Ensuring all work commentary and information provided by the EDIC has been undertaken in a manner consistent with the best available information, consistent with the high standards of the ACTWS, the CSTWS, and TWS parent organization.
* Submitting prepared materials to the ACTWS Executive Board for approval on communications, commentary, and information on behalf of the ACTWS.
* Ensuring EDIC-related written materials, including meeting minutes, and submitted written materials, are available to ACTWS members through existing Chapter communication tools (e.g., the website), and upon request.
* Liaising with the Canadian Section of TWS and the parent organization, including sharing relevant EDIC-related information (e.g., letters, white papers, position statements, media releases, etc.).

**EDIC Members**

Members of the EDIC will be selected by the current EDIC committee with approval of the ACTWS president based on their professional qualifications, which may include training and education or lived experiences as a member of a marginalized group, interest in EDI in the wildlife profession in Alberta and/or Canada, and self-identification as a member of marginalized group or as an ally in the effort to amplify the voices of marginalized groups. Members should have a commitment to EDI principles and be committed to continuing the process of self-understanding and education and should be comfortable talking about race and discrimination issues. Consideration will be given to a potential member’s geographic location and specific area of **expertise** to ensure a diverse committee from across the province and with a range of expertise. Area of expertise can include which marginalized groups the member identifies with or has worked with, different kinds of programs the member has been involved in, or other areas of expertise that ensure a diversity of perspectives and experience are represented on the committee, as well as the current composition of the EDIC.

The EDIC will strive to be composed of diverse members from different cultures, spiritual views, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, unapparent disabilities, and others. Members of the EDIC are expected to join the committee in good faith and either have a general knowledge of EDI issues and/or a willingness to continue learning. All members of the EDIC recognize that EDI is a complex, multi-faceted topic and agree that continued learning, programming flexibility, and an adaptive approach is essential to ensure committee goals are met.

Members commit to adhering to [TWS Guidelines of Professional Behaviour](http://twsconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Code-of-conduct-for-TWS-annual-meeting.pdf). Exploring, identifying, and overcoming exclusion, discrimination, bias, racism, sexism, etc. in the ACTWS and the wildlife biology field requires courage, an openness to personal growth, constructive and respectful challenge to personal biases (conscious and unconscious), and taking risks as committee members share their own identities and experiences.

It is expected that members of the EDIC will not serve as representatives of their employers but rather as individual professionals working to advance the goals and mandate of the ACTWS.

**EDIC Chair**

As per the ACTWS Bylaws, the Chair of the EDIC is appointed on an annual basis by the incoming ACTWS President and based on the recommendation from other existing EDIC members. The Chair will complete committee duties with the assistance of the President and Executive Director. The Chair will submit a written summary of committee activities to the President and Secretary/Treasurer before the close of each annual Chapter business meeting. The Chair will lead the committee and report to the ACTWS Executive Board at board meetings. The Chair may be a non-voting member of the ACTWS Executive Board and will serve as a primary liaison between the EDIC and the Executive Board.

The specific accountabilities of the Chair include:

* Support the EDIC in confirming its Terms of Reference and priorities on an *ad hoc* basis.
* Approach potential committee members on behalf of the EDIC.
* Communicate responsibilities and accountabilities to EDIC members.
* Oversee and coordinate the work of the EDIC on behalf of the ACTWS Executive Board, including:
  + Planning and scheduling EDIC conference calls as needed;
  + Tracking EDIC supported deliverables; and,
  + Ensuring alignment of EDIC deliverables with ACTWS, Canadian Section and TWS position statements.
* Provide review of committee written materials prior to release to ensure consistency with CSTWS and TWS position statements.
* Ensure an efficient and appropriate flow of information between the EDIC and the Executive Board, including delivery of progress reports.

**Relationship with ACTWS Executive Board**

The EDIC will maintain a close relationship with the Chapter Executive Board to allow efficient flow of information. Further, the Executive Board will work with the EDIC to help facilitate reaching consensus on issues where necessary.

**OPERATIONS**

**Decision-Making**

The EDIC will endeavour to make decisions based on consensus. When consensus cannot be achieved, a decision to move forward will be taken by simple majority vote with a quorum of four members of the EDIC. Contradicting perspectives will be recorded in meeting minutes.

Should there be a need to revisit a decision previously taken by the EDIC, the EDIC will strive to do so in a timely manner, including providing an explanation for taking such action.

Transparency, openness, and complete disclosure of information will be key for the successful operation of the EDIC. All information related to commentary generated by the EDIC (e.g., position statements, correspondence with partners, correspondence with institutions and government, etc.) will be made public.

The Executive Board will maintain final approval authority on communications, commentary, and information issued on behalf of the ACTWS.

**Meetings**

The EDIC will generally meet by phone at least every four months, including once annually at the Chapter’s Annual General Meeting.

The Chair will regularly interact with the Executive Board and Executive Director.

Approved by the Alberta Chapter Executive Board on July 30, 2021.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Ally –** An ally is a self-identified person that recognizes that though they may not be a member of a marginalized group(s) they support, they make a concerted effort to better understand and address that marginalization.[[2]](#footnote-1)

**Barriers –** Several barriers to representation in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) have been identified through research and the peer-reviewed literature. References to this research and identified barriers are in the EDI committee’s Additional Resources document, which will be available in the ACTWS Google Drive folder and on the ACTWS website once approved by the EDIC..

**Bias-free workplace –** One that ensures a strong, inclusive, healthy, and respectful workplace that is free of harassment, violence and discrimination. (Government of Alberta workplace policy, 2021).

**Diversity –** A diverse workforce is necessary for development of conservation and management practices and communications that resonate with all of society (The Wildlife Society, 2020).

**Equity –** Equity is an approach to ensure that everyone can access the same opportunities, regardless of their personal and cultural characteristics[[3]](#footnote-2). Inequity occurs when there are systematic disparities between groups with different levels of underlying social advantage/ disadvantage[[4]](#footnote-3).

**Expertise –** Expertise or people with experience are defined as those with professional training, schooling, or work experience regarding EDI, or those with lived-experiences pertaining to EDI issues, and/or those with an interest in addressing EDI in our profession who have dedicated time outside of their work to self-educate in areas pertaining to EDI.

**Inclusion –** Including the perspectives and skills provided by a diverse professional community of individuals to strengthen and improve approaches to research, education, management, and policy making (The Wildlife Society, 2020).

**Marginalized Group -** Marginalized groups are different groups of people within a given culture, context and history at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination due to the interplay of different personal characteristics on grounds such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, or living in various geographic localities. Belonging to such groups, or even being perceived to belong to them, heightens the risk of inequalities in terms of access to rights and use of services and goods in a variety of domains, such as access to education, employment, health, social and housing assistance, protection against domestic or institutional violence, and justice.[[5]](#footnote-4)

1. The Wildlife Society. 2020. Standing Position: Workforce Diversity within the Wildlife Profession. <https://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SP_WorkforceDiversity.pdf>. Accessed: May 29, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. University of Pittsburgh Library, 2021. [What is an Ally?](https://pitt.libguides.com/antiracism/ally) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Tulloch, 2020. [Improving sex and gender identity equity and inclusion at conservation and ecology conferences](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-1255-x). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Braveman and Gruskin, 2003. [Defining equity in health](http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech.57.4.254). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021. [Glossary: marginalized groups](https://eige.europa.eu/taxonomy/term/1280?lang=en). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)