AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE CENTRE FOR FOREST RESEARCH (CEF IN FRENCH)

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Introduction

Forest science, and science in general, has made progress in recent years in becoming more equitable, inclusive, and diverse, with respect to people of different backgrounds and identities. However, we are still a long way from the goal of creating and sustaining an environment in which all people feel equally valued and included. For example, there is a pervasive sense among people in the forest sciences that if one does not fit the caricatured image of a forest scientist - white bearded male in a plaid shirt who loves beer and hockey - then they will be perceived as "other". If one feels "other", they also feel that their contributions are not being equally valued, along with an expectation to be thankful to the "real" forest scientists for permitting their inclusion. This constitutes a problem with the *culture* of the discipline, which lies at the core of the challenge of the CEF in promoting EDI. Despite progress, many forest scientists and practitioners still experience discrimination, unconscious biases, or (micro)aggressions based on their identity, and while some cases can be subtle, many are not, and their cumulative effect is major and systemic. We hope that this formal commitment will lead the CEF to becoming a group that is more equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

Issues related to EDI pervade all of society. Science is just one part of society, and the CEF one institution within science. Many other organizations have prepared declarations of principles and plans of action related to EDI, and so to begin, the CEF declares support for and adherence to:

- The Dimensions Charter of the Canadian federal Tri-Council of science funding agencies.
- The EDI Commitment from the Fonds de recherche of the Québec government.

As definitions of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, we adopt those from the Fonds de recherche du Québec, from which the following text was taken:

> **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** refers to the presence, within the research ecosystem and society, of people from different groups, which promotes the expression of diverse perspectives, approaches and experiences, including those of underrepresented groups.

> **Inclusion** refers to the establishment of practices that allow all members of the research community to be and to feel valued, supported and respected, paying particular attention to underrepresented groups within the research community and in research itself.

In this document, the term "CEF member" applies to members of all types, including regular members (university faculty), postdoctoral researchers, students, and research professionals.

In the remainder of this action plan, we briefly outline three avenues along which actions will be taken, with the aim of adhering to these principles in order to create positive change with respect to EDI in the CEF.

1. Education and awareness.

Key goal: Maximize awareness and understanding of EDI issues among all CEF members, and as much of the broader forest science and forestry communities as possible. No member of CEF should be unaware of the challenges faced by many individuals with respect to EDI.

Action plan:

- Develop a portrait of the identities and lived experiences of CEF members with respect to EDI. Specifically, we will conduct a member survey, assessing identity along multiple axes, experiences of bias, harassment, or discrimination, and suggestions for actions to promote EDI. We will repeat this survey periodically to assess progress.
- Regularly highlight EDI issues and perspectives in venues such as the weekly CEF Infolettre and the yearly colloquium. These can include information capsules about personal lived experiences of CEF members. For example, many CEF members come to Québec from other regions where science itself is associated with a history of colonization and thus inequities and exclusion.
- Require EDI training modules, such as the <u>unconscious bias module from NSERC</u>, for all members of the CEF. At the time of renewal of the Centre, or upon becoming a member, membership will require attesting to having completed such modules, and to having read any CEF documentation on EDI (e.g., the results of the membership survey, when they become available).
- Provide platforms and spaces at the yearly colloquium, within universities, and online, for people to express their views, tell their stories, and exchange experiences and ideas.

2. Promotion of equity and inclusion.

While equity and inclusion are distinct considerations (see definitions above), most actions that serve to promote one will simultaneously benefit the other as well. As such, they are treated together here, without any implication that they are one and the same thing.

Key goal: Change the culture of the CEF, with the ultimate aim of having *no one* feel like they are "other". Aim to contribute more broadly to improving equity and inclusion in the field of forest science, in Québec, in Canada, and beyond.

Action plan:

- Promote practices within laboratories at each of the academic institutions where CEF members are involved in research, in departments, and in the CEF, that foster equity and inclusivity. These practices include, but are not limited to:
  - As lab leaders, working to ensure that discussions are not dominated by a few voices (including their own); actively listening, and creating the time and space for everyone to contribute to research progress.
  - Encouraging periodic discussions of EDI in science, based on current events, publications, or any other source of inspiration.

- ○ Support people who may feel discriminated against or excluded because of their ideas, gender, orientation or religion.
- Establish a code of conduct for all meetings and interactions within the CEF.
- Create a partial paid position (e.g., 1-2 days per week) within the CEF specifically for promotion, management, and coordination of EDI activities. For any CEF members unsure of who to contact with EDI issues, this person will provide a gateway to available resources.
- Develop a formal CEF policy concerning language, with the aim of ensuring that French continues to be the primary working language, while ensuring inclusion of non-francophones and the availability of language training. This applies to oral communication in meetings, as well as formal written and oral presentations.
- Use ungendered language in all CEF communications.

3. Diversity.

Key goal: Increase diversity in the CEF in terms of gender, visible minority status, Indigenous status, and disability status. Efforts will not be limited to these groups of people, but they represent an initial step, based on target groups defined by the Canada Research Chairs program.

Action plan:

- Define reasonable reference populations for assessing progress in increasing diversity.
- Actively seek to recruit and retain new members that increase diversity.
- Coordinate with equity and inclusion actions that make the CEF more attractive to diverse potential members.
- Conduct a simplified version of the membership survey periodically to assess progress.
- Develop strategies for reducing the financial barrier experienced by some potential students and trainees from gaining experience in forest science.
- We note that goals 1 and 2 also aim to enhance diversity indirectly by creating a culture that attracts people from all walks of life.