Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy for ArcticNet

2025
2029

ArcticNet
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Introduction

At the forefront of Arctic research in Canada, ArcticNet serves as a central hub connecting researchers, policymakers, and Northern communities across the country. Our work focuses on studying the rapidly changing Arctic – its ecosystems, economies, and the people who call it home – while addressing the far-reaching impacts of these changes across Canada and the rest of the world. Given our role as a leader in Arctic research, it is essential that ArcticNet itself is a safe, inclusive, and equitable organization.

As such, a deep commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is integral to our work. We have developed this four-year EDI strategy to ensure that these principles are not just aspirations, but fundamental parts of how we operate. This strategy builds upon the foundation laid by our previous EDI strategy (2021-2024) and incorporates insights from key stakeholder interviews, an employee and network survey, and other relevant guiding documents.

Designed to embed EDI throughout all levels of ArcticNet, this strategy is structured around three key focus areas:

- **Focus area #1: Embedding EDI in our culture** – To ensure EDI is deeply engrained in ArcticNet's internal culture through capacity-building efforts and integration into performance management practices.
- **Focus area #2: Advancing EDI in our network** – To ensure EDI is a central consideration in all network activities, with a focus on ensuring that ArcticNet-affiliated events, spaces, and environments are safe and inclusive, while also advancing the EDI-related goals established through the Government of Canada's Strategic Science Fund and other funders.
- **Focus area #3: Communicating EDI progress** – To communicate EDI progress both internally and externally, maintaining transparency and accountability as we work toward meeting our EDI commitments and share our achievements with our rights holders and stakeholders.

By prioritizing EDI, we strengthen the impact of Arctic research not only within our own organization, but across Canada and beyond. Through this strategy, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering inclusive environments where all voices are heard and valued, and where everyone is empowered to shape the future of the Arctic.

Our Purpose

EDI must be a top priority for ArcticNet for several reasons:

Our work is deeply rooted in the North.

Our work at ArcticNet spans the Canadian North – a region with deep histories, diverse communities, and unique, complex challenges. The research we support takes place on Indigenous homelands, and because of this, Indigenous perspectives must shape our decisions at every level. Whether it is funding Indigenous researchers, ensuring Indigenous representation on our Board and committees, or mobilizing Indigenous knowledge in our work, inclusion cannot be an afterthought – it must be foundational to how we operate.

Science has long excluded certain voices.

Science has historically excluded many groups including women, Indigenous Peoples, and other underrepresented communities. A narrow definition of "scientific excellence" has dominated research networks for centuries, often overlooking diverse perspectives and knowledge systems. Arctic research in Canada, in particular, has been deeply entangled with colonialism, often treating the North as a site of extraction, rather than as a home to vibrant communities with rich knowledge. While progress has been made, significant barriers remain.

As a research network, if we want Arctic research to be truly excellent, we must apply an EDI lens to recognize this history and actively work toward a more inclusive future. This means acknowledging and challenging past exclusions, creating meaningful opportunities for underrepresented groups, redefining research excellence, respecting Indigenous knowledge systems, prioritizing community collaboration, advancing Reconciliation, and ensuring that a diverse range of voices shapes the future of scientific discovery.

We are a connector.

ArcticNet brings together thousands of students, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders from diverse backgrounds – across races, ethnicities, abilities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, ages, locations, and more. To fulfill our mission, we must create spaces where everyone feels valued, heard, and enabled to share their perspectives. By fostering inclusive and equitable environments, we not only strengthen our network and advance ArcticNet's goals, but also enhance the impact of Arctic research as a whole.

What We Are Striving Toward

ArcticNet recognizes that EDI is an ongoing journey – there is no final destination, but a continuous commitment to learning and evolving. Even so, we need a clear vision to guide our efforts. We envision a future where EDI shapes our decisions, actions, and relationships at every level.

In this future…

- **Arctic research is Indigenized.** The structures underpinning Arctic research have been decolonized and Indigenized so that diverse knowledges can thrive. We have seen changes in the ways that research is funded and undertaken, by whom, and following which timelines and worldviews. We have also seen changes in the ways that diverse knowledges about the Arctic are produced, valued, and mobilized to effect positive change for Northern communities and global society at large. As a result, Arctic research has become a collaborative, transparent, and reciprocal process built on trust.

- **Arctic research is multidisciplinary.** To be able to effectively plan for, adapt, and thrive in a changing Arctic, we equally value, fund, and mobilize research from various disciplines (social sciences, health sciences, natural sciences, humanities, engineering, etc.), in addition to research by Indigenous knowledge holders.

@ArcticNet/Doug Barber

- **Indigenous inclusion is woven into every aspect of ArcticNet.** It is not just about understanding how to engage with Indigenous communities in a distinctions-based way, but also about ensuring Indigenous representation and leadership across all spheres of our work – governance, decision-making, policies, communications, events, and beyond. ArcticNet is a place of true partnership, demonstrating that a diverse and equitable network strengthens both research and impact.

- **The divide between Southern and Northern communities continues to lessen.** This tension has been replaced by a shared understanding and true partnerships. There is collective recognition that Indigenous and Western scientific approaches are both essential, and that Arctic research is strongest when diverse perspectives work together in mutual respect.

- **Trust, humility, and accountability are the norm.** Every single person involved with ArcticNet engages in open, respectful dialogue, acknowledges mistakes, takes responsibility for their actions, and commits to continuous growth. ArcticNet remains a space where these values are not only encouraged, but expected.

- **Every ArcticNet space – whether physical or virtual – is safe, inclusive, and respectful.** All environments, events, and gatherings hosted by or affiliated with ArcticNet are free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, and microaggressions. Everyone, regardless of background or identity, can fully participate, without fear of exclusion or harm.

- **We can demonstrate real progress.** Our commitment to EDI is not just a statement, but is reflected in tangible, measurable outcomes. We are able to track our impact and showcase meaningful improvements, thereby holding ourselves accountable to ongoing growth.

These points serve as our guiding compass in our journey toward EDI, while also supporting our mission to enable a flourishing Canadian Arctic by inspiring world-class research and capacity-building. With intention and action, we will bring this vision to life.

@ArcticNet/Tyler Wizenberg

Our Journey So Far

Meaningful progress begins with recognizing where we have been. By looking back at the work that has already been done, we can acknowledge our growth, learn from past experiences, and align on our starting position as we move forward in our journey.

Key milestones in our EDI journey so far include:

- **Building on a strong foundation:** ArcticNet's first EDI strategy (2021–2024) laid the groundwork for embedding EDI into our work. This new strategy builds upon that foundation, incorporating lessons learned and deepening our commitments.
- **Advancing learning & awareness:** We have offered numerous learning opportunities, including webinars, training on ethical research, and harassment prevention in the field, helping to foster a culture of respect and accountability throughout our organization.
- **Creating safer spaces at events:** We launched HearU and later LOOP, anonymous reporting mechanisms available at our Annual Scientific Meetings, ensuring that anyone affiliated with our events could report experiences of exclusion, discrimination, harassment, bullying, or microaggressions.
- **Strengthening EDI leadership:** We established EDI-focused committees, including Inclusion in Northern Research, a collaboration between ArcticNet and Inuit partners. We have also increased the role and responsibilities of the Inuit Research Management Committee, ensuring Indigenous leadership in Arctic research.
- **Championing Inuit-led research:** As part of our North-by-North Program, we run the first Inuit-led research program in the world, centering Inuit priorities and perspectives in Arctic research.
- **Breaking down barriers to participation:** We have made significant strides in identifying barriers to participation – both within ArcticNet as an organization and in Arctic research more broadly – particularly through our North-by-North program. While this work is ongoing, we recognize and celebrate the progress made thus far in ensuring equitable access to events, research opportunities, and decision-making spaces.
- **Knowledge mobilization:** Through webinars, outreach, and conferences, we ensure that diverse knowledge is exchanged. We aim to champion reciprocal, respectful research that demonstrates its real-world relevance and impact.
- **Fostering diverse leadership:** We have prioritized gender and racial diversity in our committees and Board, recognizing that representation is key to meaningful change.
- **Listening to our community:** In 2024, we conducted an EDI survey across our network and staff to inform this strategy and better understand demographics and sentiments toward inclusion within ArcticNet.
- **Empowering the next generation of researchers:** Recognizing the barriers young researchers face, we provide funding, workshops, and conference opportunities to support students and early-career researchers in Arctic science. Young researchers run the ArcticNet Student Association, hold a seat on the Board and the Research Management Committee, allowing them to gain leadership experience in research governance and management.

- **Advancing gender equity in science:** We continue to address the systemic challenges women face in research, creating pathways for greater inclusion and leadership.
- **Celebrating diversity:** We use our platforms to amplify underrepresented voices in science, highlighting LGBTQ2S+ researchers on Polar Pride Day, women scientists on International Day of Women and Girls in Science, and more.

ArcticNet has made significant strides in embedding EDI into our work – progress of which we are proud. Much of our journey so far has been about acknowledgment – recognizing past harms, the exclusion of Northerners, and the ways in which Arctic research has not always been conducted appropriately. We have taken accountability for these realities and will continue to do so, and we look forward to stepping into the next phase of our EDI journey. We will continue to move beyond acknowledgment into meaningful action.

@ArcticNet/Alysha Riquier

Where We Are Headed: Our 2025-2029 EDI Strategy

We know that EDI is more than just a checklist – it requires a fundamental shift in mindset and organizational culture. As we move forward, we have built upon past efforts to identify three key focus areas that will drive our EDI work from 2025 to 2029. These focus areas are crucial next steps in aligning ArcticNet's mission to advance knowledge and leadership in Arctic research with our commitment to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and equitable environment for all.

@ArcticNet/Doug Barber

Focus Area #1:
Embedding EDI in Our Culture

What this means: Strengthening internal capacity by equipping staff, leadership, and the Board of Directors with EDI knowledge and integrating EDI into performance management to ensure lasting impact. A strong internal culture of equity and inclusion will naturally shape how ArcticNet engages with its broader network.

Goal #1: Strengthen EDI capacity across ArcticNet internally through targeted education and leadership development.

To achieve this goal, we will carry out the following actions:

	Action	Purpose	Impact
1.	Deliver EDI training for all employees.	To ensure all staff, present and future, have a shared understanding of foundational EDI principles relevant to their work.	Creates a common language and awareness, and equips staff with practical tools that they can apply in their daily roles.
2.	Provide EDI leadership training for management.	To equip leadership with the tools to champion EDI and drive meaningful change from the top.	Ensures EDI is prioritized and modeled at all levels, strengthening accountability.
3.	Integrate EDI training into Board governance.	To promote inclusive decision-making and governance practices.	Embeds EDI into ArcticNet's strategic direction, influencing action across the organization.

Goal #2: Integrate EDI into staff goals and performance management.

To achieve this goal, we will carry out the following actions:

	Action	Purpose	Impact
1.	Embed EDI goals into staff performance objectives.	To tailor EDI efforts to each employee's role, ensuring relevance and impact in their day-to-day work.	With a small internal team, individualized EDI goals can create meaningful change across different functions, embedding EDI into ArcticNet's operations.
2.	Incorporate EDI expectations into leadership roles.	To ensure leaders actively champion and model EDI principles in their decision-making and management practices.	Leadership accountability strengthens the organization's culture and reinforces that EDI is a shared responsibility.

Focus Area #2:
Advancing EDI in Our Network

What this means: Ensuring that EDI principles are at the forefront of all ArcticNet network activities, this includes fostering safe and inclusive environments, spaces, and events, as well as building on the important work already underway through our program under the Government of Canada's Strategic Science Fund to prioritize representation of and meaningful engagement with equity-deserving groups, in particular Inuit and First Nations stakeholders.

Goal #3: All ArcticNet events, particularly our Annual Scientific Meetings, are designed to be safe, welcoming, inclusive, and accessible for all participants.

To achieve this goal, we will carry out the following actions:

	Action	Purpose	Impact
1.	Communicate and reinforce ArcticNet's zero-tolerance stance on all forms of exclusion (i.e., discrimination, harassment, bullying, microaggression, harm, etc.).	To make it clear that ArcticNet does not tolerate any form of exclusionary behaviour, is committed to fostering a safe and respectful environment at all events, and that we will take action to address any harm.	Event participants feel more confident that they are attending an event where safety and inclusion are prioritized, encouraging greater participation from everyone, including those from underrepresented groups.
2.	Implement and promote an anonymous, independent reporting mechanism for anyone affiliated with an event.	To provide a trusted and accessible way for attendees to report concerns related to exclusionary behaviour.	Builds trust in ArcticNet's commitment to safety and inclusion, while ensuring that identified trends in reporting serve as lessons learned for the future.
3.	Integrate EDI learning opportunities throughout the Annual Scientific Meetings.	To embed education on EDI into ArcticNet's largest in-person gathering, ensuring that attendees leave with greater awareness and actionable insights.	Strengthens the overall culture of inclusion at the event, builds a shared understanding of EDI across the network, and encourages attendees to bring EDI principles back to their institutions.
4.	Foster more inclusive and accessible networking and social spaces.	To create environments where all attendees, especially those from underrepresented groups, feel comfortable engaging, connecting, and sharing	More meaningful participation from all attendees, leading to stronger collaborations and a more inclusive research community.

Goal #4: All ArcticNet-funded research environments are safe, inclusive, and respectful.

To achieve this goal, we will carry out the following actions:*

	Action	Purpose	Impact
1.	Communicate ArcticNet's zero-tolerance stance on all forms of exclusion (i.e., discrimination, harassment, bullying, microaggression, harm, etc.).	To set clear expectations for respectful and inclusive conduct in all ArcticNet-funded research environments.	Reinforces a culture of accountability, ensuring all ArcticNet-affiliated researchers understand that exclusionary behaviours will not be tolerated.
2.	Implement and promote an anonymous, independent reporting mechanism for ArcticNet researchers to use in any research environment.	To provide researchers with a confidential, anonymous and accessible avenue to report misconduct in any research environment (e.g., on campus, in the field) and seek support, besides the one offered from their institution.	Though anonymous, helps ArcticNet track trends and patterns to inform future EDI efforts.
3.	Provide guidance and resources on inclusive fieldwork.	To position ArcticNet as a resource for guidance; to equip research teams with practical strategies for fostering safe, respectful, and inclusive environments in the field.	Supports researchers in proactively preventing harm, mitigating power imbalances, and addressing challenges as they arise.
4.	Strengthen EDI expectations in funding agreements.	To ensure all ArcticNet-funded research teams commit to upholding EDI in their work.	Embeds accountability into funding processes, making inclusive research and knowledge mobilization practices a standard expectation, rather than an option.
5.	Embed EDI training requirements in ArcticNet funding opportunities.	To ensure researchers and teams receive foundational learning on respectful conduct, power dynamics, and inclusive practices before fieldwork begins.	Increases awareness and preparedness, helping researchers create and maintain safer, more inclusive research environments.
6.	Ensure funding opportunities are inclusive and equitable across disciplines and knowledge holders.	To ensure that social sciences, health sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and engineering, in addition to Indigenous knowledge, are valued and supported.	A greater diversity of funded research and thus richer understanding of a changing Arctic.

*Note: Most of these actions will be implemented in Years 3 and 4 of the strategy to align with our next research funding cycle.

Goal #5: Building on the work already underway through our program under the Government of Canada's Strategic Science Fund, continue to advance key EDI-related commitments.

To achieve this goal, we will carry out the following actions:

	Action	Purpose	Impact
1.	Implement all EDI-related KPIs outlined for funding from the Government of Canada's Strategic Science Fund.[1]	To build on ongoing efforts by strengthening meaningful engagement and increasing representation of equity-deserving groups – including, but not limited to, Inuit and other Indigenous stakeholders – across all aspects of the organization.	Greater engagement and representation of diverse groups – including, but not limited to, Inuit and other Indigenous stakeholders – across ArcticNet's research, project management, leadership, administration, etc.

1. As part of its commitment to EDI, the Government of Canada under the Strategic Science Fund has requested ArcticNet to collect a set of demographic indicators from various stakeholder groups involved with the network. These EDI-related indicators are designed to help us better understand who has access to ArcticNet's programs, funding, and opportunities, and to identify any barriers to equitable participation. The indicators focus on voluntary self-identification across several demographic dimensions, including Canada's four employment equity groups (women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and people of colour), as well as sexual orientation, language, age, and immigrant status. These indicators will help ArcticNet assess representation across key stakeholder groups and support efforts to design more inclusive programs and practices over time.

@ArcticNet/Émilie Bouchard

Focus Area #3:
Communicating EDI Progress

What this means: Enhancing transparency and communication around EDI progress at ArcticNet, both internally and externally, to foster accountability and drive meaningful change.

Goal #6: Ensure transparent and consistent communication of our EDI progress, both internally and externally.

To achieve this goal, we will carry out the following actions:

	Action	Purpose	Impact
1.	Socialize the strategy and encourage two-way dialogue.	To raise awareness and invite feedback.	Staff and stakeholders feel included and invested in the strategy's success.
2.	Provide regular updates on EDI progress.	To maintain transparency and keep all stakeholders informed.	Builds trust and accountability, while reinforcing ArcticNet's commitment to EDI.
3.	Host regular staff check-ins on EDI progress.	To foster open discussion and reflection.	Staff feel engaged, heard, and encouraged to contribute to EDI efforts.
4.	Ensure ongoing review of the strategy by the dedicated EDI lead.	To track progress and ensure commitments stay on course.	The strategy stays relevant, actionable, and aligned with evolving needs.
5.	Conduct pulse surveys with staff and network.	To assess the effectiveness of ArcticNet's EDI efforts and adapt as needed.	ArcticNet remains responsive to emerging needs and continuously improves its approach.
6.	Highlight EDI success stories.	To celebrate progress and inspire continued efforts.	Reinforces the positive impact of EDI and encourages ongoing engagement.

A Note on Flexibility

The realities of Arctic research, societal expectations, and the needs of our organization will continue to shift over time, and our approach to EDI must remain adaptable in response. As such, this strategy is a living document – one that will evolve alongside ArcticNet, our research community, and the diverse voices that shape it.

Ongoing feedback and engagement from our staff, partners, researchers, and Northern communities will guide our path forward, helping us address new challenges, seize emerging opportunities, and deepen our commitment to meaningful inclusion. By staying responsive, we can ensure that EDI remains relevant and an active part of everything we do.

@ArcticNet/Antonin Boulanger Cartier

Guiding Principles

ArcticNet's commitment to EDI is shaped by a set of guiding principles that reflect our values and inform our actions. These principles serve as the foundation for how we approach change – both within our organization and in the broader Arctic research landscape. We embed them into everything we do.

- **Authenticity:** We approach EDI with honesty and integrity, recognizing that meaningful change requires more than just words. We commit to actions that align with our values and create lasting impact.
- **Vulnerability & humility:** We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. Embracing vulnerability and humility allows us to learn from our mistakes, listen to others, and grow – both as individuals and as an organization.
- **Flexibility:** True progress requires adaptability. We remain open to new perspectives, evolving knowledge, and changing circumstances, ensuring that our approach to EDI is responsive and effective.
- **Accountability:** We take responsibility for both our past and our future, approaching EDI with a mindset of action and meaningful change. This means acknowledging historical and systemic inequities, while actively working to build a more equitable Arctic research community.
- **Transparency:** We communicate openly and honestly about our actions, decisions, and challenges. Our commitment to EDI includes sharing what we know, where we stand, and what we are working toward.
- **Collaboration:** Our work is interconnected with many stakeholders, from staff to researchers to Indigenous partners. We prioritize deep listening, reciprocity, and shared decision-making, ensuring that diverse voices shape our initiatives through true partnership.
- **Respect:** At the core of all our actions is respect – respect for people, cultures, knowledge systems, and the land. We honour the lived experiences of those we work with and commit to fostering a culture of dignity and inclusion in everything we do.

Roles & Responsibilities

Successfully advancing EDI within ArcticNet requires the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders across the organization. Each group plays a critical role in embedding EDI into the fabric of our work.

Employees are expected to actively engage in EDI capacity-building initiatives and contribute to the evolution of ArcticNet's inclusive culture. This includes attending required EDI training and actively participating in discussions about EDI. Employees are also expected to demonstrate inclusive behaviours in their day-to-day work and interactions, embodying the principles of respect and collaboration. Furthermore, once individual EDI goals are established as per Focus Area #1, employees are responsible for working toward achieving these objectives, helping to drive progress within their teams and across the organization.

Leadership at ArcticNet is expected to champion EDI principles from the top down, setting an example for the entire organization. Leaders are responsible for modeling inclusive behaviours and fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are heard, valued, and acted upon. This includes attending EDI training sessions, advocating for inclusive practices, and holding themselves and others accountable for meeting established EDI goals. By prioritizing EDI in decision-making and organizational strategy, leadership ensures that EDI is integrated into all aspects of ArcticNet's operations.

The Board of Directors plays a critical governance role in advancing EDI at ArcticNet. Board members are expected to ensure that EDI is embedded in ArcticNet's strategic priorities and organizational policies. They are responsible for supporting the implementation of EDI initiatives, ensuring that they align with the overall mission and vision of the organization. Additionally, Board members are expected to actively engage in EDI-related discussions, encourage transparency and accountability, and provide oversight on the progress of EDI goals and objectives.

Network members, including researchers, students, community partners, and other external stakeholders, are expected to contribute to the creation of inclusive, respectful, and safe environments. This includes following EDI guidelines in both research spaces and events, adhering to ArcticNet's Codes of Conduct, respecting diverse perspectives, and actively working toward environments where all voices are heard. By creating inclusive spaces, the network helps ensure that ArcticNet remains a welcoming environment for all involved in ArcticNet-affiliated activities.

Defining Key Terms

To ensure a shared understanding and foster meaningful dialogue, this section defines key terms related to EDI at ArcticNet.

- **Access** is the ability for all individuals to obtain and benefit from opportunities, resources, and spaces equitably, without unnecessary barriers. It is not just about making something available – it is about ensuring that people have what they need to fully participate and thrive.

- **Accessibility** is the process of giving equitable access to everyone along the entire spectrum of human ability and experience, whether they are able-bodied or have a disability – visible or invisible. In this case, accessibility refers to how organizations make space for the unique characteristics that each stakeholder brings to the table from an ability perspective.

- **Belonging**, a critical component of inclusion, is the human emotional need to be an accepted member of a group. It is the inherent desire to belong and be an important part of something greater than yourself.

- **Culture** is the set of shared values, expectations, and beliefs for how people engage with one another.

- **Diversity** is the presence of difference – visible or invisible – within a given setting. When it comes to EDI, diversity refers to the variety of differences among people.

- **Equity** means recognizing that different people have different needs and starting points, and so it ensures we provide resources and opportunities that are tailored to those needs. It involves giving people what they need (even if those resources differ from one person to the next) in order for everyone to achieve the same outcome.

- **Inclusion** is the feeling and the reality of belonging. It allows you to feel safe, respected, heard, engaged, motivated, and valued for who you truly are.
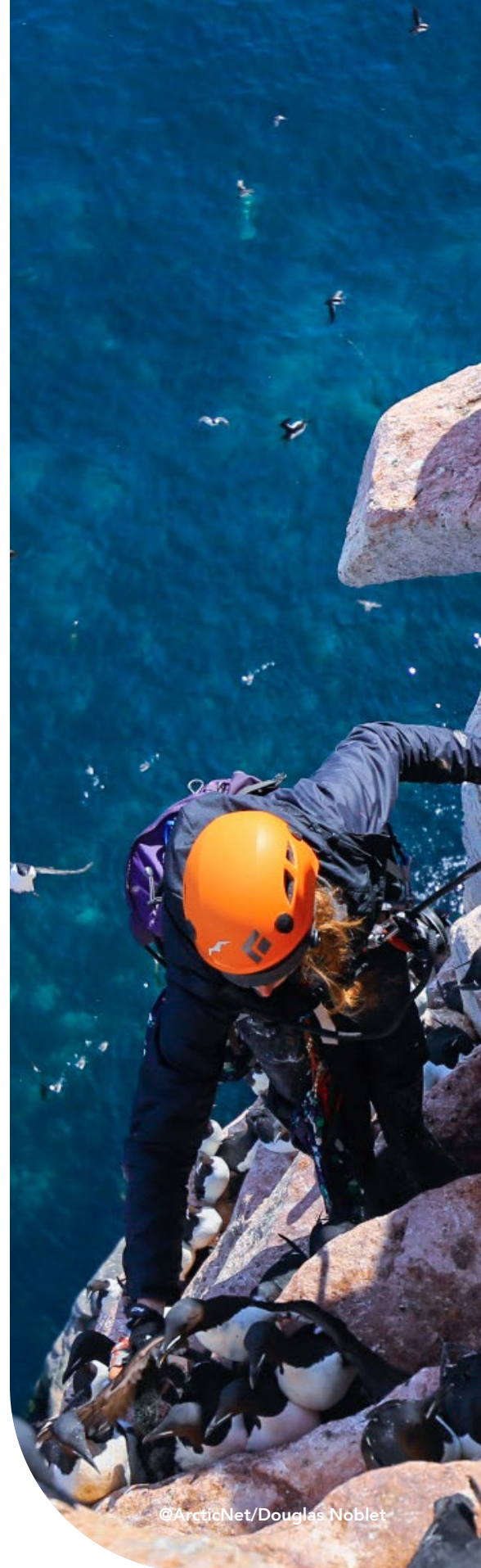
@ArcticNet/Douglas Noblet

Consequences

All participants in ArcticNet events/activities are expected to uphold the guiding principles and objectives outlined in this strategy. Anyone asked to stop inappropriate behaviour is expected to comply immediately. Event/activity organizers may take appropriate action in response to behaviour that disrupts the event/activity or creates a hostile, unsafe, or exclusionary environment. Depending on the severity of the situation, these actions may include (but are not limited to) issuing a warning, removing the individual from the event/activity without refund, and/or restricting their participation in future ArcticNet-affiliated events, activities, or projects.

Questions about our EDI strategy?
For any questions or feedback regarding this document, please feel free to reach out to Melody Lynch at melody.lynch@arcticnet.ulaval.ca for more information.