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# ENHANCING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE CANADIAN FOREST SECTOR

**July 2023**

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Prepared for:  
Free to Grow in Forestry

A report on the experiences of underrepresented groups in Canada's Forest Sector: *focus on opportunities, barriers, challenges & recommendations for action*

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Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

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des genres Canada

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents research findings on the experiences and diversity of underrepresented groups within Canada's forest sector. It addresses eight main questions, which are:

- Who are the underrepresented groups in the forest sector, and what jobs do they perform?
- How do underrepresented groups become attracted to Canada's forest sector?
- What aspects of their current forest sector employment do participants enjoy?
- What are the measures or indicators of a successful or unsuccessful forestry career?
- What barriers and challenges do underrepresented groups encounter while working in the forest sector?
- How do participants cope with challenges they face while working in the forest sector?
- What should young and diverse people looking for a career in forestry be aware of and prepared for?
- How can the forest sector overcome barriers and promote greater equity, diversity, and inclusion?

This report is especially relevant for managers, and supervisors within forest sector organizations in the private, government, and non-government sectors who are seeking to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the forest sector and increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups.

### **What are the backgrounds and identities of participants who took part in this study?**

- In the context of underrepresentation in the forestry workforce, participants self-identified with multiple forms of identity. The main intersecting identities included sex (female, male), gender (e.g., pansexual, gay, queer), ethnicity/culture (e.g., Indigenous, Black, Asian), family arrangements (e.g., mother, new mother), language (e.g., French), disability (e.g., ADHD), and values (e.g., environmentalist/nature lover).
- The study observed that while the forest sector is increasingly encouraging people from diverse backgrounds and identities to consider a career in forestry as, there is still a lack of recognition for those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.
- The majority of participants held Registered Professional Forester (RPF) certification and worked in diverse roles or occupations including human resources (e.g., talent acquisition specialist, managers), technical (e.g., technician, technologist, welder), field-based (e.g., tree planter), management or policy (e.g., forest establishment officer), and consulting.
- A few participants were retired and working as consultants, while others were in school currently attending accredited forestry programs.

### **What attracted participants to work in forestry?**

- There exist several factors and conditions that draw underrepresented groups towards pursuing a career in forestry. Among the most prominent factors are the chance to work outdoors, exposure to forestry through family or community legacy, employment security, a passion for nature and conservation, a desire to contribute towards sustainable forest management, and influence from mentors such as teachers and professional foresters.

### **What do participants love about their current job in the forest sector?**

- Participants appreciated various aspects of their work, such as the availability of diverse roles and opportunities, encountering and overcoming complex challenges, contributing to sustainable forest management, making a tangible impact, working with flexible, inclusive, and open-minded firms and colleagues, the chance to work outdoors and educate the public and decision-makers, mentoring young people, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

### **What are some of the best experiences working in the forest sector?**

- The most rewarding experiences of working in the forest sector involve the freedom to innovate, and receive recognition for it, the chance to work outdoors and explore stunning, and pristine natural landscapes, overcoming complex challenges and creating meaningful change, forging lasting relationships and mentoring others, sharing knowledge and promoting forestry to the public, leading and accomplishing significant initiatives.

### **What are the measures or evidence of a successful or unsuccessful career in forestry?**

- Indications of a successful career in forestry comprise having a strong support system from diverse sources such as supervisors, managers, and mentors; advancing in one's career, excelling in managing complex situations; cultivating and expanding connections; receiving fair and equitable compensation with healthy work-life balance; access to diverse opportunities for career advancement; employment in specialized areas like genetics or government; promoting forestry to a broader audience, particularly women; obtaining professional designations or forestry education; and receiving recognition and respect for one's contributions.

### **What are some of the barriers and challenges participants experience working in forestry?**

- Participants reported a variety of barriers and challenges they faced, with discrimination being the most pervasive. Discrimination manifested in various forms such as under-resourcing based on gender, disability, or bodily characteristics; racial discrimination; gendered expectations; fertility discrimination; sexual harassment; occupational sexism; and environmental microaggressions targeted towards women.
- In addition to gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual identity-related barriers, participants identified other obstacles that transcended identity categories. These included poor recruitment and unprofessional advancement practices; a lack of representation, particularly of women and visible minorities in senior management; insufficient/poor mentoring opportunities; difficulty expressing opinions or concerns in the field, especially for women and those new to the field; internal bullying and inadequate efforts to prevent it; unequal compensation and gender pay gaps; limited opportunities for women with childcare responsibilities; feeling like a diversity token; toxic or poor working environments; dealing with tough conditions in the forest; and job uncertainty.
- While challenges such as sexual harassment, gender pay gaps, and fertility discrimination were more commonly reported by retired individuals or those who had worked in forestry for



over two decades, obstacles like internal bullying and lack of action, occupational sexism, race-based discrimination, disrespect and having one's credibility questioned, and limited opportunities for women with childcare responsibilities persist. Young women who are new to forestry were particularly susceptible to experiencing some of these challenges.

- Participants who identified as visible minorities or recent immigrants were more likely to report lack of representation, discrimination associated with recruitment, and environmental microaggressions.

### **How do participants respond and cope with challenges working in the forest sector?**

- Participants typically responded to challenges through a variety of methods, including self-advocacy; de-personalization or ignoring microaggressions; staying neutral and internalizing; networking and learning through both professional and informal networks; changing jobs or locations; preparing and standing up for oneself; and seeking peer support or avoiding the situation.

### **What do young and diverse people looking for a career in forestry need to know and prepare for:**

- Participants offered both general and specific advice for individuals from diverse backgrounds preparing to enter the forest sector workforce. As a general principle, participants recommended that anyone seeking to work in the sector should: start in small towns, delve deeply into the field, and gain a comprehensive understanding of it; select the appropriate education and experiences; prioritize their own needs, including finding a work-life balance; deliberately cultivate relationships, learn, and network; seek out organizations that explicitly promote inclusion and diversity; and recognize that this is a good time to enter the industry due to its increasing openness and commitment to improving equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Participants offered specific advice for women preparing to enter the forest sector workforce, including: acknowledging that gender inequalities still exist and preparing oneself for potential challenges; maintaining passion for the work; fearlessly pursuing a career in forestry and standing up for oneself at all times; speaking up and advocating for oneself; considering working in government or in the southern region; and seeking external help or support in cases of bullying or harassment.
- Participants provided specific advice for visible minorities and immigrants preparing to enter the forest sector workforce, including: being patient as it may take time to enter the profession; acknowledging that the system is not perfect, but staying in it can lead to rewards; seeking out a mentor and completing an accredited program; recognizing that they may face more scrutiny and thus should be prepared to work harder and learn quickly; considering opportunities in urban forestry or in the southern region; and staying in the sector to create more awareness and opportunities for other visible minorities.
- Those who identify as non-binary and queer and are seeking to enter the forest sector workforce were advised to: be themselves; seek out others, including mentors, who share similar experiences and identities; and seek support from external organizations if necessary.

**What are the options to overcome barriers and challenges to achieve greater inclusion and diversity in forestry?**

- Participants offered several key suggestions for employers to address the barriers and challenges identified, including: fostering an inclusive and positive workplace culture; addressing gender pay gaps and low compensation; implementing effective accountability and reporting mechanisms; ensuring fair and transparent recruitment practices; amplifying the voices of minority groups and celebrating successful examples of diversity and inclusion; proactively connecting with and engaging potential employees from underrepresented groups; providing mentorship, integration, and support for new hires; acknowledging historical injustices and demonstrating a commitment to addressing them; attracting visible minorities to the "north"; providing comprehensive EDI training, particularly for managers and supervisors; and avoiding performative gestures that lack meaningful action towards EDI.

## 1. PART I: BACKGROUND

Women, Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, visible minorities, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and people living with disabilities (PLWD) are underrepresented in Canada's forest sector labour force. Yet, the extent of this lack of representation and our understanding of how it manifests have not been well documented. In 2018, the Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut Forestier du Canada (CIF-IFC) and the Centre for Social Intelligence (CSI) established a multi-stakeholder National Steering Committee of 16 key leaders from industry, government, industry, academia, Indigenous, and non-profit organizations to develop a National Action Plan to promote gender inclusion, and diversity within the forest sector. The Action Plan identified three main pillars for action to address gender inequality in the forest sector:

- Building the evidence base; collect and analyze data to advance equity in the forest sector,
- Fostering an inclusive culture; create pathways for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of underrepresented groups in the forest sector; and,
- Repositioning the sector; advocate, promote, measure and report on progress towards equity.

Work under the first pillar, *Building the evidence base* has utilized various forms of data and analysis to provide a more detailed understanding of the diversity challenges faced in the forest sector. Among them is a report that analyzed labour force data from Statistics Canada to understand the extent of diversity in the forest sector and provided the first comprehensive description of the state of diversity in Canada's forest sector and to effectively establish a baseline against which to evaluate changes over time ([Wyatt et al. 2021](#)). The findings focused on four broad areas to measure diversity in the Canadian forest sector: 1) general labour force participation; 2) diversity in specific jobs across sub-sectors and regions; 3) the wage gap between women and men; and 4) proportion of groups in full or partial employment. The findings provided convincing evidence of a significant wage gap between men and women including 13 job categories where women earned less than 75% of men and only one job (Receptionist) where women earned more (a difference of 4%). However, as with all quantitative data, the findings did not provide explanations for the patterns observed. The report further noted that the gaps between men and women could be due to multiple factors such as differences in years of experience, time taken for family responsibilities, willingness to change posts, deliberate discrimination or unconscious bias, personal characteristics such as ambition, or other factors which need to be understood.

To address these gaps, this qualitative research was designed to provide a more detailed understanding of the diversity challenges faced in the forest sector by examining how underrepresented groups enter and succeed in the forest sector.

### 1.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this study were to:

- Explore the motivations for attraction and entry into the forest sector
- Examine the challenges and opportunities for building a career in the forest sector
- Evaluate the level of satisfaction with the career journey, including compensation and work-life balance
- Analyze the hiring and promotion practices in the forest sector
- Provide guidance and advice for young people interested in pursuing a career in forestry
- Offer recommendations to employers on how to attract and retain employees in the forest sector

### 1.3 Data collection and analysis

The research was conducted by soliciting participation through the CIF-IFC website and social media platforms (Figure 1). In addition, some forest companies and professional forestry associations shared the recruitment campaign on their websites and encouraged their employees to participate.

Interviews were held between November 2021 to February 2022 to collect data for the study. All data was collected virtually through MS Teams or Zoom. A semi-structured interview data approach was used. Interviews lasted between 35 minutes to 70 minutes.

All interviews were audio recorded after consent was received from participants. Where participants did not give permission for the interview to be recorded, hand-written notes were taken.

In total, 65 individual interviews were conducted. One group interview comprised of 6 participants was also conducted. The age of participants ranged from 20 – 65+. In terms of provincial breakdown, 27 were from British Columbia, 17 from Ontario, 7 Alberta, and 2 each from Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Quebec respectively.

The study received ethical approval from the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board. Following initial analysis of the data, preliminary findings were shared with participants through two knowledge sharing sessions. The first session was held on March 21st, 2022, and was attended by participants located in eastern Canada while the second session was held on March 23rd, 2022, and was attended by participants located in western Canada.

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED**

**RESEARCH IN GENDER, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CANADIAN FOREST SECTOR**

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We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study to understand the barriers and opportunities for diverse and inclusive labour force participation in Canada's Forest Sector. We are interested in learning from the experiences of select underrepresented groups including, women, Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, visible minorities, 2SLGBTQ+, and people living with disabilities, in Canada's forest sector labour force.

As a participant in this study, you will have the option to participate in an **individual interview, group interview, or both** depending on your preference.

Your participation would involve a **45-minute interview or a 60-minute focus group discussion** or both depending on your availability. The names of participating members will remain confidential and will not be shared with their employers or other parties.

.....

**INTERESTED?**

To learn more or volunteer for this study, contact  
**Dr. John Boakye-Danquah, PhD** by  
 January 31, 2022:  
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Free to Grow in Forestry is an initiative spearheaded by the Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada and the Centre for Social Intelligence that aims to increase gender, diversity and inclusion in Canada's forest sector.

This study has been approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board

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Figure 1. Recruitment poster for interviews

## 1.4 Report organization and presentation

The study findings are organized into seven parts.

- **Part I** provides background information on the participants who took part in the study, including their diversity of identity, job roles, and sectors in forestry.
- **Part II** focuses on the attractions of working in forestry, opportunities, and positive experiences, including what participants love about their job and what constitutes a successful career in forestry.
- **Part III** discusses the barriers and challenges faced by underrepresented groups in the forestry sector, categorized into generic challenges and group/identity-specific challenges.
- **Part IV** examines how underrepresented groups currently employed in the forestry sector cope, respond, and resist inequalities and discrimination in the workplace, which may also be useful for those seeking to enter the forestry sector.
- **Part V** offers advice and suggestions for people from underrepresented backgrounds who wish to work in forestry, as told by existing employees. This section may also be helpful for young people from underrepresented groups interested in a career in forestry.
- **Part VI** presents recommendations on how employers, including forest companies, governments, and other organizations, can address the challenges and barriers faced by underrepresented groups in forestry. As such, this section may be more useful for managers, leaders, and supervisors in forestry organizations.
- **Part VII** concludes with summary of the research and recommendations for action. This section also provides the research limitations and actions for future research.

To preserve the voices of the participants, the information in this report is organized by themes that include direct quotes. However, we acknowledge that this makes the report lengthy and challenging to navigate for some readers. To address this issue, we have included a summary of the quotes grouped under each theme. This provides readers with a high-level overview of the findings. Nevertheless, for those interested in the participants' stories and narratives, we encourage you to read both the summary of each theme and the individual quotations that accompany it.

## 2. PART II: ATTRACTIONS INTO FORESTRY, SUCCESS & OPPORTUNITIES

### 2.1 Attraction to forestry

The forest industry appeals to individuals with diverse academic and socio-cultural backgrounds. Many are drawn to the freedom of working outdoors, family ties, childhood memories and place attachment, the absence of rigid professional roles and responsibilities, and a love for nature. Others are motivated by their post-secondary education in ecology and conservation-related programs, a passion for nature preservation, exposure to forest outreach and promotion programs, and guidance from mentors and teachers. Some stumble into forestry without any prior familial connections. These findings suggest that while those with family and community ties to forestry and a passion for nature and the outdoors will continue to be attracted to the industry. However, new sources of labor will arise from appealing to young and diverse individuals interested in conservation, sustainability, innovation within the field, and the opportunity for a rewarding and lucrative career that involves living close to nature.

#### 2.1.1 Opportunity to work outdoors

*I've just always really loved the outdoors, trees in particular, plants. I was a computer programmer for 15 years previously and I just realized I missed being outdoors and I didn't really like sitting at a desk at all so this is a second career for me. EDI6*

*What lured me in is to go out to the woods and spend time outside... The people were amazing, the work was interesting, I got to go places in the woods and that continues to attract me and keep me in the industry. EDI18*

#### 2.1.2 Family/community exposure/legacy

*The forest was right next to our house where I grew up and I thought working with trees, and then you know having a log cabin would be the most wonderful life and I ended up doing that. EDI1*

*I have an uncle in forestry, and I do have a very outdoorsy family so there was that draw to want to work outside. EDI11*

*I grew up in the forest and the community... so we solely depended on the forest for almost everything in terms of livelihood. So, I grew up having a passion for forest and nature. EDI10*

#### 2.1.3 Job/employment security

*The whole community and the surrounding communities I grew up in existed because of the local mills so I always remember seeing the people that worked at the mill as having made it so the job security, income, the ability just to have financial security all of that. EDI16*

*I think the draw of working outside is the big one and being assured a job after a two-year diploma. EDI39*

#### 2.1.4 Passion for nature, conservation, and sustainable forest management

*I didn't even really know that forestry was a profession...it wasn't until I took a deep dive into the woods that I realized I wanted to be part of that industry making changes, doing things properly. EDI3*

*I have always been really interested in conservation and because I'm from BC and forestry is such a big industry and everybody uses wood products so I thought it important that we have more sustainable ways of approaching it and I thought by education maybe I can make a difference. EDI12*

*I do feel like it [forestry] can be managed responsibly...I feel very passionate about being part of the industry and trying to make that change from within. EDI11*

#### 2.1.5 Educational programs that expose young people into forestry work

*I had two summers in high school where I participated in the junior forest rangers in Alberta for young people to be exposed to the forest sector...we had all sorts of work opportunities and exposure to things like tree planting, trail building, brushing, spacing, cone collecting. So that really piqued my interest and my awareness that forestry was a viable career choice. EDI37*

*I had a summer job with the Ministry of Forests in [province] and that gave me a chance to do regeneration samples, and permanent sample plots, and I found I really enjoyed it. EDI41*

*In school we would have certain professional speakers come in and give presentations of the work they did in and around forestry. So just inspiration from other people in the sector and getting to hear what sort of things they do and just how wide it was for the different things you could do. EDI26*

#### 2.1.6 Exposure to forestry by chance/accident

*Nobody in my life was into forestry. I lived in the country, but in Southern Ontario, but there's less forests, And I didn't have any mentors. I didn't meet anyone from Lakehead ahead of time or anything like that. I just found the program and said, "This sounds like what I want." EDI33*

*It was totally by accident. I have a degree in psychology, and I was working for [major technology firm] but wasn't happy with my career. I saw a sign for an open house for the faculty of forestry and I went to check out what and I thought "this sound like something I would really enjoy" and it's been a very fulfilling career in many ways. EDI22*

*I came from political science background...planned to pursue flight course...I didn't know anything about forestry, no idea of forestry, but I was always interested in environmental sciences. After school, I didn't know what to do and so forestry was a back-up plan, so I just gave it a try. EDI58*

### 2.2 What foresters love/like about their job

The participants provided diverse reasons for working in forestry, but these reasons can be grouped into 10 common themes, explained below in their own words:

- Access to diverse/varied opportunities and roles
- Working with progressive and inclusive companies, firms or corporations
- Solving complex challenges and make real world impact
- Working with diverse people or within teams

- Working outside and enjoying the beautiful scenery of the wild
- Educating the public and provide knowledge to guide decision makers
- Train and mentor people/young employees
- Contributing towards sustainable forest management
- Having flexibility and freedom to think and work
- Maintaining good work-life balance

Although grouped under themes, most participants mentioned multiple reasons why they loved their current job. Below, each of these themes are explained using participants' own voice.

### 2.2.1 Access to diverse/varied opportunities and roles

*As a technologist, I value the variety of opportunities I get in forestry. While a lot of technologists will become timber cruisers or silviculture work or cutting permit but because it's a community forest operation, and I'm the only technologist, I work with professional forester and we work really well together, and I get to do a variety of everything I went to school for, which is quite rare. EDI30*

*I really like the diversity of all of the different things, different forest management practices I get to see, you get to be a lifetime learner when you're a certification forester because I have clients in BC, Washington, Oregon, Ontario, Minnesota and I get to go see all the different forest practices in all of those locations and find that to be really fun. EDI22*

*I have really enjoyed the variety of work that I've done. I've taught extension in Cuba, and I've worked with First Nations, I've worked in China. I've enjoyed that exposure to different people, different ways of thinking, different ways of viewing forests and the environment because I'm curious by nature. EDI36*

### 2.2.2 Working with progressive and inclusive companies, firms or corporations

*I really like the company, it's a young company, not a lot of diversity on the age spectrum but it's really young, working to improve our wages and stuff and I feel they really want to make people happy. They have diversity in terms of contracts; I work on wildfire projects so not just cut blocks. EDI5*

*This has been my best forestry job ever and it's mostly because of the company I work for. Before this job, I would have [medical condition] so then I couldn't drive, and this limited my job options. I had to hide [medical condition] because I wouldn't be able to work and that would be an issue but here as soon as I had another [medical condition] they were like okay no worries just work from home, we'll figure it out and I just always work from home now and I'll go to the bush if I want to then my boss will pick me up. They have just been great at adapting to what I need to be successful. EDI17*

*I feel like the work environment in [city] was great. I liked the fact that the [city] had a very strong health and safety program, they did inspections, they made sure staff had the appropriate equipment, there was lots of training, top notch equipment. So, I have stayed there for so long because they offer things that are less available elsewhere, you can retire eventually and plan for retirement. EDI44*

### 2.2.3 Opportunity to solve complex challenges and make real world impact

*When I got the job, I was like oh great...so my entire career is going to be focused on addressing the impacts of climate change but okay that's something I anticipated and it's exciting for me and it's just a great opportunity to use what we know. The problem I had with academia was you write a paper and then nothing happens. Whereas I think working for the provincial government we're so uniquely positioned; the work we do has a real impact and I find that partly scary but very exciting as well. EDI13*



*What I really like about my job is it's challenging; I like to constantly be challenged. It's a new program, it's new funding, we're not quite sure what we're doing, so I like that it is a bit of a puzzle and I'm having to pull and lean on multiple people trying to get different pieces together and just figure out how we can make an impact. EDI18*

*I'm paid to be a constructive critic so I can challenge thinking. Since about 2011 I've been primarily the reviewer of different analysis submitted for tree licenses and so I get to check the quality to make sure that the information makes sense, then I help communicate that information to the and that makes a huge impact on how we utilize the forest. EDI19*

#### 2.2.4 Opportunity to work with diverse people or within teams

*I love working with people; when you get into forestry, you think it's about the trees but the trees are fine, and I don't know if this is true of most careers but there are an awful lot of introverted people that get into forestry cause they think they're just going to be outside by themselves, they going to be one with the trees and all that kinda stuff; it has more to do with the people and I like that. EDI33*

*I will say the ability just to work with contractors, I found over the last couple of years, that I really enjoy that. The interaction and getting to know operators and kind of getting to know them on a more of a personal level. Living their stories and how they got to where they are now, and just interacting and making plans with the supervisors as well. EDI34*

*Is the opportunity that I have to actually meet with a lot of different people from the organization, to meet with operational people, salespeople within the global supply chain, and also more senior people in the organization to strategize if things aren't going well with some of the options. EDI41*

#### 2.2.5 Opportunity to work outside

*I think in part like I got to be outside every single day, it was super nice to be able to do that and then I also met with good co-workers as well so that was definitely a good part. EDI12*

*What I love the most is being out in the field. I don't care about the weather. If I get to go out and be in the forest for the day that's awesome. So, I get to see a lot of interesting things and I get to help people as well so it's not just about myself and being out in the forest but also giving back a little. EDI20*

*Well, I was outside a lot. I got to hike around. I got to see a lot of areas that not many people get to see ever. And, yeah, just working outside, and all the terrain, it was. pretty cool. EDI35*

*Look, I like being outside, that part of it is really nice. There's a lot of consistent learning, problem solving, and thinking on your feet and figuring stuff out. And a lot of the time you're working alone with radio contact but you're alone. So, you just have to be able to be on your own and figure stuff out and get the work done that you need to get done. EDI39*

#### 2.2.6 Opportunity to educate the public and inform decision makers

*My favorite thing is taking people on a sawmilling tour and just explaining to them this is each part of it. So, for me, being able to educate the public on what a sawmill does. So, it's quite fascinating. EDI14*

*I prepare implications and considerations for decision makers, so I write briefing notes for decision makers presenting the implications and considerations, so I really like working through that thought process and the analysis to present a variety of options and scenarios for innovation. EDI19*

*I think I have been able to influence how some of these areas [urban forests] were managed. I have gotten to interact with people, got to do some education, communicate even things like prescribed burns which hadn't been dealt with in the City of [name] before forestry or park locations could be managed. I get to work on ground-breaking projects, and I feel good about that. EDI44*

### 2.2.7 Opportunity to train and mentor people young employees

*I love supporting people to succeed, and so I was put into this position where I have a lot of young staff that don't have a lot of experience, and so I can support them in a way that I wasn't supported when I was a young forester. EDI48*

*Now, I have that perspective and that experience to help people. So, the way I manage is very focused on relationships, focused on people. I still have targets, I need to meet in terms of profit and deadlines and all that kind of stuff, and that's important. But the way I manage is really relationship focused. I feel like as a manager and as a supervisor it's my job to make sure that the people that I support succeed, and getting to know them and understanding what they need to succeed is my job. EDI37*

*I'm far enough along in my career that I've had a couple of things happen; both good and not so good, and I have interesting things to tell people that are just starting out. I say, "Hey, don't sweat it, it's gonna be good, but you could do this, or you could do this, and this was my experience." So, we've had quite a lot of hirings that I have been involved with here over the last years, most of them females and so I am excited to draw on my experiences to support them grow and succeed. EDI33*

### 2.2.8 Contribute towards sustainable forest management

*I'm really into integrated pest management, the idea of relying less on pesticides and not on the environment and other aspects to improve conditions. I guess because of my background and ecosystem management and seeing how disruptive some of those things can be, the health management aspect of it really appeals to me. EDI6*

*Being involved in forest management and understanding everything the forest has to offer but also understanding the management side other than the parks, the scenery and the wildlife beauty opportunities and camping and hiking and fishing. EDI28*

*I take pride in working closely with a lot of industry professionals and invasive species management. I spend most of my time and money working around ways to fight different types of invasives and come up with cost effective methods to treat them. It's almost like in society we don't really understand the economic impact of invasive species so I'm an advocate for education management. EDI13*

### 2.2.9 Flexibility and freedom of thought and work

*I like the ability again that I can have my own schedule, I know what my work tasks are and when they needed to be completed, but I can pick and choose like what days I go to the field and what days I stay in the office or what I feel like working on today, based on my priorities. EDI34*

*My biggest thing with this job is the flexibility. I can work from home, I can work from wherever, I can work mornings, afternoons, weekends. I just make my own schedule, almost perfectly. But the thing I like the best about what I do is the field work and being able to have that balance. EDI42*

*Oh, it's the freedom, it's always something different and I have a lot of freedom in the intellectual side of things within industry. I'm allowed to speak my mind and think whatever I want. I realized I was going to compromise my integrity [with government] and some people might think it was crazy but working for the*

*sustainable forest licensee I had more humor of thought, freedom of being able to examine anything and freedom of speech and diversity of thought. EDI2*

## 2.2.10 Maintaining a good work-life balance

*What I really enjoy about my current position is it allows for good work life balance. The pandemic opened my eyes to many possibilities which is great. So, it provides a good work life balance, it also allows the sense of ease to bring forward some of the perspectives that I have. I'm doing work at my own pace, I'm able to like to instruct my own learning. So, I think it's just the amount of flexibility and the amount of self-directed work I guess is probably my answer. EDI43*

*I like the flexibility; I'm not 100% outside you know on the really ugly days I can stay in and answer those emails I've been avoiding all week, so I like the flexibility. Right now, with COVID, I like the flexibility of being able to work from home on non-forestry days or on when forestry days get really long and it's hard to manage a work life balance. EDI32*

## 2.3 Stories of best experiences working in forestry

Participants were asked to share their most memorable experiences working in forestry. The stories they shared have been summarized and grouped into the following themes:

- Opportunity to work outdoors & discovering beautiful & wild landscapes
- Being able to make a difference and contribute to forest management
- Building life-long connections
- Succeeding in solving complex problems and accomplishing major initiatives
- Opportunity to train, mentor and support others to grow
- Training, sharing knowledge and promoting forestry to the public

Next, each of themes are explained using the voices of participants.

### 2.3.1 Opportunity to work outdoors & discovering beautiful & wild landscapes

*I've seen some beautiful things that not a lot of people have seen, seeing the remote and pristine forest is magical. I have enjoyed helicopter flights and then we'll also do brush assessments from the air and just see the birds eye view of how well we're doing. EDI13*

*The places I've seen and travelled through my field work so that's something I'll always attribute to working. I've seen things that tourists will never see in their life even if they have \$5 million so that has been one of the highlights. EDI17*

*My favorite experience was looking for a wolverine den in a forest...that was a lot of fun. So, I guess forestry was the segway for me to find my passion for wolverines because I was one of the co-authors for [province name] first Wolverine Den management. It taught me a lot of stuff about forestry. I think a lot of these things have cemented my passion in forestry. EDI43*

*I remember hooking up my ATV to the bottom of that helicopter, and then being like "Oh, I can't believe...And then you get in the helicopter, then you get dropped off. Even just being around helicopters and tree plants and stuff like that, that whole thing. Watching an entire forest be replanted, that's...Those are some cool work experiences. "I can't believe I'm getting paid for this. I think just about any field day is just such an excellent experience. EDI33*

### 2.3.2 Being able to make a difference and contribute to forest management

*I think it's whenever I feel I've made a difference or been able to protect something of value...whenever there's evidence on the ground that I've done what's right and how it's a long-lasting impact like if you protect a stream then all the streams down from it are protected and I see so much value in doing a good job. So that feeling of knowing you've made a difference on the land and for future generations it just feels really cool and it's a long-lasting impact. EDI11*

*Being part of a program that plants over 50 million trees each year and I feel that's an accomplishment for the planet, for climate change and everything so I feel good about that. I'm getting some recognition from my team, and we are getting some recognition. EDI24*

*Since I started, I updated and rolled out the data collection system for [company branch name]. Before, they were able to just collect the data, but now they're able to analyze it to do rudimentary things like put in a date range and build a chart automatically. So, just by practicing and developing these other databases, I have improved my skills at writing and developing a database. EDI41*

### 2.3.3 Building networks and life-long connections

*I think my best experience is just meeting other women who are in the same field and being able to connect over our experiences and not feel so alone in them. I think that is very empowering. EDI12*

*Forestry is a tight-knit community especially amongst foresters. I've made a lot of friends and we are all interested in the same things which also just like helping your mental health. I think the reward is worth the struggle. EDI34*

*I had a boss in the Forest Service that said, "Go out and meet this guy, ...and I was scared out of my mind. And again, one of the nicest fellows, possibly, again, because we are in the lower mainland, and we have evolved men, I would say, so those experiences stuck with me. The differences between evolved men and non evolved men in the lower mainland. EDI30*

*My later years as a field operations supervisor where I was way more knowledgeable and experienced, and I was operating a whole team. I really liked my co-workers, had a great relationship with them and with my supervisor, I felt confident in the job I was doing, I knew what I was doing. I look back and that was the peak of job satisfaction. EDI32*

### 2.3.4 Succeeding in solving complex problems

*This past summer was amazing to me because we had fires including one major fire right near the community so there's smoke everywhere...despite that I was able to make significant progress in moving my programs forward so like being out in the field, trying to find the best parent trees before they burned down... it kind of got really exciting and really fun to start moving forward. EDI13*

*So, it was the first time ever training a fuel management prescription on a mini-ski resort ... I really enjoyed being able to go out and assess it and look at everything, learn everything myself and then I was able to collaborate with an experienced colleague of mine and learn exactly what to prescribe and do all the documentation. I had it completed and signed and felt a lot of satisfaction in it. EDI20*

*Mostly it's when I feel like I've accomplished something. When I was a foreman, a tree planting foreman and when I was able to pull through difficult situations, I feel like it's always a good moment in forestry when I'm able to do something that I didn't think I would be able to accomplish. And mostly just physical accomplishments since it is a physical job. EDI40*

### 2.3.5 Opportunity to mentor, train and build others up

*I'm more experienced now and I've met some new foresters coming out of school and I've been able to do some mentoring for people who wants to become RPFs...so I've taken on that role with a couple of young grads and that has been really rewarding to share my experience with them and learn about life from a younger person's perspective. I think it infuses a lot of energy, it's fun and just reminding yourself that the work can be fun too and people are usually fun. EDI17*

*Helping people with your experience, you help others to do their job better, it just makes you proud to be done. EDI24*

*More recently, those excellent experiences that I've had are when I'm working with employees, and I can see them improving in front of my eyes. So, I'm coaching folks on how to supervise their own staff, or how to be a little bit more confident or how to speak up for themselves. And when I see that happening, you're just like, "Yeah, that's a rock star moment for them." And it's very exciting. EDI33*

### 2.3.6 Training, sharing knowledge, and promoting forestry to the public

*Probably all the teaching and training ends of the work...having been a technician for long enough my local reputation grew to the point where I would be invited to help teach other people, in college for a summer course at a university, training programs for First Nations communities... so that's probably the highlight of mine. EDI26*

*I really enjoy bringing kids out on tours and receiving feedback from the kids and the teachers. All of a sudden, a bundle will come in the mail and its drawings of you doing what you... Doing what you've taught them on the tour. Those are really rewarding because you know you imparted some bit of information into somebody. EDI30*

*I was working at the college, there were a few exercises we'd do one of them being a survival night...so we'd have a night where we would work all day, doing either data collection or operations like building a bridge on a research forest site... so we would split them up and they're like 300 to 400 meters away from each other at a designed spot and I would go and check on them once or twice during the night but just seeing them come through the night successful was pretty awesome and powerful. EDI29*

## 2.4 Definitions and measures of a successful career in forestry

Participants were asked to reflect on their career journey in forestry and whether they consider themselves successful. Nearly all participants, particularly those in the later stages of their careers, indicated that they have achieved success, although this has often come through challenging and rewarding experiences. Among those who were newer to or in mid-career, some felt they had already achieved success, while others saw success as a long-term goal. The responses have been categorized and summarized into the following themes:

- Having good supervisors, managers or leaders;
- Having a good support system, including teams and mentors;
- Rising to the top or management position.
- Ability to manage complex situations and achieve results – e.g., major policy or legislation
- Developing and growing connections and ability to manage people
- Good/fair wage/compensation

- Having diverse opportunities, taking chances and being flexible
- Being given the chance or opportunity despite in-experience or gaps in career
- Having good work-life balance
- Providing the knowledge and skills to manage forests sustainably.
- Getting employment in a niche field – e.g., geneticists – or in government
- Promoting forestry to many more people, especially for women.
- Being a consultant
- Getting a professional designation or education in forestry
- Being respected or recognized

Below, each of these attributes of success are explained using participants voice.

#### 2.4.1 Having good supervisors, managers, leaders and external support

*When I got to the city of [name] the leadership was really good, they were open, and forestry was able to grow. The people who were in charge at the time were listening to the people in forestry and we provided good guidance on how we needed to grow... so being listened to, to have your voice heard and your input and recommendations accepted, being a valued member of staff and being acknowledged for the work you did were key to my success. EDI44*

*I had a couple of poor supervisors but also some very fantastic supervisors. There were some tough conversations, there was great feedback, there was, "Hey, you could be doing this," or "Hey, you could be doing that." But there were also those thank you and pats on the back. EDI33*

*I had great supervisors. Great female role models, I've had good male bosses as well, but most of my employers have been females. And they're not the type to micro-manage, they give you the opportunity to grow and try things out and a certain amount of flexibility in the job, a little extra time, and working around family. So, I think, having women, strong female leaders, have helped in that sense. EDI42*

#### 2.4.2 Having good support system

*When I first started working for [company], what I loved was the fact that it was a complete team and you felt like you were not just there on your own, it was very much a team effort and I value that. EDI33*

*I think that support system that I have, my parents, my sister, my kids, my husband, my co-workers, when you have that support system, when you are having stressful times or when you're in a situation you're not sure how to handle it, having that extra support is really helpful. EDI33*

*I think it's definitely been having a good support system. That's partly my parents because they're also involved in forestry. But also at school, all the instructors are very supportive. And then also just the company that I found to work for. It's just one of the good ones, I guess. They are trying to improve the company and push for the success of their employees. So, they care about us. EDI39*

#### 2.4.3 Getting to the top – management – being promoted and getting opportunities

*I would say I have been successful to get into where I am in my management position because of resilience, durability and I have a high ability to function on a large enough scale. But also, it's sad in a way because you must have strong traits to be there, and we are probably losing very highly intelligent, very impactful people that just don't have that same resilience. EDI13*

*I have had opportunities to move up in various roles and I have been getting opportunities, but I think it's slow and I must be pushy. I think that going back to school gave me more opportunities. Yes, just showing that I'm committed, I guess. EDI40*

*I got promoted in three years. I proved myself, when I get into the industry, I can do this, I can do that, and I got promoted within three years. EDI38*

#### 2.4.4 Ability to manage complex situations and achieve results – e.g., legislations

*Success for me is seeing the work come to fruition and not cutting corners to get there. I have this internal moral compass and when we can achieve the standards, without compromising, that's when I feel success; when we have gone above and beyond to get a stand to where it is...that brings me happiness. EDI13*

*Success to me means if there's a goal and then you make that happen. It's not necessarily the financial aspect of it. It's super challenging but I really appreciate when people tell me that things are super hard and then I just rock it, they're like oh yes, you're probably going to fuck that up then I do well and they're like oh okay. I get a kick out of that. EDI16*

*Probably my biggest learning curve was when I worked in [company] just having so much responsibility and high expectations of meeting deadlines, and getting things done. My supervisor and I had a lack of experience, so, it was kind of like, you're looking after yourself. If there's problems, you must solve them right away, right? So those kinds of things have helped me be successful. EDI34*

#### 2.4.5 Developing and growing connections and ability to manage people

*I think forming connections, forming links when you basically start out and you prove yourself at some level because you're committed to the job, and you get good feedback, and you know and receive a reward or a recommendation because you didn't lack on any point. I think that's what will make a good forestry person. EDI1*

*Just the ability to talk to people and walk through problems without a huge conflict arising, where people get really upset and then the ability to relate to them has kind of set me up for success. EDI34*

*I think hard work more than anything and working well with people because if you don't have people skills in today's environment especially if you don't have people skills you can work as hard as you can, but you are not going to succeed much. EDI24*

#### 2.4.6 Good/fair wage/compensation

*In the private sector I think sometimes you need to sell yourself, saying you're good and stuff and it's hard for some people, it's hard for me, it was appreciative they gave me a raise without having to ask for it so that helped me feeling more successful, feeling more valued in the company. EDI5*

*I am successful in a way. I'm making the wage that I want to be, and I've been able to develop myself as a forester, but I definitely think I have a lot more to go. EDI18*

*I have been successful in climbing the ladder from one pay scale to the next; I don't know if I personally associate that with being successful but in terms of pay scale in government, I've been successful. EDI19*

*I would classify it as successful in that I'm able to pay my bills. EDI18*

#### 2.4.7 Having diverse opportunities, taking chances and being flexible

*I think overall it's been successful. It's been a roller coaster. I've been moved to a new town; my mill was closed; I've been moved back and forth, and I've been forced into roles I wouldn't have normally taken but at the same time I'm also happy with where I'm at so overall it's been successful. EDI32*

*Flexibility, willing to try new things...and I could have stayed with the government, and I could've risen to be a district/regional manager, but that didn't interest me. I was far more interested in exploring different aspects of forestry, and meeting and learning from different people... I really enjoyed those interpersonal relationships. EDI36*

*I'm highly successful and I think one reason is taking chances, I'm a risk taker. For instance, when I had my second child, I wanted to work half-time but as a forester, back then, it was unheard of. So, I went to my management team and when I mentioned the idea, I was shot right down. So instead of accepting that answer, I did my own research on the statistics around productivity for working half time. I put together a plan on how I could work half time and still be effective and I invited the management team to a meeting and presented it to them and they were like, "Well, we can't say no. You've covered all of our questions." So just ask for what you want and go after it. EDI37*

#### 2.4.8 Opportunity for growth and learning

*I feel successful now in this company I'm at...I just took a break from forestry and didn't want to go back...took some years off to get my medical condition under control...and this company hired me knowing I was not working for six years. So, now I feel successful because I'm able to manage my health well, still be around for my family at home where I can keep the flow smooth and still feel like I'm doing right by the forest. I feel like I'm a good forester, I can make good decisions and juggle all of it by my work accommodating medical conditions. EDI17*

*My boss gave me a lot of opportunity and freedom to excel in my job and kinda prove myself that I can do what he asks. This past summer, I was taken on by a small consulting company, and I was put into account position, and I was just really grateful that they took me on as a woman, not knowing if I could handle the extreme terrain and the exposure to 10 or 12 day camp shifts, and I proved myself, and it was just great that I was given that opportunity to be exposed to that experience and not really questioned if my capabilities were up to standards. EDI35*

*While I was at the college, I didn't have a lot of extra outside forestry experience yet was hired as an assistant and then as a full-time instructor, so I feel that's a successful career there, but I left to do other stuff and currently I've only here just a year, so I guess there is opportunity for growth. EDI29*

#### 2.4.9 Having good work-life balance

*My short-term success would be just being able to achieve consistency in my day-to-day work but that's my short-term goal that my son is doing well in his daycare, and I can show up on the days I'm expected to and everything is flowing well. EDI11*

*I'm successful in my career; my career allows me to enjoy what I want to enjoy in life. Right now it's family, my work is allowing me to really enjoy my family, I go back in a few months and we'll see how that goes but with my flextime I'm going to buy some vacation and I was allowed to keep my vacation I'd accrued before I left which is the first time they've allowed that for somebody on maternity leave and see I asked them for a lot of things and they did say yes to a lot of them. EDI15*

*I think for me, it's been making sure that the right things are prioritized, so my family always would come first, but work is a strong second, and then I also have a business that I run on the side, and having that*



*creative outlet, I think is also really important, to have something else, so that you're not sinking everything into your family or everything into your job. EDI33*

#### 2.4.10 Getting job in a niche field – e.g., geneticists – or in government

*I think even just getting the job in terms of geneticists there are like ten of us in the province, so I feel very privileged and grateful to have the opportunity to do what I'm doing. EDI13*

*My career has been successful in terms of progressing through government, I've been with government probably less than five years and I've managed to climb the ladder so to speak to a high technical level, not a management level. I think I've been fairly successful so far and I attributed that to just self-motivated and driven and not afraid to take chances. EDI19*

*Taking a government job allows financial security but then also I'm still able to do the things I like and learn and talk and research on the things I like so I would say it's a mix, 50/50 professionally I'm probably okay now but I'm not where I would like to be. EDI26*

#### 2.4.11 Being a consultant and/or self employment

*I think going into consulting and self-employment has allowed me to stay in the sector. The reward is correlated to my effort. If I was in a bigger organization that wouldn't really be the case and some of those opportunities would be more limited because you are either waiting for someone to retire to move into a next position. So, I think self-employment has allowed me to stay in the sector, stay engaged in different types of work and different clients and to keep it interesting. EDI17*

*I could see myself getting my RPF and doing some sort of consulting business on my own, that's where I see myself going. I want to probably run my own consulting company, so just the flexibility of being able to do different things. EDI35*

*Most memorable probably would be anything tied to consulting just because consulting is the work that government doesn't want to do it, the mills don't want to do it themselves, so it gets downloaded to a consultant and that's where I've had the most fun, the worst misadventures, getting vehicles and ATVs stuck and having days with that. EDI18*

#### 2.4.12 Getting a professional designation or accredited forestry education

*I believe my career in forestry now is successful, I've come through all the programs and managed to get my professional forester's designation and now I'm contributing back to the land. EDI20*

*My education and diverse experience in Alberta and British Columbia but are not necessarily valued by others because they didn't go through the same experience...but only you know what you've experienced and what you do with it and how you pitch is most important, and I think I've been extremely valuable. EDI28*

*Definitely my programming and schooling. Because being a professional program, they really helped in developing presentation skills, being comfortable talking around people. It's not something I could do before, I was not good at that before I went to school, so that helped it that way. EDI42*

#### 2.4.13 Being respected, recognized and rewarded

*I'd say I would feel successful if I am respected for whatever I've accomplished as opposed to who I am, what gender I am, anything like that and I want to be able to meet a person and not have lower expectations because I'm female. EDI27*

*I find it rewarding that I am recognized by my company for my ability to do my job well. They extended my term beyond the initially expected five to six months and before that full year had elapsed, they offered to transfer me to [name] and they paid for the move and gave me a one-month allowance towards rent as helping me move. Since then, I have been assigned more duties and significantly increased pay from when I first started. EDI41*

*I would say I'm respected by my peers. I'm a person that definitely stands with my morals and values and I don't stand down and I think that makes the forestry sector a little bit scared, so I think for someone who has been in this for five years I have done pretty well. EDI42*

### 3. PART III: BARRIERS & CHALLENGES WORKING IN FORESTRY

Participants were asked to share the barriers and worst experiences they have encountered while working in forestry. They identified a range of obstacles, both past and present, including personal and institutionalized/systemic barriers. The main experiences shared by participants have been summarized and categorized into themes, as outlined below:

- Perceived discriminatory hiring practices
- Gender discrimination
- Poor recruitment and unprofessional advancement practices
- Microaggressions and toxic or poor working environments
- Sexual harassment
- Lack of action against bullying
- Incessant conflicts and poor interpersonal relations
- Disrespect and having one's credibility questioned
- Dealing with tough field conditions in the forest and safety issues
- Difficulty or inability to voice opinions concerns on the field, especially for women
- Feeling like you're a diversity token
- Lack of representation
- Lack of training and mentorship opportunities.
- Poor compensation and gender pay gaps
- Limited opportunities for women with childcare responsibilities;
- Job uncertainty

These challenges are symptomatic of deeper systemic issues that affected participants both personally and professionally.

#### 3.1 Discrimination

Gender discrimination was identified as the most prominent form of discrimination in the forestry industry. It included references to a male-dominated culture that excluded women, recruitment and advancement processes that favored men, rigid gender expectations placed on female professionals, workplace harassment that bordered on fertility discrimination, and gender-based under-resourcing. Participants also shared incidents of gendered verbal and environmental microaggressions, sexual harassment, racism, a hostile working environment for women, and undermining of female leadership and authority. These discriminatory attitudes can curtail professional advancement opportunities for mostly female participants, highlighting the pervasive nature of gender discrimination and the need for more inclusive policies and practices within the industry.

a. Gender, disability / bodily related discrimination, but also safety

*I have a lot of difficulty finding PPE, like clothing that fits me properly and work boots or gloves. I had trouble finding a fitting or suitable vest because things don't come in smaller sizes and that compromises my safety. It makes me look unprofessional because I look like a child wearing my father's suit and the way you look does affect others' perception of you. EDI6*

*Sometimes when a new hire comes or even summer student, they don't have extra shirt for them but if they do it is often like extra-large sizes or that don't fit women or even when it comes to a T-shirt that has their crew on it they only come in men's sizes ...even having to ask for it goes a long way because it makes you feel like you're an afterthought. EDI11*

*I personally have a double XL hybrid vest but the gloves are laughable, they are about three inches too long...I'm used to having a giant vest, I'll tie it in a knot...but if I was working there every single day the message that it's sends is that you don't belong here, we don't plan for you to be here, we don't order things for you to be here EDI14*

b. Race based discrimination

*There's a post-doc at [company name] who is originally from [country] ...she wears a hijab and I've heard comments such as "we can't hire her because her hijab might get caught on a tree" or I've heard comments like "well, you have to be born in Canada to know how to drive on a forest service road... obviously, that doesn't apply to European men. EDI13*

*Like people talking to you and you are listening and it's okay and then you open your mouth to speak, and you almost feel they are slowly dismissing you because it's almost like you have an accent...makes you feel stupid, and I just turn around and walk away because you know you are smart. EDI24*

*I have had managers who have said "I am being asked to employ visible minorities but how am I going to work with people that I don't understand what they say". I don't understand; some people don't even want to learn other peoples' names (how to pronounce or spell them). EDI51*

c. Gendered expectations

*My role is to present implications and considerations for decision makers, and I would do that through an email presenting many options. I've been given feedback like "it needs to be more direct" and "be very firm with my direction; that advice has come from male management, but I feel as a woman if I were to articulate myself in a very strong, forceful, confident manner it would be perceived as overstepping. EDI24*

*Sometimes when you're working with other people, when they even look at you and decide what type of role, you're going to do without actually knowing what you're capable of doing, so they send a couple of guys over to do something I'm entirely capable of doing. EDI6*

*We were hiring a new crew and he [boss] said "I always like hiring girls, they take better care of their stuff, they're cleaner and they really want to be here, and they'll work twice as hard as any of the guys I'm going to hire" and I knew exactly what he meant, and I hated that it was so true. ED32*

#### d. Fertility discrimination

*There is hesitation to hire or rely on young women who people expect might have a child. I know it because it was made clear to me when I got pregnant a second time, it was an inconvenience. It was handled very subtly, and it was surprising 'because I mostly had female supervisors who were older than me. EDI42*

*When I worked in industry I felt if I wasn't a status native, I would have been a liability, that's how it was when I got pregnant too, I was like an inconvenience because I couldn't go to the bush all the time and I was supposed to be a layout person so for quite a few months I just showed up at work and didn't really have anything to do because they didn't find something useful for me to do. EDI17*

*It did affect my job choices [having a child] actually, because for one, I knew that having a second child would be difficult if I got into a forestry job where I would have a field work or anything like that, and then because of the old boy's club, and that's part of the reason that I stayed [in a university]. EDI42*

#### e. Sexual harassment

*I think sometimes it feels like you're constantly paddling upstream, but I mean there's one thing that stands out. There was an incident of sexual harassment in camp, and I didn't really talk about it for a while and then when I was telling friends of mine in the industry, I realized that maybe if that happened to some people, they would have reacted differently than me. EDI17*

*People would comment on parts of my body. You know, it would sexualize me to a certain degree. That was when I was in my late 20s, early 30s. And that you don't really even know what to say when that happens in the workplace, right? So, people would joke about how big my boobs were or... I remember a manager telling a crude joke. It was inappropriate. EDI37*

*I've also experienced workplace harassment and discrimination I guess that wasn't great mentally and that was largely due to a white guy who didn't like the fact I was young; I was not a man, and it was just not a great experience, so I guess that was the other one. EDI43*

#### f. Occupational sexism

*I've also been on sites where I'm with a contractor that is overseeing a big capital project... the new contractor shakes the hand of every one of my male co-workers and then looks at me and goes to introduce himself, ask my name and then he just calls me "beautiful" for the whole rest of the tour. I'm like my name is [Name] and he was like I'm just going to call you "beautiful" and not one of my supervisors said anything. I'm the most junior employee, what am I going to do, so simply get along with them. ED32*

*Something that drives me really crazy is when somebody refers to me as a girl. They don't refer to men as boys, so why are they infantilizing women in the workplace? You know, when they say, "Hey, guys and girls," it's like, "No, no, we're not girls, we're women." So that still happens a lot. EDI37*

*I rolled out this program for a few months and then I would go to all the mills and check in with all my technicians and ask them how... "So how is everything going with the maintenance training program"? what are your thoughts, are there any grumblings, are excited about the training? One of the supervisors was like "oh yes we're just all excited to see which one gets to follow you around the mill and stare at your ass" and he said it in front of three other colleagues and I was so humiliated, more than embarrassed, I felt defeated because I just thought I have worked so hard to get you guys more wages, better benefits, training, no I was*

*reduced to something and as an educated female that's worked so hard in this industry, I honestly felt it was my lowest point. EDI14*

g. Environmental microaggression towards women

*There was a woman who came to work just for the summer, and she was a lesbian, and everybody just would talk about her behind her back all the time and it was really quite disturbing for me...it was going on around me so I feel that also exists where people will label you as something. EDI20*

*In the woods it's probably more escalated on a volume scale, maybe a vulgarity scale. People tend to use worse language out in the bush than they do in the office, and I've been on the receiving end, right in the field office and out in the bush. EDI26*

*When I'm going to be going on a work site I usually default to women for my safety because most of these camps are men camps and that can be scary. Oftentimes they organized for you to go to the washroom because it's not safe. EDI43*

h. Gendered under-resourcing/infrastructure.

*When I started, I had to fight really hard for resources but other people who started after me with fewer qualifications, they were just given these resources I had been fighting for, so I got quite bitter for a while and just felt really annoyed with this double standard. EDI13*

*When I go to work at the mills, I go to the washroom when I hit the office because I know once I get out to the mill my options are very limited. We've got limited change and locker rooms and things like that because they really plan on one or two to be there right...so I think the infrastructure is an issue EDI14*

### 3.2 Lack of representation

Who gets to be in a decision-making role and which diversity issues get to be prioritized/discussed in the forest sector is mediated by gender, race and other identify factors. Participants noted that women, Indigenous peoples, and visible minorities were less likely to hold leadership or management positions, and discussions and initiatives to promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the forest sector were less likely to address or prioritize issues affecting the SLGBTQ+ community.

- a. Women, indigenous peoples and visible minorities are less likely to be in leadership or management/executive roles/positions

*My company is very transparent. I can go to the organization chart and see who oversees what, this person, the team, how many people in this team, and the pictures and name and a little bit of background, so I can see everything. And I have to say...I haven't really seen the diversity in that group yet. EDI38*

*I find it's going to be very difficult because the people that are making the decisions themselves there's no representation at the highest point where the decisions are being made so even if everyone below feels like this needs to change but if there isn't representation from the top then it's very hard to make change. EDI6*

*I'd say where I most often see visible minorities are the people driving the trucks, both delivering the logs from the bush, and the people picking up the finished lumber. EDI41*

*In the last few years, they've[company] been really hiring women but not necessarily forester women. We are harder to come, so there is a lot more women being hired in different parts of the company, but I was the first RPF woman to be hired at the company that's been around for decades, so I think they recognize they need to be fairer but I don't know if they know how to be fair without being biased. EDI15*

b. Although there have been improvements in women representation in executive and management positions, the lack of women representations lingers

*We have quite an even split of female and male, but we don't have a lot of women in higher up positions. And the company has reached out to the women in lower positions and been trying to figure out why that is. A lot of the time, it seems, women tend to either move to other positions or they do wanna start a family. And a lot of the work that we do it's 50 hours a week and a lot of it is in camp and that's just not conducive to starting a family. EDI39*

*All the people that are making these decisions are white, Caucasian, male, straight male, so the female representation at that executive level is like 80-20. It should be 50-50. EDI45*

*I said [to my manager] there are no women managers and then at a team lead meeting he had asked everyone to look around and essentially said "how many women team leads do we have" and everyone said there aren't any. I think sometimes women are just overlooked, sometimes it just seems to happen, other times it comes down to women are going to have to kids and they're going to married and they don't want to put them in a management role because they won't be there for long while men tend to be in these management roles longer. EDI18*

c. Diversity and inclusion discussions in the forest sector is less likely to include representation of people who identify as gay

*Last year was the first time on our website where we spoke about pride week/month and what that meant. I found out from the communications department that the announcement came up from a small group in [location name] that actually said, why don't we ever mention anything about it [gay], right? It wasn't from the corporate. EDI45*

*I'm sure there would be people in the organization that would go like "well, no, no. Let's just concentrate on women's diversity right now, we don't wanna get involved in people, sexual orientation," right? And that's where they're wrong, because I think if they also saw that they were being very open to everybody, I think that would further attract women. EDI45*

*Through my 30 years of work in forestry, I have not seen examples of other gay people in leadership roles, or anyone in the organization reaching out to me, asking me for my view as someone that's fairly well respected. We are going through a diversity program, but I haven't been asked to contribute. EDI46*

*They [company] are still talking about diversity within gender, like getting women involved in the organization, and indigenous people and Black people. And it's the first time I've seen something published that shows LGBTQ community as being part of it. It's never mentioned in any of the diversity campaigns. So, when I saw this [research poster], then I realized all they were doing was re-writing what you had in yours. EDI46.*

*When I was in sales, my reviews were great. I developed a lot of good relationships. However, I felt so uncomfortable 'cause I felt if they knew, would that get all taken away? Would it create not just damage to me, but damage to the organization? Because to me, that would be very damaging to me personally to hear that, oh, the account got pulled because they heard I was gay or... So, there was my work life and there was my social life, and the two did not meet. Lots of opportunities were lost because of that. EDI45*

### 3.3 Poor compensation and gender pay gaps

One of the biggest systemic challenges mentioned by participants was poor compensation and gender pay gaps. Although most participants in later stages of their careers indicated that they were satisfied with their compensation, many had experienced being underpaid. Female employees, in particular, tended to start their careers with lower pay and often had to demand a pay raise before being offered one. Women generally received lower pay and discovered later in their careers that they were being paid less than their male colleagues with comparable or less experience and doing same or similar job. Additionally, women and people of color were less likely to negotiate their salaries.

Participants stated that wage issues were less transparent in the private sector than in the public sector, although the private sector tended to pay more. Participants said that the public sector had a more transparent pay structure than the private sector, as well as job security and other benefits.

- a. The forest sector is generally noted to have low compensation compared with other natural resource sectors

*A lot of the people that have jobs in forestry, the main concerns are always low compensation or working too many hours but like across genders even if you are a white man that's always going to be an issue, it's not just my race that are not getting fair compensation. EDI12*

*My company has existed for a long time it's just getting bigger right now...I think they're also seeing it's really hard to find people and they have been hiring a lot of girls/woman and a lot of people with degrees which is super cool but it's hard to retain them because they don't pay a lot and it's a lot of physical work that you don't need school sometimes for. EDI5*

*I think compensation is huge and forestry companies don't really understand that they're competing for employers with non-forestry companies such as oil and gas companies and utility companies; there's a huge need for natural resource professionals in many industries and there's a lot of opportunities, so I think the hardest part is just matching that. EDI32*



- b. New female employees often start on the low end pay and must demand a pay rise before being offered

*When I first started it was just under a smaller consultant but I was making \$10.00 less than somebody who had no education and I did that for about six months and then I asked for my first raise to be equivalent to what the other crew members were making and I think I got a \$6.00 raise right on the spot but I had to advocate for that myself, it wasn't offered to me but I was new and coming off mat leave. EDI3*

*After I got hired when I was dealing with the hiring person I was asked if I could get a wage and the response was no because just a handful of years ago, they would hire any kid off the street for the position which was quite offensive to me because I had the job and because technically you don't need any qualifications so they can justify not paying you very well. EDI12*

*It still happens, and unless you find out, as a woman, that you're getting paid less, you will continue to be paid less. Yeah. It's happening. EDI36*

- c. Women tend to be paid less and most women find out later in their careers that they receive less than their fellow male workers with comparable or more experience

*So if we are hiring two people, for example and with identical years of experience, they'll say okay I think this guy should be about \$80,000 and the women will say \$60,000 so what I would always have to do – because I was prepared for it to happen – is I would bring the last five hires and I'd say this is what we pay with equivalent experience but they would always want to pay the woman less. EDI14*

*I had worked for the government for two years already, and I found out that a co-worker who was a male was getting paid more than me, and it was his first summer and he had no forestry experience. Now, I was told that this had something to do with how the pay work experience worked out, but in my mind, that just didn't make sense if he had no forestry experience and I had some...I was very upset". EDI34*

*After I took the job, I had another contractor tell me that one of my peers what his salary was and it was \$15,000 a year more than mine and I was shocked...there is a way in our system to look at what bill out rate is which I don't think my organization knows that I can do and I did look at it and I saw who was at the top and who was at the bottom and I went through and actually looked at all the women contractors for all the different standards, not just forestry and we were all at the bottom, we were not at the highest bill out rate except for one woman who was really high. EDI22*

- d. Women and people of colour are less likely to negotiate salaries

*Certainly when you're a woman or a person of color or you're into a new job I think most people wouldn't start by asking for more whereas I've heard and I've seen firsthand other guys who do come in asking for more money and they get more and you're like what you're getting paid less to do what, no way, you know how does that work and then they're like well you know they asked and you didn't ask and obviously there's a variety of reasons that contribute to why you don't ask but when I started it never even occurred to me I could ask. EDI17*

*I lack confidence to go to a manager and ask for a raise. I've never done that, and I talk to other co-workers and they're like, are you insane? What do you mean you've never gone and asked for a raise. I've done it once this year and that's something I feel very uncomfortable doing. EDI32*

*I haven't talked to any management about it, but I know I deserved to be paid more than...Yeah, yeah. Because I know my worth and how much I contribute. And I know my capability. But I just don't have the courage to do that. EDI38*

- e. Compared with the public sector, wage issues are less transparent in the private sector as people do not have the courage to discuss

*In the private sector, it's not uncommon you get an offer letter and you're like okay that's good and then your co-worker is doing the same job as you but then later on you find out that it's more or less and you're doing the same work, but it was just they did more or less negotiating rate to start with. EDI17*

*The company policy does not allow people to discuss salary issues with other employees. Let's say if we work together, we are not allowed to discuss our salary with each other. EDI38*

*I think in government it's pretty fair because for the most part, all the jobs are union and there is a pay grade stating clearly where you come in and how you move up but in the private sector depending on who you know and the type of people you know and whether people talk about how much they get paid or not there's no grade and depending on your employer. EDI4*

### 3.4 Poor recruitment and unprofessional advancement practices

When asked about their experiences with recruitment and hiring practices in the forestry sector, participants provided mixed responses with some reporting positive experiences while others shared negative experiences. However, most participants acknowledged that systemic challenges in recruitment and promotion persist, despite improvements in the recruitment of under-represented groups. Women, in particular, recounted historical discriminatory hiring practices, although they also noted that the general acceptance of women in forestry has improved.

According to some participants, while employment in the government sector is perceived to be transparent, in practice, several biases prevail, mostly favouring internal candidates. Conversely, participants believed that there is less transparency in hiring and promotion in the private sector, where nepotism and a "boys club" mentality persist, often at the expense of newcomers and women. Immigrant participants indicated that foreign credentials present a major barrier to entry into the sector, and without motivation and mentorship, the likelihood of dropping out of forestry is high. However, some participants noted that hiring practices are changing, with the promotion of various diversity initiatives, the emergence of checks and balances to combat biases, and new companies committed to equal opportunity employment.

- a. Many women recounted historical discriminatory and poor hiring practices although they acknowledge hiring practices have improved

*They did not want to hire me ... the person who was leading the hiring competition tried to convince me five times to drop out of my interview. He was also on the [study] committee of the person they hired, so I knew that was going to happen... it's almost like they want you to think less of yourself even though you know you're capable of making these contributions so that was my experience. EDI13*

*When I was starting my career, I might have had more experience than other people, but I was a woman and I was younger, so I wasn't given the same responsibility. EDI50*

*It's such a different hiring market now. When I first applied there were some poor hiring practices... they asked what my childbearing plans were for the future and then if I were going to have any more children. I*

*knew these questions were asked and I still took the job because it was such a jump for me in salary, responsibility, and a career jump that I had to take but I think you can just look at who is being hired and you can see there isn't equity and diversity at the forefront of these decisions. EDI3*

b. Poor and discriminatory hiring practices persists, especially for visible minorities

*Hiring continues to be difficult for me even just to watch. We hired someone with a high school diploma into a position that previously they would never have been qualified for and to do that we excluded a woman we had worked with in our office for over a year who had a master's degree. I said something about it and still have people with a straight face try to explain to you...but it's because they the skewed hiring criteria so they could get this one person they wanted. So that was a low point. EDI13*

*I did one of the forestry organizations in [province] and felt I performed so well, and the panel members were very impressed but at the end of the day I didn't get the job so I was very saddened, and I felt like I was an immigrant, or the job might have been cooked for someone. I was in the wrong place, that was my lowest moment. EDI10*

*I have lost opportunities as soon as I say I am not an RPF and even if they weren't requiring me to sign off on a plan or use the designation in that way, sort of that oh you're not a forester, and so I have had that feeling a couple of times. I get the designation is important and respected, people work hard to earn it and I respect all of that, but I feel sometimes there is maybe still that culture of oh you're not one of us and that hurts. EDI26*

c. Government sector is transparent on paper but its hard to get in because internal candidates are always preferred

*They [government] look positive on the surface but in many of the cases I have observed and actually I did many interviews to be honest it's not transparent... when you see that advertisement all good words are there but when it comes to the hiring it's at the discretion of the hiring manager. EDI4*

*I did an interview and at the end of the interview I was told "well you are not accepted" and I asked for the feedback. The manager was very nice and he was very upfront and he said "to be honest you did wonderful and I have nothing to tell you where you lacked in your interview, the only reason you did not get this position is the other person is already working in the ministry and he has more experience and some relevant experience but if that same person would have declined I have no reason to not call you for this job". EDI4*

*Our hiring practices [government] are the biggest obstacle because we tend to pick favorites and then whether or not positions there are temporary assignments so people can just get appointed into those and then there are internal hiring processes and then you can write a job profile so that really only the person qualifies. EDI51*

d. Private sector hiring and promotion is less transparent - Nepotism and Boys club mentality persists

*It's fairer in government than in the private sector where if you know the right person, you're getting the job and maybe there's not even an interview. EDI4*

*In the private sector I've seen a lot of nepotism or boys club mentality with hiring and promotion...in some instances you know that those people you know aren't good at their job but yet everyone knows it and says it but yet they're still there and they're not going anywhere because they know the right people, or they've been there for a long time. EDI17*

*To be honest with you male leaders just tend to be less inclined to hire females because they just don't want to deal with the issues so I guess avoidance would probably be the number one reaction. So, for instance, I've got three qualified candidates, one of them is a woman, all things being equal, I'm going with a guy then I won't need to deal with that, so I think that's probably the number one thing. EDI33*

- e. It's tough for immigrants with foreign credentials to enter forestry - You have to be motivated and supported or else you will drop out

*Overall, I think navigating to the forestry sector in Canada for an immigrant is really tough especially when you come with a foreign degree, and you don't enroll in an accredited program. I was fortunate to be motivated to engage or enroll in another Master's program that is professionally accredited; I think that was very, very helpful but if you don't go through that process and you want to navigate through the system to become an RPF you have to go through a whole lot. EDI10*

*You know being an immigrant and English as a second language, I attended an interview, and I was way more experienced for the job than the guy that got it and I failed on my interview based on my spelling mistakes; at that time, they didn't allow us to use a computer and that kind of hurt although computers were available at the time. EDI24*

- f. Forestry is a small world – networks are key to getting a job so that can be a barrier to newcomers, and women

*Forestry is 100% who you know - whether in consulting, industry or government - because it is such a small niche world that networking is very important. It comes into play quite often in hiring practices whether it's formally or informally. I see that and now having been through a lot of interviews, the interview panel yes, I absolutely see that network and who you know is important. EDI8*

*Being a small niche networked industry, that's tough like I think it would be tough for a newcomer, new to the province, new to the country to break into that. I don't know if it's contextual or [pause] but I do see that as a barrier to this. EDI2*

### 3.5 Lack of mentoring opportunities and poor supervisors

- a. Mentoring, supporting and training of new employees in key skills and competencies remain a challenge

*I was thrown into the deep end as a very young person and given this immense responsibility up in a remote area of the province, in the logging camp. They just threw me in the deep end and said, "Here is your budget, here's your truck, here's the keys to your truck, go for it...back then there wasn't a lot [mentors], you'd find somebody to talk to, like a manager, or a colleague, and you kinda bounce ideas off of them, but it wasn't that common. What I'm seeing now is that there's a lot more formalized coaching and supervisory training. EDI37*

*There is not enough early training on some of those key business elements, like budgeting, hiring, some of those core tools that sometimes men used to get just by way of getting into the workforce earlier or being put on a fast track for management development. But one of the things I noticed that I didn't have when I was coming into this management position is that women sometimes don't get that budgeting or finances, business kind of training because it's math, or it's hard. EDI33*

*Another big issue is minorities and leadership too; very, very few. I did run into definite issues where I had to stand up for myself, not really having a mentor or anybody to look up to, which is why it's hard for a woman to last in camp. EDI14*

b. Some supervisors fail to support and defend women their subordinates' experiences discrimination and poor working relationships

*In my previous job before my direct supervisor was moved, he would say things that were just full sexist and not see anything wrong with it and I almost felt like I couldn't bring it up to him because then he would be like "oh you can't take a joke" and also in reviews, he would say I was difficult to work with or I couldn't take instruction and different things but I would ask other supervisors and they would say that I wasn't those things so it's that personal relationship. EDI11*

*I've had some poor supervisors in the past, and at the time...I had a supervisor that was not great, and I was trying to figure out if I wanted to leave the organization and go work somewhere else, because I didn't see a way out. I just wasn't going to fix this person's behavior, so yeah, that might be the worst one. EDI33*

*I was speaking with a contractor and his Foreman, and they were working on some machine and one of the operators and a mechanic who's younger was working there too. And the older foreman made sexual but vulgar comments about me and there is no rhyme or reason for it, he was just trying to make a joke and be funny. And I was very taken back by that. EDI34*

### 3.6 Difficulty or inability to voice opinions or concerns on the field

Some participants reported that they faced several challenges (e.g., severe weather and wildlife encounters and other safety concerns, discriminatory hiring practices), but found it difficult to speak up about feeling unsafe due to a fear of being seen as weak. Additionally, some participants felt unheard or dismissed when voicing their opinions, leading them to consider leaving their job.

*This year there were a lot of challenges with the weather like severe fires, heat and lots of wildlife encounters and when I felt unsafe in the role it was always a challenge for me to speak up because no one else spoke up, I don't want to be seen as the girl who can't take a little bit of heat or weather so those are maybe some of my worst moments. EDI12*

*When I speak out [against discriminatory hiring practices] like you really have to weigh the balance because you piss people off speaking out like you're not building those positive relationships with your supervisor or*

*whoever and you can't really do anything about it like I mean whether or not I speak out at this point it doesn't change how the process is going to happen. EDI13*

*Anytime I'm not feeling right about something and try to voice my opinion on it and I'm feeling like I'm not being heard or I'm being told it's not acceptable for me to voice my opinion those are times where it's just like I just want to get out of here right now. EDI20*

### 3.7 Lack of action against bullying

Some participants reported experiencing internal bullying and lack of support, which resulted in isolation. Examples included feeling like a troublemaker for reporting problems and supervisors defending bad behavior instead of supporting staff.

*The internal bullying and lack of action is not so good. Once I got enough courage to spill the beans and say this was a problem and nothing was done about it. I turned out looking like the villain and a troublemaker I would say. It's very disheartening to say that but especially at the time I was the only female in the office, so I felt very alone, isolated and definitely not supported. EDI28*

*Some people are difficult...talks down to you, and he would leave, and I would just shake my head and say to my boss, "I don't like dealing with him and he said, you know, "that's just who he is, he's just an old guy, and this and that."...what I didn't like was that fact that he would defend another man's bad behavior, and he did that several times. Instead of standing up to those men and saying, "We don't speak to our staff like that, no matter who they are," he just went, that's who he is. He'll never change." EDI30*

*I know a lot of people in the field team who had a wonderful experience in the field because they had a great supervisor and then others who hated it and would never come back to work there just because they had a terrible supervisor. ED32*

### 3.8 Limited opportunities for women with childcare responsibilities

Some participants expressed difficulties in finding job opportunities that could accommodate their need for full-time daycare and as a result had to turn down offers. For some others, limited daycare facilities made it challenging to commit to full-time work.

*I did land a lot of interviews but then when it came to discussing what are the options, I felt like a lot of them I had to turn it down because I couldn't guarantee what they were asking from me like they were okay to do part-time but it was temporary like they wanted me to say within a certain number of months I would go full-time so they were willing to try but the end goal for me is full-time and daycare but it's so hard to find I feel like it's across the province probably even across Canada. EDI11*

*In the beginning all we had was two days a week guaranteed for daycare, and I had no idea when that would change to be able to say in three months I could do full-time was impossible for to guarantee so I had to turn down job opportunities because of that limitation and also their inability or them not being willing to consider something part-time as a more long term solution. EDI11*

### 3.9 Incessant conflicts and poor interpersonal relations

Participants shared experiences of conflict and disagreements in group settings and with contractors, which were not always resolved. For some female participants, conflicts with male counterparts were particularly stressful, and standing one's ground was perceived as difficult rather than assertive.

*When we are working in groups, we have a lot of conflict; some conflicts that don't get solved like something I would count on as my worst experience. EDI1*

*I have had conflicts and I don't want to say that it's all the men's fault because I don't want to sound like I'm a man hater but I have had conflicts/disagreeing with male counterparts which have been quite low, they've been very stressful. The perception is that you're difficult because the expectation is I'll do whatever my male counterpart says even if I have always been extremely ethical, it's just standing my ground. EDI22*

*Sometimes I get frustrated with contractors because they are not following all safety protocols, like you have to wear your safety glasses, you have to wear your hard hat, you have worn your safety boots, you have to wear your high visibility vest or appropriate equipment...but they often do not like to take some of the safety protocols serious and I wanted to insist that they do the right thing. EDI41*

### 3.10 Disrespect and having one's credibility questioned

Some participants shared their experiences of workplace challenges, including cultural issues such as dishonesty, bad science, arrogance, and a culture of silence. Gender-related conflicts were also mentioned, such as not being respected or being questioned due to being a woman and struggling to gain respect and lack of support from immediate supervisors.

*The worst experience that would definitely be the last plan...I still have PTSD from it but that was more because of the dishonesty, bad science, it was a cultural thing, the culture of silence, the culture of shutting down feedback, culture of arrogance so it was nothing to do with me being a woman or anything. I was in a position of having my credibility seriously questioned even though I 'd done nothing, EDI2*

*I've always been told this one team member will never represent me because I'm a woman and there is often conflict where they're not receptive to the implications, considerations, and recommendations I'm putting forward and I do believe a lot of that conflict is based out of just this lack of respect so that's a continual thing and those are those low points for sure. EDI19*

*Certainly, in first office I worked at when I was in my 20's that was challenging, because I didn't get a lot of respect, and I couldn't go to my district manager. EDI36*

### 3.12 Job uncertainty

Few participants recounted their experiences of job insecurity such as downsizing in government and mill closure, and the anxiety and uncertainty that comes with it.

*Governments go through downsizing and those experiences are awful. I remember one year when they call you basically, they told us to stay late in our office and then they will call or text the people and you are sitting there and waiting praying to God for the phone not to ring EDI24*

*When my mill closed that was probably the lowest where I didn't really know if I was going to get laid off, if I was going to be kept on, if I was going to move, where I would move to. That was probably the most stressful moment for me. EDI32*



## 4. PART IV: STRATEGIES TO COPE OR RESIST INEQUALITIES IN FORESTRY

Participants were asked how they responded or coped with barriers or challenges experienced. An overwhelming majority of participants responded to challenges through personal or individual level actions as opposed to management or external body intervention. This notwithstanding, some participants acknowledged that some employers are owning up having recognized increased public conversations about the need to create an inclusive, equitable and diverse forest sector. A summary of how participants responded include:

- self-advocacy
- de-personalizing
- ignoring gendered microaggressions
- internalization
- staying neutral
- changing job or locations
- personal search for best practices
- peer support
- preparing and standing up for oneself
- learning and drawing resources from ones network
- employer support

The fact that participants opted to address the challenges they experienced through personal or individual level approaches signals an absence of a systemic or organizational approach or lack of faith in existing organizational mechanisms to mitigate these barriers. Individuals are often ill-equipped to effectively deal with systemic issues that affects them.

### 4.1 Self-advocacy

*So, I knew that story [...] and I think with knowing about the previous people's experiences, it was informative in the sense that I knew I would have to advocate for myself. EDI13*

*Women don't advocate for themselves. Right? So, a lot of times, the management teams are composed of... Male dominated... Primarily men, and what I've seen in the private sector is that unless you speak up for yourself, change is not going to happen. EDI37*

### 4.2 Self-searching or researching for solutions

*A lot of it is doing your own research, finding out about the companies you are interested in working for like seeing if they have policies in place like Trans inclusion policies, hiring practices. You can tell a lot just by going to someone's website and seeing whether its performative or not and the fact it's there and if you read through it and sometimes people post photos of people that work there and it's like okay. EDI6*

*In terms of the equipment and PPE, I've been looking on social media to find people that are redeeming certain things that are fit for smaller people or gender non-conforming and there are people out there that are doing that work. I think it would be helpful if there was somewhere central, I don't know, the Internet's an amazing tool where people would be able to put up links to different types of resources. EDI12*

### 4.3 De-personalizing / ignoring microaggressions

*I have never taken it so hard. but it's nothing I bring home with me, it's water off of a duck's back to me, I would just say "those guys". That's how I would think of it, those old guys that's just how they are and not excusing the behavior at all, but it does seem to me that older generations have definitely not had colleagues that are closer to my age and certainly younger exhibiting those same behaviors. EDI26*

*If they're still a culture where you're getting teased after work and stuff and... Yeah, just standing your ground and telling, or just ignoring, or whatever. I just take a joking approach. I don't know, many people don't. It's probably my personality too. EDI35*

### 4.4 Staying neutral and internalizing

*It was difficult to address being my first job in the industry...so quite often, it was just saying something relatively neutral. I wasn't agreeing with them but wasn't outright disagreeing because there were also a couple of my co-workers who were a little bit older and had more traditional views on stuff like that. I didn't want to make any tension at the workplace because it was overall quite an accepting workplace, it was just those couple of little things. EDI27*

*I want to say I went as far as the vice-president, and they just don't want to deal with people like that. This person was known to have an issue working with females and I just think they don't want to deal with it. That's the typical male trait I'm going to use, which is very superficial and not that practical in addressing these types of issues whereas females and others will actually internalize and sort these things out if they're asked to deal with them. EDI28*

### 4.5 Networking, learning and peer support

*If you don't feel like you belong, I mean there's tons of really great networks and groups that you can join, ... but sometimes you have to do that little bit extra although you're still not noticed or acknowledged because it's not what they're looking for. EDI42*

*I had lived with some of the people in camp for six months straight, and I had to build bonds with some of them. I'm almost 25 years old, and some of these people were double my age and so just creating those conversations, and those bonds that you can lean on and trust them, it's helpful in those situations and helps to know your rights, especially right to refuse work. EDI35*

*Regarding the perceived biases I received, most company policies don't seem to address that, so I've sought out peer support groups with other women or like I said I have a mentor whom I speak. Having those types of relationships formalized in government, encouraged, or creating time to have those peer support networks I think that would be beneficial. EDI19.*

### 4.6 Changing jobs or taking jobs in more diverse locations

*So, I looked for another position and that's why I landed at the government. So, I wasn't supported at all. And in fact, I have a friend and colleague that works for that company. They're still there and she had kidded the same time as me, it took her a few years before she convinced them to let her work 0.8, instead of a full-time, so that she could pick her kids up from school or take them to appointments or whatever, and frankly, she gets more done than the average full-time person. EDI37*

*After school, I didn't want to go up north because I felt I would experience more barriers in the community and the workplace than in the south. For instance, I was concerned I might not find her species up north and whether the community would accept me, so I took policy job in Ottawa. However, I missed some field*

*experience that would help me understand the sector better so its important to consider not just work-life balance but also socio-cultural life balance. EDI26*

#### 4.7 Prepare and stand-up for yourself

*Yeah, definitely stand up for yourself. EDI28*

*I have a running note on my phone of just things that people tell me, and whether that's machine operators telling me, "Yeah, my machine can go 10 feet at 20% or something," then I just jot that down, and then I can refer to that. It makes our jobs easier, then people aren't upset, and then you don't get blamed, right? 'Cause then you're... Because you're a minority, you're an easy target, unfortunately. So just prepare yourself, and yeah, just unfortunately, we need to be extra prepared. EDI35*

*I think it's important to speak up [against racism] but is easy for me to do that in case that person was not part of my supervisory like it's a lot easier to push back when that person doesn't have direct power over you. EDI13*

#### 4.8 Avoidance

*The workplaces that I've been in, they've been small, and I tend to gravitate towards... I don't want to work for someone that I don't trust or like, that I don't respect. And again, I have that privilege to be able to shop around because I have the support of my husband, but... Yeah, I definitely know that that's out there and I avoid... I have avoided working at big forestry companies that doesn't sound like a good environment or you hear about a lot of turnovers, and I'm like, "That doesn't sound like somewhere I want to be. EDI42*

*So, to be honest with you male leaders just tend to be less inclined to hire females because they just don't want to deal with the issues so I guess avoidance would probably be the number one reaction. EDI14*

*I would end up just brushing it off and kind of laughing it off even though I didn't find it appropriate because a lot of times it was people making comments who were... They're my bosses or even when I was a foreman, my supervisor would make some inappropriate jokes and I don't know, a lot of times I would want to say something, but it's uncomfortable, so I'd usually just kind of try to laugh it off. EDI40*

#### 4.9 Confront and call people out

*I was very taken back by [sexually vulgar comment by a Forman] and I nipped it in the bud right away. I said that's inappropriate. There's a line you crossed; you can't do that again. EDI34*

## 5. PART V: ADVICE & SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORESTRY WORKERS

In this section, we share lessons and advice provided by participants to anyone planning to embark on a professional career in forestry. The lessons we highlight are divided into two main categories. The first focuses on general lessons that applies to all identity and diversity groups seeking a career in forestry. The second set of lessons or advice provided by participants were directed to specific identity/diversity groups (e.g., women, immigrants, queer women). For instance, participants who identified as women were asked to provide advice for young women who want to start a career in forest. Below, we describe these lessons using participants own voice.

### 5. 1. General suggestions/advice to future forest employees

Drawing from their own experiences, participants offered general advice for people who want to start a career in forestry and succeed in the profession. A summary of these advice is categorized into 7 themes and listed below.

- Start from small towns, go deep, and understand the depth
- Pick the right education and experiences
- Before applying decide what's right for you, do your research and ask questions
- Be intentional about building relationships, ask questions, and find mentors and allies
- Recognize that it's a good time to enter the industry
- Be prepared to face/experience conflict and learn to quickly adapt

Next, each of these themes are explained using direct quotations from participants.

#### a. Be intentional about building relationships, ask questions, and find mentors and allies

*I think relationships are so important, whether it's networking to get the job, the sooner you can build relationships with the people you're working with the better because ultimately that's what creates the supportive environment. EDI13*

*Don't be afraid to communicate with everyone, even if they may not look approachable, even just a simple "Hey, I had a question about the machine you were running" or something so simple like that. It's just little things like that go a long way. And you'd be surprised at how much you can actually learn by simple things like that. EDI35*

*If you see someone that has a job that you think you like, go find out how they got there. What's their education? How many times did they apply for that job? What kind of work did they do before? I've done that with two of my employees here and I was surprised how surprised they were about how somebody got there because they had a misconception of how they got that job. EDI33*

#### b. Find and work with a mentor

*Find an ally somebody you can learn from...mentors are really important, and I think that's one thing we try to do is we call them our work buddy or somebody that we pair a new employee up with. I mean just have somebody you can feel comfortable with and ask questions. EDI14*

*Have some mentors, have some coaches along the way that can help you work some things out that you either didn't get in school or that you're not getting from your current position or whatever it is, because those folks are the ones that can give you tinier bits of advice. EDI33*

c. Start slowly and from small towns, go deep, understand the depth

*Forestry is a great field and it's interesting...you know what they say you've got to go or start from the small towns, I tell them to go deep; don't start in the regional office, you may be pushed this way now, but I say understand the depth. Start planting trees, cruising...it's one of the best experiences...you're going to see so much, learn your ecology, whatever you do learn your stuff and just know that there is a lot and talk to everybody that's the advice I'd give. EDI2*

*It's a good opportunity to work in the "north" – it's a place where one can grow quickly because you are tasked with so much a variety of things, but it's also a challenging environment to work in if you are not part of the norm but I would say, take advantage of that. EDI52*

*Don't feel like you have to do it all in the first year that you work. You're going to have a long career. You can do a lot of things. EDI33*

d. Pick the right education and experiences

*I would say go to an accredited forestry program and that would be true for anyone else wanting to get into the industry; identify which province you think you want to work in, research what qualifications, what programs are accredited and attend one of those and go through the process of being a registered professional. EDI18*

*I would tell them find out where your local CIF section is, because they helped me a great deal...and remember you do have a community outside of school, the community doesn't have to be limited to your co-workers or your summer student position boss. EDI26*

e. Before applying for a job, do your research, decide what's right for you and ask questions

*You need to do what's right for you and your family, whatever that looks like. Maybe working for an organization where work-life balance looks like it's a little bit more flexible, might be better for a certain time period, and then you can go and make more money and get some experience. EDI33*

*So, the advice I give them [students]... throughout the course is you have to decide what's important to you. For me, it's important that I am part of a bigger team, that I am able to be home every night, so that's why I like working for this company. EDI41*

*A lot of it is doing your own research, finding out about the companies you are interested in working for like seeing if they have policies in place like Trans inclusion policies, you can tell a lot just by going to someone's website and seeing whether or not its performative or not and the fact it's there and if you read through it and sometimes people post photos of people that work there and it's like okay... it does limit options but it is one way, it's a lot of work on your own behalf. EDI16*

f. Take your chance - it's a good time to enter the industry

*I feel especially right now with the opportunity there is out there and with the programs they're trying to diversify, there's never a better time to try to get involved...and you could support your family on an entry level production job, or you can set goals and a company like [company name] they support talent from within for promotion and training and stuff. EDI16*

*There are more women in forestry now I think than there ever has ever been. So that's a plus, you know, like the kind of work ethic that women bring to the workforce, they work a little differently than men do and so it's a great time to be in the sector. EDI34*

**g. Be prepared to face/experience conflict and learn quickly to adapt**

*Just the ability to be able to face conflict and not avoid it. At the end of the day, I think most people would look up to you if you can take conflict head on and be able to resolve situations. EDI34*

*If you have a problem and you go to your supervisor with a solution, they'll love that. And I think that's what people look for in leaders. It feels really good to bring solutions and then be able to be like, "Hey, I have something, and this is what we're gonna do." And your supervisor is like, "Yeah. Go for it." EDI34*

## 5.2 Advice for specific groups – Women

Participants who identified as women also provided specific suggestions or advice for other young women who plan on pursuing a forestry career. A summary of this advice is listed below and explained in more detailed subsequently using direct quotations by participants.

- Inequalities persist; prepare or brace yourself for these challenges
- It's a hard job – be prepared mentally for it and keep your passion
- Don't be afraid to join forestry, stand-up for yourself always
- Speak up, don't undersell yourself and stand up for yourself
- Stay with the government or in the south
- If you're ever bullied or harassed, seek external support

**a. Inequalities persist; prepare or brace yourself for these challenges**

*I would brace them for the inequalities and tell them how as a woman you need to be strong. The [public official] has her stories and same with [leader forestry organization]; she has her stories like all of us who have persevered to get to executive positions we have our stories and the younger people coming up through the ranks need to know that this is what it's like and then it's going to be less of a shock to them. EDI13*

*I would tell them to persevere, it's just being there to encourage other people like yourself to enter that field even if you feel alone. EDI6*

*It's hard but you're creating space for other people like yourself to enter so if you're able to persevere through it and be resilient and you're doing a lot of good, people that are trying to get into it. EDI6*

**b. It's a hard job – be prepared mentally for it and keep your passion**

*know what you're getting into to see if you are willing to put in all that time and energy into a particular role.*

*It definitely was the hardest job I've ever had, and I feel if I went there with the mindset of learning and something to get out of it, it would have been very miserable so certainly to know what they're getting into. EDI12*

*If you willing to work hard and not always be comfortable go for it...the day before I spent probably four hours outside in -30 like it was brutal but it doesn't kill you and it's not all the time so if you're willing to work hard, be a little bit uncomfortable once in a while and just keep your head down. EDI16*

*I think that women that choose to go into forestry are fairly passionate people anyways. It's just a very different career path, and so keep that passion alive and use that for your strengths and your inner strengths. EDI30*

**c. Don't be afraid to join forestry, stand-up for yourself always**

*I've done a lot of talks in colleges and universities on behalf of my company to try to get more women in forestry... I tell them anyone can do it. I think the biggest thing is people must get out of that mentality of thinking they're weak or they can't do it because it's a physical job. EDI18*

*I think the big thing is to stand up for yourself. Develop that self-confidence and know what you're worth. It's a huge thing and it's not comfortable, but that's another place where you kinda go. EDI36*

*just to be continually confident and stubborn; be confident in your opinion, your approach or your recommendation. Just don't give up and trust in yourself because there will be many people who want to dismiss you but maintain your confidence. EDI19*

#### d. Speak up or stand up for yourself and don't undersell yourself

*You just need to stand up for yourself. If there's issues that arise, you need to nip it in the butt right away. You can't avoid it. Conflicts are a part of life. It is going to suck, and those conversations are going to be awkward, but I think the reward is worth it. EDI34*

*Go for it, but make sure you're standing up for yourself and asking for more and making sure that... I think that all of my opportunities have been from me standing up for myself, making myself heard. make sure you're heard because they'll kind of get pushed aside. EDI40*

*Do not sell yourself short, you don't have to fill every requirement, every detail on a job description. Even in the interview, you can always try to find ways within it. Even if you're like, "Okay, I don't have that exact experience, I have this kind of similar skills and I'm very interested in learning more. EDI42*

#### e. Stay with the government or in the south

*I would say honestly go for the government [laughter] and I don't have experience up north in logger's camps however I have friends that have been that didn't have a great experience like a lot of not-so-great experiences. EDI5*

*I would say stick to staying south but I would say go for it though it's great, you learn a lot and there's some cool and respectful people in the north. EDI8*

#### f. If you're ever bullied or harassed, seek support

*If you're being bullied in the work environment, I would say you need to seek out support where you know you're actually going to be supported so if you've got bullying that tells you that the policies and procedures mean nothing in terms of work go external but I would say definitely never give up your right to have a position in forestry, don't give up on that because there is no reason for that. EDI28*

*I would say just speak for yourself and don't be shy to ask for help or speak up to somebody because I think it's changing... people are trying to speak up and women are starting to say avoid that company because this happened there and they're never going to fire that guy so this is good so I would say speak up. EDI5*

### 5.3 Advice for specific groups - Non-binary, Queer women, and gay men

For participants who identified as non-binary, queer women and gay men, their advice to young people who may similarly identified as them and who desire a career in forestry focused on four themes including:

- Be yourself and you will find others to connect with
- Find queer mentors if possible but be open minded
- Find support from outside your workplace if you can't find it inside your workplace
- Don't be afraid to enter the industry; it is more diverse and welcoming than it has ever been

a. Be yourself and you will find others to connect with

*This is the advice that I've given to young queer women, is to just be yourself. And honestly, that's why I'm just myself. And sometimes you're gonna connect with people and sometimes you won't. Try not to shield or put a mask on. It can be scary for sure. You're always gonna find those people though that you're gonna connect with, and you're gonna inspire people doing that, right. EDI37*

*I think just owning up to it, being confident in yourself and what you're capable of that's important. I think some of these barriers I'm putting on myself because I'm scared of the potential results or consequences but as I'm slowly working my way up to fully being myself and everything. EDI27*

*You need to be flexible, but not to the point that you change because you're just gonna burn out if you are a fake person or a different person at work entirely than in your personal life. So I'd say, you will need to play the game within the current environment, but also push a little bit at some point...if you go all guns blazing as a super about an LGBT person, unfortunately, right now, it's not the right place, it saddens me to say that. EDI47*

b. Find queer mentors if possible but be open minded

*Find mentors but be open-minded about mentors because did I think a white guy was going to be my mentor and provide some of the best foundations? No, I did not, but he challenged me in ways that I didn't think he could challenge. EDI37*

*If you can try and find mentors out, go for it because I know they are and it's becoming more and more prominent in the fields of forestry. EDI47*

*I would just say like if you're fresh out of school, try to find some mentors, whether it's like a forester, just someone in the forestry sector to help you out and just gain those really solid principles to figure out what way you're going to go on your career path. EDI37*

c. Find support from outside your workplace if you can't find it inside your workplace

*If you can't find support at work, find it outside of work...when I was struggling, back when I had my first child and my work wasn't supportive and they said, "Sorry, we can't help you." I found support outside of work, and it really helped me to not feel so isolated and judged. EDI37*

*Sometimes we assume that'll happen in the workplace and I think you'll find out quickly who's going to be your boss and who's going to be your mentor so don't always assume your boss is the best mentor. EDI37*

d. Don't be afraid to enter the industry; it is more diverse and welcoming than it has ever been

*The industry is not the industry that it was, 20, 30, 40 years ago. Right now, and very soon you'll be working with people who are very similar to you, they're going to be young, energetic, educated, probably from a larger city, even if they didn't grow up there. They're gonna already have had experiences that are very diverse, just about where they've lived, or the experiences they've had coming into the organization. And they're gonna see that their managers and supervisors will provide them those opportunities, and then there are no barriers, but they could sense once they're there, that there is still an older dominant Caucasian male guard that's sort of running the show, but it's not imposing as much as it was. That's what I would, that's what I see. EDI45*



## 5.4 Advice for specific groups - minorities and Indigenous Persons

Young people who desire a career in forestry and identify as coming from equity deserving backgrounds including women and Indigenous Peoples were advised first and foremost to be confident and not to undersell themselves prior to getting a job and on the job while also being encouraged to enjoy the fun and be aware of the challenges that come with the occupation.

### a. Do not undersell your-self - Its both fun and a challenging job

*Do not sell yourself short. I have noticed that in our junior staff, there's a lack of confidence I find, particularly minorities, such as women and Indigenous Peoples. Don't sell yourself short. EDI42*

*I reviewed time and expense for our company, and I noticed that our indigenous staff and our young women tend to really be hard on themselves in the number of hours that they've logged in, whereas the older or my generation and older males tend to not have issues but anyway, so what I figured out... If they get distracted by something for half an hour, they don't claim that half an hour. EDI42*

*I would just say, use your voice and make your voice heard as much as you can because in the field that I work in, a lot of it is about contributing your own unique ideas, and I think that those ideas matter and you're capable of making a difference, so it's important to make sure that they're heard. EDI50*

*I would tell them yes do it; it's going to be hard but everything's going to be hard, but it can also be really fun and yes as much as I think it can be a pain in the ass it's still worth it. EDI32*

## 5.5 Advice for specific groups - recent immigrants and visible minorities, especially blacks

Participants who were once recent immigrants, have worked with recent immigrants, or identify as black people provide diverse advice to recent immigrants and visible minorities, especially people who identify as black and who desire to work in forestry. The advice largely focused on imploring them to be cognisant of challenges and be resilient and patient as they wait and search for space and opportunities in the sector. A summary of the advice categorized into is seven (7) themes are listed below:

- Understand it is a long journey to step into the profession – be patient
- Recognize that the system is not perfect but stay in, it will pay off
- Identify a mentor and go through an accredited program
- You will face more scrutiny, so work a little harder and learn quickly
- Brace yourself for challenges
- Get into the sector to create more awareness for other color or immigrants
- Consider staying in the south and in urban forestry

Next, each of these themes are described using participants own voice.

### a. Understand it is a long journey to step into the profession – be patient

*If you're a forester coming from outside of Canada it takes time to step into the profession, so understand it is a long journey. Once you are in the profession, there are more opportunities, but the struggling piece is when you are not in the profession and so that's the time-consuming process. EDI4*

*There are colleagues of mine that are building managers in Vancouver and don't make much money, they have a university degree in forestry they are doing jobs that is way below university degree...if you didn't have work in a profession for a few years your diploma gets stale and nobody wants to hire you and it's a problem with that too you know it has to be done quickly. EDI24*

*Be aware sometimes you will be treated unequal but that's not your fault and just stay true to yourself and use your voice, if there's something that happens don't be quiet about just speak up... there are some bad things that could happen like you could lose your job for example but that actually can present a new opportunity for you and to go somewhere actually where you are valued and you can really contribute equally to the work.*

*EDI20*

**b. Recognize that the system is not perfect but stay in, it will pay off**

*If you're coming into this profession trained from outside Canada, make sure this is your reality. It's not perfect, it is not a transparent system, it does not consider the equity response, it has loopholes in terms of acknowledging and accepting diversity. EDI4*

*it's not perfect but if you want to come in and be positive in your mind, complaining all the time doesn't help, neither for you nor anybody else. You must accept that reality and that will at least lessen your surprise but at the end of the day don't get unnecessarily stressed and don't get broken down. EDI4*

**c. Identify a mentor and go through an accredited program**

*I would encourage anybody that wants to pursue forestry in Canada as an immigrant to identify with a mentor; you know mentorship is very, very critical. You need to be directed and motivated by someone who's already in the industry. EDI10*

*It's mostly the process so if you want to pursue forestry in Canada, you must go through an accredited program and through that program you also get exposed to so many job opportunities. EDI10*

**d. You will face more scrutiny, so work a little harder and learn quickly**

*Be prepared that you're going to have to be good at your job, you are going to be facing further scrutiny so just do your best to learn as quickly as you can and ask lots of questions and be humble because you may be tempted because you are under scrutiny. EDI14*

*You don't want to withstand an abusive course but sometimes you're just going to have to let things roll off your back a little bit until you earn that respect and sometimes it takes a little bit longer to do that but if you can learn to just make jokes of it and make light of it then I think it makes things a lot easier than if you're fulfilling the stereotype of being like oh you disrespected me or oh I'm filing a complaint... that's definitely not going to work. EDI14*

*I would say focus on what you are gaining from it as opposed to like it's super easy to get caught up in the negative; you really do have to keep your eye on the prize to get through it sometimes. EDI16*

**e. Brace yourself for challenges**

*I would tell them it's not going to be easy and they're going to come up to a lot of not huge barriers but you're just going to have to deal with a lot of petty stuff.-I guess people call those macroaggressions in forms, you're going to have to manage through a lot of these things but there is a way to make it work for you and it's so rewarding. EDI17*

*Be passionate about the work you're or passionate about whether it's the lifestyle it provides you, being outside or seeing cool things whatever it is you really have to love that to manage through the rest of it because it won't be easy. EDI17*

f. Get into the sector to create more awareness for other color or immigrants

*Go for it and don't worry about or look at how many people of color are there because the fact I got into it was pure accident. EDI311*

*Forestry it's not very well-known and we do have people who come from other places who struggle trying to get into permanent work, being in communities that tend to be remote, where you don't see someone like yourself...so is a bit of a struggle but the only way to overcome that is if you have more diverse people... so somebody has to start and the more people who are diverse get into it, the more exposure there is and then hopefully more people will follow. EDI31*

*Working around here, you're not gonna see a lot of people who look like you but you're gonna find a lot of people in the industry that think like you and share the same values. It's important to stay together and keep each other up as best as you can and to help foster those ideas and keep them going because that's the only way, we're going to get better at all. EDI51*

g. Consider staying in the south and in urban forestry

*Staying up south where you have a mixed community makes things easier, you may not be the only one in that workplace and you're in a community that is more aware of it, that's more open to it, it's easier. EDI31*

*You're going to find more minorities working in urban forestry than you are in forestry up north where the population is still largely one color. So urban forestry is probably your place...so you should consider urban forestry if you're at all considering forestry. EDI31*

*After school, I didn't want to go up north because I felt I would experience more barriers in the community and the workplace than in the south. For instance, I was concerned I might not find my species up north and whether the community would accept me, so I took policy job instead. However, I missed some field experience that would help me understand the sector better so its important to consider not just work-life balance but also socio-cultural life balance. EDI58*

## 5.6 Summary of advice for young people desiring/planning to work in forestry

Participants in the forestry industry offered various general and group-specific pieces of advice (e.g., for women, visible minorities, and LGBTQ+ individuals) to young people interested in pursuing careers in forestry.

1. Across different groups, the most prevalent advice for young aspiring foresters from underrepresented backgrounds is to acknowledge that inequalities still exist. To succeed, they should not undersell themselves, but rather speak up and stand their ground when faced with bullying, discrimination, or harassment.

2. Young people were urged to be deliberate about building relationships by asking questions and seeking mentors both internally and externally, as the forestry community is closely knit.
3. To obtain the necessary education and experience, which are highly valued in forestry, young individuals were advised to enroll in accredited forestry programs and gain relevant experience. To gain relevant experience, this is best achieved by starting a career in small forestry towns in the north, where one can grasp the full scope of the industry.
4. Almost all participants encouraged young people from underrepresented groups not to hesitate to join the forestry sector, as it is becoming more diverse and inclusive than ever before. In the words of some participants, now is a "good time to enter the industry."
5. Lastly, for young people who prefer to avoid potential challenges in forestry, some participants recommended considering career options in the south, pursuing urban forestry careers, or working in government. These areas or sectors tend to be more welcoming and have a higher number of underrepresented groups.

## 6. PART VI: RECOMMENDATIONS TO EMPLOYERS TO MAKE FORESTRY INCLUSIVE

Participants were asked for recommendations on how to improve the attraction and retention of underrepresented groups in forestry, focusing on the role of employers. The study identified several themes that cover creating an inclusive workplace, promoting equity and diversity, and addressing historical injustices. The themes include creating a transparent and equitable pay structure, ensuring fair recruitment practices, amplifying the voices of successful minorities, promoting forest employment opportunities to young people, demonstrating a commitment to implementing policies related to safety, anti-racism, harassment, diversity, and inclusion, mentoring, and integrating new hires into the workplace, expanding EDI initiatives in forestry, and implementing an equity mandate or reporting.

### 6.1 Overview of recommendations to employers

- Participants commonly recommended that forest sector employers should aim to create a positive and inclusive workplace environment, which includes offering flexible work arrangements to improve employee retention, recognizing and supporting the diverse needs and experiences of employees (such as those with disabilities or childcare responsibilities), and creating a welcoming atmosphere to attract and retain visible minorities, including immigrants and those with accents.
- Participants emphasized the need for the forest sector to address non-competitive and unequal pay structures, with a majority calling for a commitment from hiring managers to advocate for equal pay and implement transparent pay structures. They specifically cautioned against perpetuating the underpayment of women.
- Participants urged employers in the forestry sector to improve recruitment practices by taking several steps. These included diversifying interview panels, removing systemic barriers and prejudices for specific groups in the hiring process (such as black employees), changing recruitment tactics to focus on growth potential and professional development opportunities, and committing not to penalize women for taking time off to raise children during the recruitment process.
- Some participants also called on the forest sector to recognize historical injustices perpetrated on equity deserving groups in the forest sector, particularly women, by providing opportunities for victims to tell their stories, while amplifying minority voices, and celebrating successful examples of minority persons in the sector.
- Additionally, some participants urged leaders and supervisors to exhibit a compassionate approach that acknowledges the distinct and individual requirements of their employees. This can be achieved by supplying suitable PPE in the correct sizes, regularly interacting with employees to understand their experiences, promoting fairness in the allocation of resources and facilities at work, such as

- providing an equal number of restrooms for men and women, and offering gender-neutral restrooms.
- Numerous participants urged the forest industry to proactively advocate for forestry jobs by reaching out and interacting with prospective employees through focused initiatives and involvement in schools. This would attract a diverse range of talent, particularly for essential roles like welders, millwrights, repairers, and line workers that keep the sector operational. For example, rather than relying on HR managers to lead recruitment campaigns in schools, it was recommended to motivate current employees lead by sharing their experiences and stories about their careers in the industry to attract others.
  - A significant number of participants acknowledged improvements in attracting a diverse candidate to the sector but emphasized the need for greater efforts to retain employees once hired. To bolster integration and retention, it was suggested that a collaborative approach be taken to create developmental plans for new hires and provide mentorship focusing on their welfare, training, and career advancement.
  - The forest sector was urged to intensify its efforts in attracting and integrating visible minorities into northern forest communities. In this context, employers were also urged to show dedication to implementing and enforcing policies and procedures designed to protect employees from incidents such as discrimination and unjust treatment.
  - Lastly, while many participants observed their employers' commitment to implementing EDI policies, with some even serving on EDI committees at their workplaces, there was a call for the sector to expand EDI initiatives to encompass all equity deserving groups. The participants also cautioned against tokenistic EDI efforts and encouraged proper targeting of initiatives. For example, it was suggested that additional training be given to frontline managers and supervisors on the field and factory floors. Additionally, governments were encouraged to collaborate with the forest sector in implementing equity mandates or equity reporting to show a genuine commitment to inclusion and diversity.

## 6.2 Detailed recommendations supported with quotes from participants

### 6.2.1 Create an inclusive and positive workplace environment

- a. Offer flexible work-life balance to enhance employee retention, particularly women

*As far as attracting and retaining, it's about making the working conditions that are suitable, that are appropriate, and being flexible, if somebody has, be it childcare, be it religious holidays, the employer needs to respect that and welcome it. EDI36*

*I would say a lot of that lies with the employer. Now I work with the government and its pretty standard 7 hours a day. With industry, with the mill and consulting it's easily 10 plus hours a day. And that is a limiting factor for people with families. EDI8*

*Firms should sell flexible work-life balance as part of their package, people should be made to feel like they're wanted...we have these benefits here to help you, to support you, because if you're supported, you'll be more efficient at your job, you'll be happier at your job which will make you more productive EDI42*

- b. Recognize and support diverse differences and experiences - Diversity might mean different things to different people

*Be open to diversity in the workplace. Some people might not be best suited in situations, and that's okay, and just knowing not to shun people over...Like a field situation is definitely not for everybody. It's... you're almost falling off cliffs,... It's scary sometimes and not everybody likes that, and so employers just take that approach of, hey, this might not be for everybody, and being a little bit more understanding. It's hard in the industry...*

*Like my company, if you got hired, you were in the field. EDI35*

*As far as attracting and retaining, it's about making the working conditions that are suitable, that are appropriate, and being flexible, if somebody has, whatever it is, be it childcare, be it religious holidays, whatever. The employer needs to respect that and welcome it, needs to welcome and support the diversity, make it easy. EDI36*

*I was having these experiences but to be told repeatedly by people that I wasn't having these experiences and when I was briefly thinking oh maybe I should be working somewhere else I was thinking oh it would be just so nice to work with other women, it would be so nice to work in an environment where like it's easier to just talk to people with shared experience so I don't know if that requires culture change on the part of the people who are already in the industry or if it just requires a more diverse workforce so there is more diverse viewpoints so that you could have conversations that make you feel at home. EDI13*

- c. Create a welcoming environment for visible minorities, especially for immigrants and people with accents

*Right from the outset, in the job description, in the job posting, demonstrate that you're actively trying to hire a more diverse workforce or something, just kind of shows that the company is thinking about it, and that would definitely be something. EDI39*

*I do some diversity and inclusion training with my managers and quite often what we had was we have got some folks that are adamant about I can't understand what they're saying, they need to pull their pants up and speak clearly is what they will say...If you have a hard time understanding other accent....I will say make a point of sitting at lunch at the table, have more conversations with them, learn a little bit of that language and then just spend more time because the more exposure that we have to it the easier it is to understand. ...it's uncomfortable when you can't understand somebody so just find some polite ways to ask them to repeat themselves, maybe can you slow down or I'm having difficulty understanding instead of putting it on them you'll need to speak more clearly, it's like no I'm struggling a bit or can you help me write it down. EDI14*

*If you have somebody who just maybe doesn't quite fit in the same way as the rest of them, maybe rotating the new person or somebody that's a new hire through a couple of different crews or people to work with as their supervisor would be helpful just to gain some different perspectives. EDI29*

## 6.2.2 Address low compensation and gender pay gaps

- a. Don't inherit and perpetuate underpayment of women

*I tell my managers, do not inherit the unequal pay of the prior employer...often employers want to know what an employee was earning before, but I would be like, but they were underpaid, one of the reasons they're leaving. They will say, she was earning \$62,000 there before so we could probably get her \$65,000 but I'm like if they were vastly underpaid you shouldn't inherit that, you pay them what the job is worth, you pay them what we pay others. EDI14*

*Keep yourself in check, why am I feeling the need to pay this woman less, why am I feeling to pay this immigrant less...pay them what the job is worth and if you don't feel like that person's worth it then they're not qualified for it so don't hire them. EDI14*

*We need people to advocate for an equal pay gap. Just recently there were two people in the same position doing the same work, one was male, one was female, there was a \$3/hour difference, and I went to my management team and said "we need to make this equal, so I gave a little bit of a good rationale...she's doing an amazing job, she's showing up, she's meeting the targets, she should be paid equal if not more to this person. So, you know I'm in a position where I can advocate for that for my staff, and I will. But most managers don't. EDI37*

b. Implement transparent pay structure, and be an advocate for equal pay

*Wage transparency would be helpful...a lot of private-sector job postings don't post the wage range and I've definitely not applied for those jobs that I've been interested in because there's no range. So, wage transparency would help in that aspect, I think a lot. EDI37*

*Within the industry, we need to make sure there are safe spaces for people to report any issues they may have. We need to confront issues so that not only is there a safe place to talk about these issues, make sure everyone feels safe and also a specific plan for how to respond. This is because a lot of issues get overlooked and don't get taken as seriously as they should be. EDI18*

### 6.2.3 Provide fair and transparent recruitment practices

While few participants suggested that hiring practices are fair or have improved due to checks and balances, others recommended specific actions to improve hiring and recruitment of underrepresented groups. Examples of these include:

- diversifying interview panels
- removing systemic barriers and prejudices in the hiring process
- changing recruitment tactics to focus on opportunities for professional development and growth
- taking steps not to punish women who take time to raise children

a. Some firms have fair and transparent hiring practices

*I don't know if I've seen those biases reflected in the hiring process. I think there are more checks and balances built in with hiring in equity deserving groups now. EDI19*

*I feel the hiring process was very fair and I don't know what it is because when they hire they're able to hire a lot of diverse candidates but it's always the retention part that there are challenges. EDI12*

*The company I work in right now is at 50% or more women...so they're used to women in leadership. It's an equal opportunity employer. EDI2*



b. Diversify interview panels, and remove systematic barriers and prejudices for specific groups in the hiring process

*A lot of women are in HR so when having an interview with a woman who works in an operational role, an HR woman on the panel wouldn't be as helpful as a women RPF who works there you know is beneficial for retaining people and also hiring people. I think of my interviews like three dudes, and it would have been great having more of a different panel. EDI18*

*I think black people should be given the opportunity ...because drawing from my personal experience when I started as a practicing forester, I was very impressive and I got feedback from my hiring manager was so impressed with the feedback but if you're not given the opportunity, you can't give your best right, so she gave me the opportunity, and I thrived. So, they should recruit us without prejudice. EDI10*

*We [black people] have the potential all we need is the opportunity and that is what makes me passionate about diversity and inclusion because it appears there seems to be a prejudice in the system that affects us [black people] in the hiring process. EDI10*

c. Change recruitment tactics – focus on growth potentials and professional development opportunities

*I think the message we used to communicate to young people saying "Hey, you should come and work in this really great job that will get you outside and you'll get to work with trees, and you'll get to do a bit of science, and this is really fun. And you get to drive ATVs." That doesn't cut it anymore, because that's not what people are interested in, that's not what young people coming out of school are interested in. They want to know that their contribution is going to matter. EDI33*

*We've started recruiting right out of school before they've even graduated, and we have had good conversations about career progression. "Hey, we want you here and we want you in this position. So, we want you here and we will train you to do this work. And, here's where you're gonna go. You're gonna start here, but then we're gonna develop you here." EDI33*

*I had the conversation with him after we offered him the job, he had a whole lot of questions about what his development looks like. He asked if the Forest Service would support him getting a master's degree, and I was like, "Yeah, why not? Why wouldn't we?" Because we want to retain him, right? EDI33*

d. Don't punish women for taking time to raise children

*When I screen people, when I look at their resume, I see what their background and experience is, if they've taken a year or two offs because they're raising kids, it doesn't bother me, in fact, it helps me to kind of frame it that they have a bit more life experience. EDI37*

*I'm not gonna screen them out because they took a couple of years off to raise their kids, it's a bit different if somebody takes like a decade off... That's a big deal. I don't know if I would necessarily hire them at a high level, I would try them out at a certain level and then see through merit whether they want to advance. EDI37*

#### 6.2.4 Demonstrate a caring attitude - the small things matter

*I think small things can go a long way...a lot of companies will have extra gear if somebody is new or just a summer student...If a new hire is coming you ask them more privately write it down on a piece of paper or through an email just going to the one person that's ordering the uniforms ideally, so you get appropriate gear that fits you. EDI29*

*it would be nice to have gear that fits you or the option of wearing your own gear if the standard uniform for whatever reason does not suit you but if the uniform pants are black cargo pants and you can wear your own black cargo pants, I don't see the issue with that at least it's more comfortable for people. EDI29*

*Having gender neutral washrooms or even just something as simple as the same number of washrooms for men and women because even in my building there's half as many washrooms for women as there are men and again that place where if there isn't this structural space for me is going to be a cultural one. EDI27*

#### 6.2.5 Actively and innovatively promote forestry employment

Many participants advocated for the proactive promotion of forestry employment to young and diverse individuals, leveraging unique and creative strategies. As a preliminary step, some participants advised that the sector confront and rectify signs of historic injustice and inequality in the representation of marginalized groups in forestry. To achieve this, the dominant male culture needs to be acknowledged and challenged, thereby creating more room for non-dominant groups. One suggested strategy is to allow these underrepresented groups in forestry to narrate their experiences, stories, triumphs, and challenges, which could resonate with young individuals with similar identities and encourage them to consider a career in forestry. There were also several other suggested best practices to actively enhance employment in the forestry sector, which include:

- Raise awareness about forestry as an employment growth hub
- Highlight that forestry has several, diverse and fun opportunities
- Actively engage in schools to build young people's interest in forestry
- Engage young people to understand that forestry has diverse opportunities & can be fun
- Use diverse and real forest workers to speak about forestry to young people

These are discussed below using participants voices.

- a. Provide opportunities for minority groups to share their experiences, stories, successes and struggles

*I think amplifying the women you already have can go a long way too. The company I'm with right now one of their main people on the crew is a woman and she's young and she's a goal getter and she works just as hard if not harder than the other ones and, on the website, she's got a whole profile along with the guys ... so I think just promote women and do it because women are good at the job and not as a token. EDI11*

*Having more women speaking and more women faces out there I think is really going to help more women join the sector because a lot of the time when I do these talks in colleges, girls and women come up to me and they're like oh my God you do this, you work in the field, so I think that is empowering for women to see other women doing it. EDI18*

b. Demonstrate commitment to address historical injustices

*The industry as a whole needs to change its perception, and the culture surrounding it. For example, my manager, the quality control manager for both sites is a woman, and she is the only female manager between both sites. But all the other supervisors that I can think of are men. So as to how to encourage underrepresented groups to consider this, I'd say there needs to be a push for a big shift in the culture, because, from what I'm aware, forestry is known to be a lot of men, and they perhaps don't have the best social skills, or they deliberately choose to ignore rules, social rules. EDI41*

*The heavy equipment side is all men, and on the forklift side where they deal with the lumber, there is a small number of women there. And there's for sure at least one in the sawmill that I'm aware of. So, a lot needs to be done to create spaces... a lot more needs to be done to challenge the culture and to encourage more people in that space. EDI41*

*I think firms need to commit to you just to say yes, we recognize 75% of our staff are white straight males and that's not okay, we want more diversity and we want to get opportunities and we recognize that certain groups have been historically underrepresented and then just do specific hiring to address that. EDI21*

c. Raise more awareness about forestry as an employment growth

*We absolutely need millwrights, welders, people to repair the equipment in addition to people working on the line. I think part of it is that people don't consider that as part of keeping the industry running...that industry just seems to me like a standalone thing, and so we need to push to let people know we exist...we need to get to the schools...and I think that's where they fall down, is then people who are perhaps more talented or better suited or more reliable or whatever, are not aware that this path exists. EDI41*

*The sector itself should be doing more to raise the awareness of the forest sector as an employment growth area. I think they need to focus especially if they want to get more diverse people. I mean obviously there is a huge indigenous population you would think that more indigenous people would get into forestry so the question is "Why not" and if they're not focusing on recruiting or making people aware of it among those groups then people will think that they're not welcome. EDI31*

d. Actively engage in schools to build young peoples interest in forestry

*I think it really has to come down to the corporate culture and being able to reach out to schools, encouraging teachers to bring in foresters to their class, giving students tours and helping do part of curriculum, or maybe exposing students to heavy duty machinery as a way to expose them to what happens. EDI41*

*I think it probably starts at the schools, the forestry school programs and how they are recruiting folks at pup mills. Let's be honest, it goes all the way back to kids in school, and if you can get kids, girls, indigenous, new Canadians, involved in the science programs, technology engineering, the arts as well, early on interested. EDI33*

e. Young people need to know forestry has diverse opportunities and can be fun

*I think you had mentioned just how we can get more people into the forestry industry; we should just be telling people that jobs like this exist. Like you can go be a plot checker and go ride a quad in the woods for all day and check/do soil samples. It's fun work, it is. But a lot of people don't understand or know what it's about, so*

*if we show people how fun it is to be working in the forestry industry, we can definitely attract a lot more people, definitely more minorities, people with disabilities, as long as we can show them that the work is there, it's fun and that they can do it and it's inclusive for sure. EDI48*

*I think it's really about getting folks to know that it is possible for them to be doing these things, even though it doesn't seem to. however, that takes place, I guess, just getting more conversations going, the men showing people they can do it, like using social media presence and stuff like that but not necessarily from a company standpoint like, "Hey, I'm doing this thing, look at my YouTube channel. I'm talking about how great it is to do these things as the person I am. EDI49*

f. Engagement and outreach activities in forestry should be done by real and diverse forestry workers

*I think what's important is the content they're showing in schools, show researchers that are more diverse, show videos that aren't just an old white guy talking, the information is there but still it would be nice to see other faces and see that people you relate to exist in the industry so that you're more likely to go into so you feel like you belong. EDI6*

*If you have employees in the workforce coming out and sharing those experiences and talking to groups of people is probably super helpful, and just being able to hear those stories of people who have actually done it, whether that's a video of a short clip of them talking or whatever. It's different when it comes straight from the source instead of the owner of a company reiterating a story, so just incorporating probably the... Just raw details and experiences, I guess, is the better word. EDI35*

*I think the big thing is going to schools, but don't just send the operation guys...make sure you have a woman or someone that's indigenous or minority show up and show like we've been here, we've done all these cool things, like come do what we do. I think companies just need to make themselves more available... Let people be aware of what they're doing. EDI34*

g. Focus on training opportunities to enhance employment of Indigenous Youth

*Having worked for an indigenous company and primarily with indigenous peoples for a couple of years now, I'm aware of a lot of barriers to employment that they face. So, I think, emphasis on more training opportunities for people, specifically indigenous peoples, to sort of help them overcome that barrier to employment and give them opportunities to advance is something that is really important as well. EDI49*

*There aren't that many applicants [indigenous applicants] that have the required skills, so their employability is low. So, I think there needs to be more opportunities to enroll Indigenous youth in certificates, diplomas or a degree, for example, to enhance their chances of getting a job. EDI41*

## 6.2.6 Mentor, integrate, and support new hires

Beyond improving the attraction and employment of underrepresented groups in forestry, most participants also highlighted the need to develop better strategies to retain people who are employed.

a. Commit to the welfare, training and professional development of new employees

*I think we still do need to have a man in our court (unfortunately), helping the younger women that are in forestry and introducing them and making them feel welcome is really key still. Or a woman in our court to help mentor us through difficult times. There are so few women in late-stage careers; someone on the sideline that's cheering for you and cheering for your success is valuable. EDI30*

*I think mentoring people from an earlier stage in their career can be helpful such as getting involved with graduate students and helping them develop their ideas and even just seeing this as a potential path for employment; so, I think that mentorship component is so crucial in mentoring a diverse group of people who then have the potential to come into our group and the industry more broadly. EDI13*

*Just like getting involved with the communities...I don't know what you can call it, but like different little groups, so staff from wherever in [company name] we'll meet on Zoom calls. So, I'm part of inclusion and diversity, and so we do things each month anywhere from assimilation or discrimination and little things like linguistic discrimination, racism, people that identify as non-binary, LGBTQ too plus, right? Just making people aware of those and being in a group that discusses those kinds of things. It is kind of unique and cool and makes you wanna be part of the teams that [company name]. EDI34*

**b. Have a development plan for new hires/employees**

*We attract some folks, but how do we make sure we retain them? We have tons of training, and development opportunities. So, he's going on paternity leave. But we've already talked about what it's gonna look like when he comes back. What are the projects that he's gonna be working on? And when do we start to think about moving him up as well? So, it's kind of putting them all in that pool of those young, to be developed and retained staff, making sure that they're happy here as much as we can. EDI33*

*Giving the opportunity to women who would maybe make a good crew lead or something like that. Giving them that opportunity instead of waiting for them to ask for it. I think maybe there's three people who are all on the same level and one person asks for it so they get it first kind of thing, but a woman generally would be less likely to or maybe be more doubtful that she would be able to lead the crew, try higher positions so really having the support and recognition of that needing to be pushed. EDI39*

*So with where I am now, when I have a summer student come in, I'll even have some of them just phone and want a job shadow, and I'm just all about, "Yeah, you'd come in and let's just fill your head with knowledge." I'm hoping to continue that. I probably got five years left, but I really hope to encourage more women to... In forestry and mentor them through whatever needs to be done. EDI30*

### 6.2.7 Intentionally support and integrate visible minorities stay up in the “north”

*In the north it's tough to get people to begin with never mind any sort of diversity on the team like we're checking that someone's here.? So non-underrepresented people need to be aware about why their colleagues might not feel comfortable going somewhere in northern Ontario to do field work on their own. EDI8*

*I think it goes back to community, if you're welcomed, if they feel included, if there are common things, common sports or clubs they had when they were usually in a larger center if that's available to them in their new small town and just making that known to new employees that this is a great town to live in, we have tons of recreation available, there's always really cool clubs; for myself moving here it took time to find that and it took a fair bit of effort on my part for me to build my community and find my group. ED57*

*When I started, they gave us a welcome package and it included a tourism Dawson Creek magazine and that was it, there wasn't anything personal beyond that it's like here is the magazine, good luck sees you tomorrow morning. You're left to navigate your way around. EDI8*

### 6.2.8 Walk the talk – implement and enforce policies to the letter

*if you [company, manager, supervisor] do get wind of issues don't sweep it under the rug, have discussions about it, let people explain it in a way they can understand about how it feels being brand new, how it feels being different and explain it to them in front of their kids like a lot of people have a lot more empathy for the children than they do for other human beings around them so if your child walks in and they are getting bullied how would you feel EDI14*

*I don't think they can do much more than they already do other than when you have policies and procedures about minorities, about bullying, about opportunity, about some advancement and mobility make sure those just aren't words on paper...ensure what you say is what you mean, and it truly happens when those policies are called to task. EDI28*

### 6.2.9 Provide training for managers and supervisors

*I would say regular inclusion and diversity training is important. I think that buddy up system is going to be important, I mean we all know who cheerleaders are on our teams, we all know who is chucking the crew lead of the company and would be a good ambassador so I would do that, definitely do inclusion and diversity training on your team, it's not a one and done. EDI14*

*I think there needs to be some EDI training as a minimum in organizations and I also think there needs to be space for people that identify in those EDI groups, women, indigenous people, LGBT people, immigrants, to express the concerns like the oppositions, the harassment they endured. EDI43*

*In my career we practice anti-oppressive practice, and everything revolves around that. Right now, we know and are conditioned to know that forestry is a boys club but we got to implement these practices to change that we can have employers, employees do anti-oppressive training. And of course, it's not something that can be learned and changed in a snap, but it's a practice. And so, I think if we're implementing anti-oppressive training practices that would help with that. EDI50*

### 6.2.10 Broaden DEI initiatives, avoid performative DEI and do proper targeting

*We had a mentorship program initially started just with women and then we opened it up into the whole company, but we had more women that participated...was quite a successful mentorship program but one of the biggest issues is it was only open to our salaried folks so the only people that were corporate women participated and not actual mill level women. I don't think we have any issues recruiting women to our offices, it is the operations and once again it's the hours that are the issue. EDI14*

*I am on the diversity and inclusion team, and I don't think the experience is great. I think they've built a pretty framework to make it look like it should be great. the problem with that it all happens in an office during regular business hours whereas a lot of our new hires/ professionals are being hired into entry positions and those are all out in the field so really their only contact for our business is their direct field crew leader or supervisor who at one time were the most inexperienced leaders we have in the company. ED32*

*I think in any diversity communication, they need to mention the full diversity they're looking for. They need to make it a broader base and not limited to either women or indigenous or black or whatever it might happen to be, I think they really need to open it up. And I think they need to really start stating about the LGBTQ community and start putting that in their communication. EDI45*

### 6.2.11 Implement equity mandate or reporting

*I think that [equity] needs to be mandated, I think a certain level of diversity, needs to be mandated and when it is required for you to have 50% this and 50% that or this certain ethnicity % and all that stuff then people will rise to the challenge because they at least know it's an option and that opportunity is available to them. So the government should regulate it because they're not voluntarily doing it. EDI3*

*Companies should be encouraged or mandated to do reporting [diversity/equity of employees] to the government or some sort of advisory body because we don't fully understand the picture of diversity in the industry. I know there will be push back but there always is when we go against the status quo and if there are financial penalties attached to not having 50% gender split on your board or in your executive then companies will be forced to change. EDI7*

### 6.3 Summary of recommendations for employers to make forestry inclusive and attractive

1. Participants urged employers to proactively shape a welcoming and inclusive work atmosphere. This involves offering flexible work-life balance options to boost employee retention, acknowledging, and supporting the diverse experiences of employees (such as women with childcare responsibilities, individuals with disabilities), and fostering an open environment to attract and retain visible minorities and immigrants.
2. A considerable number of participants also appealed to the forestry sector to rectify its non-competitive and unequal pay structures, as well as its lack of wage transparency, particularly in the private sector. They suggested that hiring managers should pledge not to continue the trend of underpaying women and should champion equal pay.
3. To improve hiring practices, reduce bias, and provide fair opportunities to qualified candidates from underrepresented backgrounds, employers were urged to diversify interview panels, eliminate systematic barriers and prejudices during hiring (for instance, against black employees), and to ensure that women are not penalized for taking time out for child-rearing during the recruitment process.
4. To make the forestry occupation appealing to a young and diverse populace, participants recommended that employers adopt innovative engagement and recruitment methods. These could include initiatives like school outreach programs featuring forestry workers from underrepresented backgrounds as resource persons, showcasing the range of opportunities in forestry beyond logging, and encouraging more individuals from underrepresented groups to share their experiences and career journeys in the sector.
5. To enrich the employee experience in the workplace, participants suggested that managers and supervisors should display a caring attitude that acknowledges the unique characteristics and needs of each employee. This could include providing appropriate gear in the correct sizes, routinely interacting with employees to understand their experiences, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and infrastructure in the workplace. Furthermore, employers were urged to commit fully to the implementation and enforcement of policies designed to protect workers from incidents such as discrimination and unfair treatment.
6. To facilitate the integration and retention of new hires, some participants proposed collaborating with employees to devise a developmental plan for new recruits, offering

mentoring opportunities that address workers' wellbeing, identifying training and professional development needs, and deliberately attracting and integrating visible minorities into forest communities in the "north".

7. Although participants acknowledged that working in the north could be challenging for those unfamiliar with the norms, they suggested that offering more opportunities to underrepresented groups could accelerate personal growth due to the abundance of opportunities. Therefore, employers should strive to make the "north" a more welcoming work environment.
8. Many participants noted the commitment of certain employers to enforce EDI policies, with some even serving on EDI committees in their workplaces. However, they also called for a broader implementation of EDI initiatives in the sector to include all equity-deserving groups. Expanding the discussion around the definition of diversity in forestry is crucial as it directly influences the actions taken, and what isn't deliberately included often ends up being unintentionally excluded.
9. Finally, participants urged the forestry sector to eschew superficial EDI gestures and instead focus on properly targeted EDI initiatives. This should include initiatives that extend beyond office environments to mills and forests where many challenges for underrepresented groups still exist. Additionally, they encouraged governments to collaborate with the forestry sector to implement equity mandates or equity reporting to demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusion and diversity.



## 7. Part VII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of underrepresented groups who have pursued a career in the forest sector. The following objectives were outlined in this report:

- a. To identify the various representations and identities of underrepresented groups in the forest sector.
- b. To explore the factors that attract individuals to pursue a career in forestry.
- c. To understand what aspects of working in forestry participants find enjoyable or fulfilling.
- d. To examine the characteristics of a successful or unsuccessful career in forestry.
- e. To identify the opportunities and positive experiences available to those working in the forest sector.
- f. To identify the barriers, challenges, and negative experiences that individuals may encounter while working in the forest sector.
- g. To explore the strategies and approaches used by forest sector workers to overcome barriers and challenges.
- h. To gather advice and lessons learned from participants for young people who aspire to work in the forest sector.

### Summary of Key Findings

1. The study involved participants from varied backgrounds with multiple identities that were influenced by factors such as sex (male/female), gender (e.g., man, woman, non-binary), ethnicity/culture (e.g., Indigenous), living arrangements (e.g., mother), language (e.g., French), disability, and thought/values. However, forestry discussions and EDI initiatives tend to be limited and exclusive, focusing mainly on women, Indigenous Peoples, and, to a lesser extent, visible minorities. Less commonly discussed identities include individuals with visible and invisible disabilities and those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, particularly gay individuals.
2. Motivations and attraction into forestry are diverse although the dominant motivation is the lure, freedom, flexibility, and opportunity to work outdoors and in the woods. Further layered on this are the family connections to forestry, childhood experiences and place attachment to forest communities, love for nature, mentor and educational influences, passion for nature preservation, and influence from forest outreach/promotion programs. While family and community connections to forestry, and love for nature and outdoor spaces will continue to be strong attraction to get people into forestry, the industry's future growth will rely on attracting young and diverse individuals interested in conservation, sustainability, innovation, and the rewarding careers and work-life balance offered by forestry.
3. Forestry offers unique experiences that attract those interested in working in the field. The freedom and flexibility of working in natural landscapes and discovering new wilderness areas are particularly appealing. Long-time forestry workers value mentoring and training the next generation, while emerging forest professionals find satisfaction in tackling complex challenges and making a difference in forest management. Progressive

companies that prioritize EDI and work-life balance also draw interest for some others. These findings can guide employers in developing workplace practices that align with the values and expectations of their employees.

4. The definition of a successful forestry career varies based on factors such as employment duration. Across all age groups, having a supportive system, opportunities for career advancement, fair wages, and a good work-life balance are essential. For long-time employees, mentoring young employees, gaining respect and recognition, and promoting forestry are crucial for success. Meanwhile, young and recent employees value diverse opportunities, professional/continuing? education, and the ability to manage complex situations and achieve results.
5. Despite the positive experiences forestry provides, the industry is still plagued by historical and current unequal, discriminatory, and gendered relationships. Underrepresented groups face significant systemic obstacles to participating in the forest sector workforce, with challenges such as gender and race-based discrimination, inadequate recruitment and promotion practices, poor compensation and gender pay disparities, and a lack of representation of women, Indigenous peoples, and visible minorities in leadership positions. Additionally, participants identified gendered verbal and environmental microaggressions, hostile working environment for women, and undermining of female leadership and authority as incidents that need addressing. Other challenges that require attention include bullying, difficulty or inability to voice opinions or concerns on the field, especially for women.
6. Despite a decrease in incidents of sexual harassment, women in forestry continue to face disrespect, bullying, and discrimination based on their appearance and opinions. Although it was anticipated that younger women would be more empowered to challenge the status quo, women of all ages in the industry report slow progress, with many still searching or forging their path.
7. While there is greater understanding of people's needs, such as the need to balance work and childcare, and efforts to broaden participation for visible minorities, discrimination based on race, microaggressions, lack of action against bullying, and discriminatory hiring practices are still prevalent. Visible and non-visible minorities report feeling unheard and not receiving the same opportunities for responsibilities and advancement as others, with progress being slow.
8. Also, while several initiatives have been developed to improve the participation of women in the workforce compared with other underrepresented groups and progress has been made in the representation of women in the forestry workforce, our findings showed that, industry wide, women are still being ignored or receive comments based on their physical appearance.
9. Most underrepresented groups in the forestry sector do not seek formal redress for discriminatory or unequal treatment, opting for self-coping mechanisms instead. Many are reluctant to confront the systems and individuals who oppress them due to fear of victimization. Participants noted that managers and supervisors often fail to take action against bullying, which remains a significant issue in the sector.

## Limitations and areas for future research

Most participants in this study were Registered Forest Professionals (RPFs) which may have skewed the results of this study. Therefore, further research is required to understand the perceptions of individuals in other forestry occupations, particularly those who are not RPFs, and specific identity groups that were underrepresented in this study (e.g., recent immigrants, visible minorities, such as black and Asian foresters) about their work in forestry. Moreover, a carefully designed study can target underrepresented groups working in all four forest sector occupations including Forestry and Logging, Support Activities for Forestry, Wood Product Manufacturing and Paper Manufacturing, to compare experiences. Possible avenues for future research include:

1. In subsequent conversations, some participants were taken aback by the absence of discussion concerning hiring or promotion issues related to male superiors' hostility towards new employees. As this topic was not directly addressed in the current study, future research could be tailored to investigate this matter more thoroughly.
2. Additionally, further investigation is required to comprehend the involvement and integration of individuals with disabilities within the forest workforce, as they are frequently overlooked in forestry-related EDI conversations.
3. Although women reported wage disparities, our results did not reveal whether other minority groups faced similar pay gaps or felt underpaid. Wyatt et al.'s (2021) quantitative study based on the 2016 Statistics Canada labor survey indicated that pay gaps exist for new immigrants, indigenous people, and women. For example, in all four forestry subsectors, immigrants had lower median incomes than non-immigrants. Specifically, in the Paper Manufacturing subsector, immigrants' median income was 24% lower than non-immigrants, a difference of nearly \$20,000 per year. More research, especially qualitative studies, can reveal further insights into minorities' income expectations, satisfaction, and acceptance of low earnings. Additionally, it remains unknown whether initial underpayment of women is rectified over time or persists throughout their careers.
4. While many participants mentioned their involvement in workplace diversity committees, the effectiveness of these committees and the experiences of their members are unknown. Consequently, research is necessary to evaluate the efficacy of diversity committees in the workforce and the experiences of employee members, particularly from underrepresented groups.
5. Furthermore, since participants commended their employers for their dedication to EDI and equal pay, research should be intentionally designed to study successful cases of employers who have effectively promoted EDI in their workplace. For example, case studies employing appreciative inquiry research methods could be used to showcase the efforts of progressive companies and learn from their experiences.
6. Lastly, it is essential to conduct research examining the diversity of students enrolled in and graduating from universities and forestry training institutions, as these institutions have a responsibility to promote diversity among their trainees.