URGE Complaints and Reporting Policy for Toolik Field Station (TFS), within the Institute of Arctic Biology (IAB) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

This is what was found by the Toolik URGE Pod on policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes for Toolik Field Station and the University of Alaska. Some information was public; answers that were only found through follow up with contacts are noted.

In researching and compiling existing policies and reporting procedures it became clear that improvements are urgently needed in this area. The Toolik URGE pod should focus considerable attention on revising, updating, and improving reporting options and procedures. Ideas discussed by the pod are detailed here and the group will continue to devote time and effort to improving policies and reporting avenues at Toolik Field Station.

At present TFS does not have an explicitly reporting policy for racial discrimination. We do have a Code of Conduct and Title IX reporting policies specific to TFS on our website. UAF Department of Equity and Compliance (DEC) is responsible for upholding civil rights of Title IX and Accessibility (ADA/504).

“The Department of Equity and Compliance processes reports of discrimination and sexual harassment. If you believe you are being treated differently or if you believe your educational opportunities are being affected by your race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, genetic code, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, veteran status or retaliation, then DEO is the appropriate avenue of redress”.

The Department of Equity and Compliance has posited policies for how to report grievances and discrimination.

University level policies are defined under the Under the Regents’ Policy & University Regulations. Under Part 1, Chapter 2 are the general provisions given to all UAF affiliates which include a Nondiscrimination policy (01.02.020, updated 06/01/2017) and definitions of discrimination (P01.02.025, updated 08/14/2020). Policies are periodically updated during regular, special, or emergency board meetings when brought up by one or more members of the board (Board of Regents Bylaw 15. Board Policies).

At this time there are no publicly available documents on the rate of reporting discrimination at TFS or at UAF. There are reports of metrics of Title IX infractions released annually (FY2020 TIX Report). The template of this report could be used for developing metrics of discrimination reports at TFS and UAF.

Current Mechanisms for Reporting

There are no clear paths for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, or overt racism at TFS. Under the TFS Code of Conduct it states that it is the responsibility of the project leader/PI to respond to ‘bad behaviour’, however, for reporting it seems to be left to the Scientific Liaison to convey issues to the Camp Manager.

“In general, the Scientific Liaison and the camp manager will take the responsibility for dealing with issues that arise within their respective areas of influence, but will inform each other as to the issues and what action is taken. If a member of the scientific community is behaving in an inappropriate way or causing problems for the
camp, the Scientific Liaison should first inform that person’s PI/project leader, who has responsibility for the actions of project members. Issues that involve both camp staff and scientists should be dealt with jointly by the Scientific Liaison and the camp manager. We expect that the Scientific Liaison, the camp manager, and members of the Toolik Management Group will support each other in dealing proactively with potential or actual problems that may arise. The camp manager and the Scientific Liaison must also consult with CPS representatives in camp if there are issues involving CPS or subcontracted staff. If there is a breakdown in communication between the Scientific Liaison and the camp manager, then either party should feel free to contact members of the Toolik Management Group or senior scientists on appropriate projects.”

The TFS Title IX and Sexual Misconduct policy has a clear list of reporting options within TFS, UAF, as well as external contacts.

- Disclosure to the on-site Camp Manager
- Disclosure to any member of the TFS Management Team
- Disclosure to any TFS staff member
- Disclosure to the Scientific Liaisons
- Disclosure to the UAF Title IX Office (office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity)
- Disclosure to the Police (911)
- Confidential reporting and support resources are listed under Important Contacts below

Currently, reporting at TFS can be done in person or by phone. Reports of bad behaviour and those that require a formal warning are recorded by the camp manager, in case further action is needed to be taken. Before future action is taken, the on-site camp manager will discuss with the Scientific Liaisons and the Facility Supervisor whether present in camp or not. Reports that require warnings are discussed with the TFS management team to determine further action. Actions can include being dismissed from TFS, formal complaints to the DEC, and if needed police involvement.

Reporting can be done with the Department of Equity and Compliance in person, by phone, or through an online form to report grievances or discrimination. This form can be filled out anonymously or you can identify yourself. Reports to the DEC go to Margo Griffith, the Director of the DEC as well as the ADA/504 and Title IX coordinator. There is a group of four Title IX and civil rights investigators that work in the DEC. In Title IX cases, there is a framework for police involvement depending on the type of incident. There are resources about individual rights complainant, respondent, witness, as well as the advocate on the DEC website. Title IX incidents are investigated if they fulfill a certain number of criteria. The number of Title IX incidents that are reported vs the number that are investigated are reported on the annual report.

Resources for individuals reporting at TFS are currently minimal other than talking to your Supervisor/PI or with the Science Liaison. The DEC has a list of resources including counseling for Students and Staff at UAF. The DEC is working on developing a bridge between departmental reporting and the system that they currently have in place for institutional level reporting.

Future Policy (aka, the dream)

It is clear that Toolik requires a discrimination policy specific to racial, cultural, and ethnic discrimination in addition to a Title IX policy directed towards sexual and gender discrimination. The Toolik Pod has so far outlined the goals of this new policy but has yet to come to a consensus about how best to achieve them. The Toolik policy on racial discrimination must:

1. Set clear expectations for all Toolik community members in creating a positive organizational climate.
   a. Option to format the policy in the form of a community contract that all community members must sign annually before arriving at Toolik. This ensures that every person at Toolik has at minimum seen the camp’s policy.
   b. Required pre-arrival anti-discrimination training as well as additional recommended training such as active bystander intervention training.
c. Include a review of the policy, a note about reporting, and an introduction to the Scientific Liaisons during the arrival orientation.

2. Establish clear, supportive, and safe pathways to report and address major and minor infractions. **Ensure that reporting options are clear and accessible before, during, and after time spent at Toolik Field Station.**
   a. Create reporting pathways for major and minor infractions (in-person and online).

   **Disclaimer:** the terms “major and minor” are not intended to mitigate or dismiss the experiences of any victim of discrimination. It's up to individuals to decide how “major” an incident feels to them and what avenues of redress they want to pursue.

   i. Major - Utilizing existing infrastructure at UAF from the Department of Equity and Compliance for major infractions.
   j. Minor - Microaggressions are often brushed off as “not a big deal” and “not worth making a fuss over” however they are the most common and insidious form of discrimination and often greatly contribute to feelings of exclusion or danger by people of color. A commitment to making Toolik a safer and more inclusive place to live and work requires us to take microaggressions seriously and to create an avenue to document and address them. In this pathway, microaggressions can be quickly addressed by the community without requiring the victim to navigate the larger UAF system (if they chose not to).

   b. Develop flyers similar to the one created for reporting sexual misconduct. These reporting pathways should include options for reporting major infractions as well as minor infractions (microaggressions). They should lay out all reporting options, make it clear what is and isn’t anonymous, and be widely available around camp (in the “towers”, dining hall, shower mod, labs, trucks) and on the Toolik website.

   c. Establish an in-person reporting pathway that includes options of a Scientific Liaison, In-Town Liaison, and Toolik Staff. Clearly indicate and post a picture on the board of who these people are so that they are more recognizable and approachable. In addition to the picture board, post the Scientific Liaisons on the community calendar.
   i. Establish a second Scientific Liaison so that there are both a male and female, and/or non-binary Scientific Liaison on duty at all times in camp to increase likelihood that all community members can talk to someone they feel comfortable with.
   j. Establish an on duty In-Town Liaison. A member of the Fairbanks based Toolik staff that is available to allow victims to file complaints while by-passing in-camp politics and tension.

   d. Establish online reporting options for both major and minor infractions. These reporting options should allow for anonymity.
   i. Major - Complaints in this form should have action taken immediately to follow up with the victim and to determine what further action is needed.
   j. Minor - Complaints from this form should be tracked in order to measure progress over time in addressing minor infractions (microaggressions) and to follow up with the victim to make sure they feel comfortable and satisfied with the actions taken.

   k. Ideas for this online reporting option should include:
      1. Option to “address immediately”, “time delay”, or “add to a bank” of reports to further protect anonymity.
      2. Some events require acknowledgement but not further action. Provide a field for the reporter to decide whether or not they want further action to be taken in the form.
      3. Have the “In-Town Liaison” address form complaints to further by-pass in-camp politics and protect anonymity.
      4. Include a field to describe the role of the person reporting: were they a bystander or the person harmed by incident, did they hear about it from someone else, etc.

   e. Follow up on reports is an important element of the reporting pathways.
      1. Victim
         1. Ensure that the victim is safe and feels safe.
         2. Follow up after the report to inquire if they are satisfied with the response and outcome.
3. In following up be respectful about not asking/expecting folks to revisit traumatic experiences, if they don’t wish to.

2. Violator
   1. If a minor infraction and the violator is allowed to remain at camp, follow up with them to ensure that they understand what they said or did is an infraction as well as the gravity of the situation.
   2. If a major infraction, define the timeline of if someone is dismissed from camp. How quickly does it occur? What happens to their ongoing projects and equipment? Need to figure this out so that the expectations of what happens in the face of a major infraction is clear from the beginning.
   3. Follow up to see if they completed the required training or are following the disciplinary actions that were implemented.

3. Community
   1. Invest in a community centered approach improving the organizational climate and to eliminating discrimination. Ideas include:
      a. Dedicating time in User Forums to discuss microaggressions and other types of discrimination (racial and Title IX).
      b. Annually provide a report of how many complaints were received and how they were dealt with.
      c. Offer a variety of training options (bystander intervention, implicit bias, safe space) for any interested community members. These could be a class that users can take on their own time before arriving, an option to do in quarantine, or a shorter version given during a Talking Shop.
      d. Encourage bystanders to support, empower, and hold each other accountable.
   2. Make the user forum more inviting to provide feedback, continue anonymous online comments and read them during the forum for discussion and resolution.
   3. Encourage community to participate in revising policies on racial discrimination and Title IX offences. These documents are living documents and improvement should be encouraged. At least once a year have an open solicitation for feedback on the policies. Updated policies be dated and posted on the Toolik website.

3. Provide clear guidance for outcomes or consequences for individuals who violate Toolik’s policy and follow up with the victim(s)/ reporter(s).
   a. As outlined in the current Toolik Code of Conduct the Camp Manager and any member of the Toolik Management team has the authority to remove from camp any individual who “engages in physical or verbal abuse or assault, intimidation, coercion, threats, sexual harassment, or behavior that endangers the health and safety of oneself or others”. This covers racial discrimination but the language could be adapted to address these concerns specifically.
   b. Other outcomes should include follow-up by supervisor, training, disciplinary action, and termination if needed.

4. Provide support groups and counseling information and resources for the community.
   a. Peer-mentoring group
   b. Supervisors/PI are the advocates for their employees
   c. Polar Impact Network - An inclusive network of racial & ethnic minorities and allies in the polar research community.

5. Continue to develop a positive organizational climate
   a. Workshops and community discussions on discrimination, microaggressions, and organizational climate.
   b. Create a more welcoming environment at the User Forum where comments and feedback can be safely brought up and discussed. The anonymous online and in camp box of comments will continue to be read and discussed at the User Forum.
c. Anti-discrimination and pro-inclusion signs around camp to promote a more positive culture for all community members.