

EASTERN SHELBURNE COUNTY Equity & Anti-Racism Plan

2025-2028



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Plain Language Summary

What the plan is about:

This plan is about how the Municipality of the District of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport are going to identify, prevent and remove barriers for people of all backgrounds in our spaces, policies, programs and services. It will make sure that every person will be respected and treated fairly, no matter their race, gender, sexual orientation, abilities and more.

The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* (2022) is an important part of our plan. It will improve things for everyone.

In line with the law, our plan explains what we'll do next to keep making things better, and how we'll measure our progress.

Key areas of our plan:

- We will listen to people from all backgrounds about barriers they face
- We will help our staff and Councils learn about equity and anti-racism
- We will change or create policies that make sure everyone is included
- We will lead by example and be accountable for what we do

Who we talked to:

We talked to people of all backgrounds, groups that support them, and staff and Councillors. They told us about their experiences, concerns, barriers and suggestions on how to address them.

Plan Background

The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and our response to it:

- The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* (2022) outlines the provincial government's approach to addressing systemic hate, inequity and racism.
- It requires some public sector bodies, such as Municipalities, to develop equity and anti-racism plans.
- These plans must identify actions that will promote equity and anti-racism in our policies, programs and services by consulting with and considering the needs of equity-deserving groups.
- The Municipality of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport have partnered to develop a joint equity and anti-racism plan for Eastern Shelburne County.
- We are legislated to update our plan every three years.
- This is our first plan.
- **An important note:** This plan will be a responsive, flexible document that may change over time to keep up with new laws and the needs of our communities.

Equity-deserving groups: A group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities that are available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Such groups face barriers based on factors such as race, age, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, and more.

Statement of Commitment

The Municipality of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne and Town of Lockeport recognize that our community includes many groups and individuals who don't have access to full participation in public life due to barriers created by racism and discrimination.

We're aware there are unique challenges faced by these communities, and will do our part to eliminate barriers for all in our organizations whenever possible.

To meet this goal, we are committed to the following:

- Engaging with equity-deserving groups in the community
- Making sure equity and anti-racism plans and work are informed by the valuable first-voice feedback from equity-deserving groups
- Using an equity and anti-racism lens in all we do to identify, prevent and remove barriers that make it harder for equity-deserving groups to access what we provide
- Aligning our equity and anti-racism plans with the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* (2022)

What We Heard

Community engagement (asking our community for feedback) is an essential component of the development of our equity and anti-racism plan.

The purpose of engagement is:

- To listen to community members' first-voice perspectives on equity and anti-racism in order to better understand what these groups experience (historically and currently)
- To identify what barriers there are to equitable access to Municipal and Town spaces, policies and procedures
- To determine what should be the actions we should prioritize to address these barriers

Engagement methods used:

- Engagement sessions with equity-deserving groups and the organizations that represent them
- A temporary Advisory Panel made up of members from these communities and Council representatives from the Municipality/Towns
- Public meetings in both Shelburne and Lockeport
- A public survey, online and in print
- A survey for staff and Councillors, online and in print

Equity Deserving Groups engaged with, but not limited to:

- Mi'kmaw
- African Nova Scotians and people of African descent
- Newcomers
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- Low income

Organizations engaged with, but not limited to:

- Black Loyalist Heritage Centre
- Centre for Environmental Justice Society (CEJ)
- Eastern Shelburne County Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Nova Scotia Mental Health and Addictions
- Our House Youth Wellness Centre
- Refugee Sponsorship Groups
- Kitchen Table Talks (A Shelburne County Community Health Board initiative)
- Shelburne County Family Resource Centre
- Shelburne County Senior Safety and Services
- Wasoqopa’q First Nation

Summary of findings from community engagement:

Main barriers to equity in the community

- Systemic racism and discrimination throughout society
- Lack of equity and anti-racism education for the general public
- Lack of resources, such as public transportation, affordable housing, food security, clean water and services, especially mental health services
- Lack of employment and employment opportunities
- Lack of access to healthcare and mental health services
- Social isolation and lack of support for seniors and newcomers, i.e. immigrants and refugees
- Poverty, often linked to generational trauma, affects many equity-deserving groups, and can limit their access to participating fully in society

Main barriers to equity at a Municipal and Town Level

- Systemic racism and discrimination, e.g. the presence or absence of an equity and anti-racism lens in policies and practices

- Lack of equity and anti-racism education and training opportunities for Municipal staff and Councillors
- Equity-deserving groups don't see themselves represented in Municipal and Town staff, Councils and in decision-making roles
- Physical barriers limit people with disabilities from accessing spaces
- Lack of transportation options prevent some, especially low-income residents and people with disabilities, from reaching events, programs and services
- Digital-only communication methods and a lack of multilingual options exclude those without internet, tech skills, or English fluency

Suggested Municipal and Town Actions

- Equity and anti-racism training for all staff and Councillors
- Ongoing community engagement with equity-deserving groups, including public meetings, online surveys and more
- Create an equity and anti-racism advisory committee and associated task-forces as needed, with equity-deserving groups represented and informing decision-making
- Review practices and policies with input from equity-deserving groups, starting with inclusive event planning, hiring, procurement, land use, and any codes of conduct
- Consider hiring dedicated equity and anti-racism staff
- Explore transportation options to help more people with disabilities and low-income residents attend events, etc.
- Increase support and programming for seniors and newcomers wherever possible
- Make communication more accessible, e.g. use less digital-only methods and explore ways to provide multilingual documents
- Consider ways to improve public awareness of available resources and how to access them, e.g. public meetings, a Community Conversations video and staff support for newcomers
- Lead by example on equity by considering the representation of equity-deserving groups when updating signs, the raising of diverse flags in

central locations and using inclusive language in surveys and forms, e.g. wording related to gender identity

- Prioritize accountability through a committee, public transparency on equity efforts and considering clear and safe ways for residents to report racism or discrimination at the Municipal and Town level
- More advocacy wherever possible

Summary of findings from Municipality/Towns Staff and Councillors Survey

A survey for Municipality/Towns employees and Councillors was completed. A total of 38 responses were collected with 19 from the Municipality of Shelburne, 13 from the Town of Shelburne, and 6 from the Town of Lockeport.

- Most respondents (95%) felt that they had a very good to excellent understanding of racism and what it means.
- Most respondents (83%) felt that they had a very good to excellent understanding of discrimination and what it means.
- Most respondents (98%) felt that they were somewhat to very knowledgeable of the Municipality/Town's existing policies on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- For the question "What do you see as the biggest barriers to advancing equity and anti-racism in your organization?", the top barriers selected were:
 - Insufficient resources (34%)
 - Resistance to change (34%)
 - Lack of awareness (32%)
 - Fear of retaliation (16%)
 - Discrimination (13%)
 - Racism (11%)
 - A notable portion of respondent selected "I don't see any barriers" (34%)

- For the question “What resources or support do you think would help you or others engage in equity and anti-racism work?”, the top selections were:
 - Anti-racism and equity training for Municipal and Town staff and Council (63%)
 - Increase engagement of people with lived experiences (including staff members with lived experiences) in reviewing and planning programs, policies and services (63%)
 - Access to mental health support (57%)
 - Clear reporting mechanisms for incidents of racism and discrimination (43%)

Priority Areas

Our plan includes four priority areas: community engagement, education and training, inclusive policies and leadership commitment and accountability. In each of these areas, we will state our goal and actions we will take in that area.



Actions

Community Engagement

Intentionally engaging with and supporting equity-deserving groups in meaningful ways.

Actions

Action 1.1 Establish an Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee made up of people from equity-deserving groups and organizations.

Consider:

- Combining this new committee with the existing Accessibility Advisory Committee to create a single Equity Committee
- Associated sub-committees and working groups as needed

Action 1.2 Strengthen current and build new partnerships and relationships with equity-deserving groups and organizations.

Action 1.3 Use partnerships and relationships with equity-deserving groups and organizations to address issues relevant to equity and anti-racism and to inform decision making.

Education and Training

Provide ongoing education and training opportunities for the organization that focus on equity and anti-racism education.

Actions

Action 2.1 Involve equity-deserving groups and organizations when selecting equity and anti-racism training for Municipal and Town staff and Councillors.

Action 2.2 Make equity and anti-racism training mandatory for all Municipal and Town staff and Councillors.

Action 2.3 Ensure that education is ongoing to promote a culture of equity and anti-racism.

Action 2.4 When possible, make training and educational opportunities available to the public as well as staff to raise public awareness of equity and anti-racism.

Inclusive Policies

The presence of policies that actively promote equity and anti-racism within the organization.

Actions

Action 3.1 Conduct a review of existing Municipal and Town policies to identify gaps, biases, and systemic barriers that may affect equity-deserving groups.

Action 3.2 Using an equity and anti-racism lens, make a plan to update or create new policies as necessary.

Action 3.3 Involve equity-deserving groups and organizations when updating or creating new policies relevant to equity and anti-racism.

Leadership Commitment and Accountability

The extent to which the organization leadership demonstrates a commitment to equity and anti-racism principles.

Actions

Action 4.1 Consider hiring dedicated staff to lead the development and implementation of actions in this plan, ensuring accountability.

Action 4.2 Develop a vision statement for our commitment to equity and anti-racism.

Action 4.3 Incorporate the vision statement into Municipal and Town documents.

Action 4.4 Align policies and operations with the vision statement.

Action 4.5 Develop a workplan that outlines the actions in this plan with timelines and staff responsibilities.

Action 4.6 Establish regular reporting to share updates on equity and anti-racism initiatives with Councils and the public.

Next Steps

To monitor and evaluate our plan and equity and anti-racism work:

- We will create an annual equity and anti-racism progress report for the Municipal and Town Councils.
- The report will detail what we have accomplished in our priority areas.
- The report will be completed by the end of each fiscal year.
- It will be a public document that will be posted on our websites.
- Community engagement will be ongoing, and will inform updates of the equity and anti-racism plan.
- We'll keep a record of all official equity and anti-racism complaints and concerns. This information may also inform updates of the equity and anti-racism plan.

Acknowledgments

The development of the Equity & Anti-Racism Plan was a process that involved public engagement and staff support from the Municipality/Towns.

The input from members of the public, representatives from equity deserving groups, and organizations that represent them greatly informed the development of the plan.

Thank you to:

- Those who attended public meetings on equity and anti-racism
- Those who completed the public survey
- The individuals and organizations who took part in engagement sessions with staff on equity and anti-racism
- The Eastern Shelburne County Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Panel, for your dedication to equity and anti-racism in your community, and for the important role you play in advising the Municipality and Towns on equity and anti-racism

Throughout the process staff from the Municipality/Towns engaged groups, conducted consultations, developed drafts of the plan, and provided administrative support among other things.

Staff included:

- Frances Scott, Former Community Coordinator, Town of Lockeport
- Jessie Dyer, Executive Coordinator, Town of Shelburne
- Adam Dedrick, Director of Recreation and Parks, Municipality of the District of Shelburne
- Michelle Vacon, Administrative Support (for the Municipality/Towns)

Definitions

2SLGBTQIA+: An acronym for 2-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual/biromantic, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, and asexual/aromatic with the “+” representing the diversity of ways people self-identify their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Accessibility: When our environments, services, policies, and more are proactively designed and constructed so that people with disabilities can fully and equitably participate without experiencing barriers.

Anti-racism: The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. The goal is to remove racism, fix the harm it has caused in the past and present, and make sure power and opportunities are shared equitably by everyone.

Barrier: Barriers are anything that excludes or makes it harder for an individual or group to fully take part in society. Some types of barriers are attitudinal barriers, physical barriers, or systemic barriers. Barriers are not always intentional.

Discrimination: Treating people or groups unfairly by not giving them the same chances as others. It happens through policies or practices that stop people or groups from getting things like jobs, housing, services, or other benefits in society. Discrimination includes racism, as well as sexism, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, etc.

Dismantling Racism and Hate Act (2022): The law enacted by the province of Nova Scotia to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism. ([Read the full Act.](#))

Diversity: Having a variety of people from a range of different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, sexual orientations, life experiences, competencies and faiths represented on teams, in workplaces in general and particularly in processes like engagement.

Eastern Shelburne County: Includes The Town of Shelburne, The Municipality of Shelburne and the Town of Lockeport.

Equity: Understanding that not everyone starts with the same chances in life. Some people face more barriers and challenges, so they may need extra support to reach the same goals as others, even if they try just as hard.

Equitable: Having or exhibiting equity.

Equity and anti-racism lens: A framework for ensuring policies, services, and environments are inclusive and barrier-free for equity-deserving groups. It involves considering equity and anti-racism at every stage of decision-making to promote full participation for all.

Equity-deserving groups: A group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities that are available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes. Such groups face barriers based on factors such as race, age, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, and more.

First Voice: A person telling their own story, from their own point of view.

African Nova Scotians: A distinct people who descend from free and enslaved Black planters, Black loyalists, Black refugees, Maroons and other Black people who inhabited the original 52 land-based Black communities in that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia.

Inclusion: Intentionally offering equitable access to opportunities and resources to people who might otherwise be left out.

Mi'kmaq: The original inhabitants of Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki encompasses what is known as present-day Nova Scotia, PEI, Quebec, New Brunswick, parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and parts of Maine.

Newcomers: Those who have recently immigrated or settled in Canada, typically within the last five years. This term can refer to immigrants, refugees, or those who came as temporary residents and are now seeking to stay permanently.

People of African Descent: People who have ancestry from the African continent, including descendants of those who were brought to North and South America through the transatlantic slave trade, recent migrants, and others with historical or cultural ties to Africa.

People with Disabilities: People who face barriers to their full and effective participation in society when chronic, long-term, episodic or recurring physical, sensory, mental, learning, developmental, or intellectual conditions or illnesses interact with various social and physical environments.

Plain Language: Language that is clear and easy for the reader or listener to understand. Plain Language is usually at a 6th grade reading level.

Racism: When a person, group, or system treats a person or a group unfairly because of their race, and has the power to support that unfair treatment through rules, policies, and social attitudes. Race itself is a social idea, not a biological fact, created to benefit those in power.

Systemic: Describes what relates to or affects an entire system. For example, systemic changes to an organization, such as designing policies, practices, and procedures with equity in mind, would have an impact on the entire organization, including its most basic operations.

Wasoqopa’q First Nation: Wasoqopa’q First Nation’s unique geographical composition spreads through the Southwestern regions of Nova Scotia spanning five counties from Yarmouth to Halifax. A Mi'kmaw Nation with ties to traditional territory. Wasoqopa’q First Nation encompasses six reserves - Yarmouth, Ponhook, Medway, Wildcat, Gold River, and Hammonds Plains. Additionally, Wasoqopa’q First Nation has separate land holdings in Gardner's Mill and Shelburne.

Resources

Black Loyalist Heritage Centre. *Black Loyalist Heritage Centre*.

<https://blackloyalist.com/>

Government of Canada. 2022. *Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*

Terminology. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2022/05/guide-equity-diversity-inclusion-terminology.html>

Government of Nova Scotia. 2022. *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*.

<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/dismantling%20racism%20and%20hate.pdf>

Government of Nova Scotia. *Office of Equity and Anti-Racism*.

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/equity-and-anti-racism/about>

Government of Nova Scotia. *Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Public*

Engagement Site. <https://www.oeaengagement.ca/>

Government of Nova Scotia. *We are all treaty people*.

<https://novascotia.ca/treaty-education/treaty-education-brochure-english.pdf>

Municipality of Shelburne, Town of Shelburne, and Town of Lockeport. 2025.

Eastern Shelburne County Accessibility Plan 2025-2028.

<https://www.municipalityofshelburne.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Eastern-Shelburne-County-Accessibility-Plan-2025-2028.pdf>

Wasoqopa'q First Nation, Nova Scotia. 2025. *Wasoqopa'q First Nation*.

<https://www.acadiafirstnation.ca/>

Appendix A: Equity and Anti-Racism Plan Advisory Panel Members

Community Members

- Mimi Champagne - Refugee sponsorship group
- Andrea Davis, Black Loyalist Heritage Centre
- Louise Delisle, Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)
- Lyndi Goulden, Our House Youth Wellness Centre
- Vanessa Hartley, Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)
- Davie Hartley, Kitchen Table Talks (A Shelburne County Community Health Board initiative)
- Catherine Jones, Eastern Shelburne County Accessibility Advisory Committee Member
- Troy Lawrence, African Nova Scotia Affairs
- Jeanette Nickerson, Wasoqopa'q First Nations
- Sandie Organ, Shelburne Family Resource Centre
- Shawna Symonds, Shelburne County Senior Safety and Services

Council Members

- Therese Cruz, Town of Shelburne
- Sherry Thorburn Irvine, Municipality of the District of Shelburne
- Candace Malik, Town of Lockeport

Appendix B: Tree of Diversity

The cover page includes an image of the **Tree of Diversity**. It symbolizes growth, strength, and the interconnectedness of all people. It visually represents how equity and inclusion create a thriving, resilient community - one that's rooted in shared values and nourished by diversity.



