

*Cropped image courtesy Leah Benetti and the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark.*



# Equity & Diversity Plan

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Equity & Diversity Advisory Committee for the Municipality  
of the County of Cumberland

**2025-2028**

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# P'jila'si, Bienvenue, Fàilte, Welcome



A child attends Welcoming Week Cumberland 2024 at the Amherst Curling Club. Coaches Creations Sports, Design & Photography.

Welcome, Ласкаво просимо, willkommen, مرحبا! The Municipality of Cumberland invites you to read its Equity and Anti-Racism Plan, which outlines strategies to identify, prevent, and eliminate inequality and systemic racism. The Municipality's goal is to create a more inclusive Cumberland for all to enjoy for the next seven generations<sup>1</sup> and more.

The Equity and Anti-Racism Plan has been developed by the Equity & Diversity Advisory Committee ("the Committee"), a group of employees and citizens of the Municipality of Cumberland. The Committee created this Plan to recommend how to celebrate and better serve Cumberland's increasingly diverse population. The Plan was developed to meet requirements under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* ("the Act").

In August 2024, Municipal staff did a listening tour of Cumberland to hear people's thoughts on equity and accessibility (see Accessible Cumberland [webpage](#) & Plan).

<sup>1</sup> Some Indigenous cultures, including here in Mi'kma'ki, emphasize the number 7 (l'uiknek) for a variety of reasons (directions, Creation stories, etc.). See here for more information about the significance of 7 generations: [Integrative-Science-Seven-Generations.pdf](#).

Many things learned from those sessions have been included in this Plan (see below, “Community Engagement”, for more information).

The Plan will be reviewed and updated at least every 3 years as required by the Act, or more often as necessary.

## About Cumberland



A map of the world showing where people had moved from, designed by the Welcoming Week Committee.

The Municipality of Cumberland has a widely spread, rural population of 19,964 people. [4] It includes two former towns (Springhill and Parrsboro), the Villages of Pugwash and River Hebert, and many small communities and remote areas, all with different characteristics and services. The Municipality shares a border with the neighbouring province of New Brunswick and includes all of Cumberland County except the Town of Amherst and the Town of Oxford (an additional population of 10,574 combined). [4] It is the second-largest municipality in Nova Scotia by land area, at 4,276 km<sup>2</sup>. [1]

Cumberland is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq, governed by the Peace and Friendship Treaties. [1] Some communities within the colonial borders of Cumberland include Taqamiku'jk (Parrsboro), Atuomjek (Advocate Harbour), Qospemk (Franklin Manor Reserve 22 & area), Wen'jue'katik (Joggins), Pakwesk (Pugwash), Springhill Junction, Remsheg (Wallace), and more [2]. The

Municipality also appreciates the presence and contributions of African Nova Scotians in the area for over 400 years, particularly in the community of Springhill<sup>[3]</sup>.

Another significant group living here is the Acadians. Acadians and Mi'kmaq developed strong relationships over generations. [1] Historic Acadian communities in Cumberland include Minudie, Beaubassin, Maccan and River Hebert. [2]

The 2021 census (specific to Cumberland) lists the following as the most common ancestries: English, (8685 people), Scottish (7955), Canadian (6215)<sup>2</sup>, Irish (5705), and French (3345).<sup>3</sup> [3] However, Cumberland's population is becoming more diverse. Due to global events such as the Syrian and Ukraine Wars, and other general population movement, Nova Scotia has welcomed many immigrants and refugees, some of whom have chosen Cumberland as their home.

The YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth's YREACH program has shared some statistics regarding the newcomer population in the regions below. They can help the Municipality understand the population until the next census comes out (2031). In the Amherst, Springhill, Oxford, and Pugwash areas, there are 396 known eligible clients (newcomers). People have come primarily from (in no particular order):

- India
- Philippines
- Ukraine
- Korea
- Syria
- Nepal

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<sup>2</sup> The census listing "Canadian" as an ancestry can mean many things for different people because Canada has an incredibly diverse population.

<sup>3</sup> "The sum of the ethnic or cultural origins in this table is greater than the total population estimate because a person may report more than one ethnic or cultural origin in the census."

# Truth & Reconciliation



At 2024's Truth & Reconciliation Day Talking Circle, Carol Ann Knockwood (right) speaks about her experiences growing up in Springhill Junction and at Shubenacadie Indian Residential School. Her daughter, Michelle Parsons (left), listens intently.

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) [4] made their [94 Calls to Action](#) document in 2012. It has 94 actions to improve relationships between Indigenous peoples and governments/institutions. Of the 94 items, 12 call for municipal-level action, several of which were included in this Plan (plan actions with an asterisk\*).

On September 26, 2024, the Municipality hosted an internal talking circle event. This marked a personable beginning to the Municipality's efforts towards reconciliation. Carol Ann Knockwood was the guest speaker, sharing experiences of racism growing up in Springhill & Springhill Junction, such as other children saying they didn't want to play with a "dirty Indian". She also attended Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, which she described as the worst five years of her life.

This was positive progress towards developing and fostering a relationship with the Mi'kmaw community.

# Community Engagement



Stephanie Keilhack, Community Engagement Coordinator and Equity/Accessibility Staff Lead, visited various events like Maw'io'mi and farmers markets to hear citizens' concerns.

The Municipality's Community Engagement Coordinator (the Coordinator) drew upon multiple sources when creating this Plan. Importantly, a dedicated committee (EDAC) reviewed every aspect of this plan and suggested additional ideas and changes. See Appendix C for a list of committee members.

To meet with as many citizens as possible, the Coordinator went on a Listening Tour of Cumberland, primarily at farmer's markets. With signage promoting equity and accessibility, passersby had four options for sharing their opinions on the subjects.

- An activity with popsicle sticks and labeled buckets, as an easy conversation starter
- Verbal sharing
- Anonymous online survey
- Anonymous written suggestions box

People's equity concerns were mostly related to:

- Indigenous languages
- Equity in job applications

The Coordinator also benefited from meetings and events with the Association of Municipal Administrators, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism, the Office of L'nu Affairs, African Nova Scotian Affairs, the Tamarack Institute, KAIROS Blanket Exercises, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, Joggins Fossil Cliffs, YMCA Cumberland, Lilac Place Amherst, Cumberland African Nova Scotian Association (CANSA), and the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre.

## Areas of Focus

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The Plan includes the following areas of focus. These themes are important to ensure that all areas of the Municipality's organizational structure are involved in equity work, from senior leadership to customer service.

- Programs and Services
- Human Resources and Administration
- Leadership and Decision-Making

# Programs and Services



Welcoming Week 2024 at the Amherst Curling Club with the Latido Mexican Folklore Dancers. Photo courtesy Coaches Creations Sports, Design & Photography.

## Vision

The Municipality's programs and services (like customer service and recreation) are welcoming and useful to all, including celebrating cultural differences.

## Overview

Recreation has been on the forefront of equity efforts so far. Girls at Bat, for example, is a program designed to encourage girls to enjoy softball and expand their skills, as sports are often prioritized for boys in North American societies, even if unintentionally. Also, events like Welcoming Week Cumberland (YMCA) have encouraged people in the region to honour neighbours' cultures.

## Policies

The Municipality should review its policies to ensure that people of different races, cultures, genders, or sexualities do not face discrimination, harassment, or prejudice in programs or in the delivery of services.

## Actions

### Now

	Action Item	Responsible
PS1	Consider adopting the Recreation <a href="#">Anti-Racism Charter</a> .	Council
PS2	To recognize important days like Acadian Heritage Day or Emancipation Day, visibly display support with signage, decals, flags, and/or lights.	Communications
PS3	Provide anti-discrimination training for staff and key volunteers (e.g. firefighters), specialized for their public-facing roles.	Human Resources
PS4	Promote anti-racism learning opportunities for the public.	Communications
PS5	Increase diversity in Municipal communications and promotional materials.	Communications

### Next

	Action Item	Responsible
PS6 [TR*]	87. With Mi'kmaq and relevant organizations, educate the public on Indigenous athletes in history.	Recreation, Communications

\*From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 99 Calls to Action.

### Later

	Action Item	Responsible
PS7	Support non-profit organizations in installing public art through our grant programs.	Administration
PS8	Develop a guide for when signage should be Multilingual (French, Acadian, Mi'kmaq, English).	Communications
PS9	Work with tourism partners to recognize cultural communities in Cumberland.	Planning and Development
PS10	For newcomers, include an informational welcome package on the website.	Communications
PS11	In forms that require a question about gender, change to make it more inclusive (e.g. blank	Administration

	to self-indicate gender, or offering male, female, and other: _____).	
PS12 [TR]	In collaboration with tourism partners, explore translation services for signage and informational displays.	Administration Communications
PS13	Consider adjusting grant policy to incorporate diversity criteria into the evaluation of applications.	Council Administration

# Human Resources and Administration



Michelle Parsons leads a smudge for Cumberland Chief Administrative Officer Greg Herrett, September 2024.

## Vision

The Municipality demonstrates its value for diversity in its work culture. Everyday processes reflect its commitment to inclusion, and employees consistently feel valued and able to be their full selves at work.

## Overview

The Municipality is in the early, but promising, stages of its equity journey.

To assist in building this Plan, the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS) led all department directors through an Equity and Anti-Racism Self-Assessment Tool. This brought ideas and understanding from all corners of the organization together. The results of this meeting can be seen in Appendix D.

## Starting Point

In October 2024, the Municipality's Personnel Policy was updated to include an employment equity statement, clarifications on certain leaves of absence (e.g. gender-based violence leave), and an added accommodations policy and procedure.

## Policies

Review policies for discrimination, harassment, or prejudice, and then break down these issues for the benefit of current and prospective employees.

## Actions

### Now

	Action Item	Responsible
HR1	Consider creating a staff equity advisory committee.	Administration
HR2	Include cultural learning components in staff events when appropriate.	Administration

### Next

	Action Item	Responsible
HR3	Anti-discrimination training for all staff.	Human Resources, Administration
HR4	Implement the respectful workplace, and accommodation, equity and accessibility policies.	Administration, Human Resources
HR5	Explore the inclusion of an equity, diversity, and inclusion component in the procurement policy.	Administration
HR6 [TR*]	Become familiar with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a framework for reconciliation. *[Inspired by TRC #43]	Council
HR7 [TR*]	*57. Provide skills-based intercultural competence training for staff on topics such as the history and legacy of residential schools.	Human Resources
HR8 [TR]	Consider extending the reach of the organization's land acknowledgement.	Communications

\*From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 99 Calls to Action.

### Advocacy

\*From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 99 Calls to Action.

# Leadership and Decision-Making



2024-2028 Members of Cumberland municipal council include: CAO Greg Herrett, District 6 Coun. Scott Lockhart, Mayor Rod Gilroy, District 1 Coun. Fred Gould, District 2 Coun. Anthony Fromm, (back, from left) District 3 Coun. Jennifer Houghtaling, District 5 Coun. Angela 'Angel' McCormick, District 4 Coun. Kathy Redmond, District 7 Coun. Carrie Lee and District 8 Coun. Marchel Strong.

## Vision

The Municipality's high-level decision-making will include a diverse cross-section of people. Leadership processes, such as budgeting, council proceedings, procurement, and management will be well-informed by equity and anti-racism.

## Starting Point

The Municipality was founded in 1759. It is unclear how many BIPOC or 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals have served in council or senior staff leadership positions.

## Policies

Review policies to include diverse people when making decisions, especially at the high level.

## Actions

### Now

	Action Item	Responsible
LD1 [TR*]	Seek input into our Municipal Planning Strategy from Mi'kmaw partners. [*Inspired by TRC #47]	Land Use & Planning, Council

### Next

	Action Item	Responsible
LD2	Provide anti-discrimination training for senior administration and council, specialized for high-level positions and inclusive of gender-related concerns.	Office of the CAO
LD3	Review policies and key procedures (e.g. grant allocation, procurement, budgeting) with an EDIA lens.	Office of the CAO
LD4 [TR]	Engage First Nation governments where appropriate on projects of common interest.	Council Office of the CAO Administration
LD5 [TR]	Make a commitment to netukulimk (the sustainable use of resources) and care for the environment through the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP).	Planning & Permitting, Council
LD6 [TR]	Recommend a policy for engagement with Mi'kmaq.	Administration, Council

### Later

	Action Item	Responsible
LD7	Learn how to attract and retain diverse staff and councillors. Integrate that learning into common practice to empower diverse leadership.	Human Resources

# Implementing the Plan



Pugwash has Gaelic street signs throughout the village, a useful and visible step toward preserving the endangered language.

## Responsibilities

Municipal Council is responsible for

- Receiving and overseeing the Plan.

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for

- Implementing the Plan.

The Deputy CAO is responsible for

- Assuring that Municipal budgets align with the Plan (in cooperation with the Coordinator).

The Committee is responsible for

- Developing and updating the Plan.
- Monitoring success of the Plan.
- Feedback and recommendations to Council.

The Coordinator is responsible for

- Supporting the work of the Committee and leading it in its responsibilities.
- Monitoring progress in implementation of the Plan.
- Assuring that Municipal planning documents and processes align with the Plan.
- Continuing efforts to improve organizational awareness of equity and diversity.
- (In support of the Human Resources Officer) Supporting staff if they request equity accommodations.

## Schedule

Plan items have been grouped into “now”, “next”, “later” and “advocacy” based on feasibility, priority, and responsibility. The goal timelines for completing these groupings are:

Now: September 2025-March 2026

Next: April 2026-March 2028

Later: April 2028-2030

Advocacy: by request, or in cooperation with, the responsible organization.

## Monitoring

The Committee will prepare a Report Card for council by March 31 of each year. This report card will assess the effectiveness of the policies and actions outlined in this Plan. The Committee may also make recommendations to improve the Plan.

The Plan will be updated every 3 years or as frequently as new provincial standards are implemented.

The Report Card will be a public document. It will be posted on the Municipality's website.

## Evaluating

The Municipality will engage the public to review and evaluate the Plan by 2027. The Coordinator will use the public's thoughts when editing the Plan. According to the Act, an edit of the Plan will be due the following year.

## Responding to Questions and Complaints

Anyone can make a complaint or ask a question to the Municipality. These should be directed to [customer service](#). Customer service will direct the complaint to the relevant department with the Coordinator acting as a resource for their knowledge on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The Coordinator will keep a record of all concerns on which they are consulted and will provide summary updates to the Committee on a regular basis. These updates will become part of the Committee's continual review of the Plan and may inform future changes.

## Appendices

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### A – Reference Links

[Accessible Cumberland - Municipality of Cumberland](#)

[Calls to Action English2.pdf](#)

[Dismantling Racism and Hate Act](#)

[Integrative-Science-Seven-Generations.pdf](#)

[Kairos Blanket Exercise](#)

[Kentville Mural Map](#)

[Nova Scotia's Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation](#)

[Public Art — Yarmouth Arts Alliance](#)

[Treaty Education Nova Scotia - Nova Scotia Public Service](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - NCTR](#)

[UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | OHCHR](#)

- [Mi'kmaq](#)

- [English](#)
- [English teen-friendly](#)
- [French](#)

## B – Equity Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

[Terms of Reference](#)

## C – Equity & Diversity Advisory Committee (EDAC) Members

Rachel Smith (Chair), Y Reach program, YMCA

Stephanie Keilhack (Staff Lead)

Michelle Parsons, Indigenous Affairs Canada

Tammy Drew, Indigenous Affairs Canada

Richie Wilcox, Cumberland resident

While EDAC's task was to form this plan, members feel it is important to always take more steps forward, because work like this is never fully finished. The best everyone can do is continue to learn, grow, and forge a better future for Cumberland.

## D – Organizational Self-Assessment Tool

The Office of Equity & Anti-Racism (OEA) has created a document that helps organizations assess their progress in various areas of equity work.

The Directors from each department got together to evaluate the Municipality's progress. The chart below shows the results of this discussion.

	Not Yet Started	Ready to Start	Launched	Well on the Way	Leading
Vision		X			
Leadership Commitment		X			
Inclusive Policies			X		
Supporting Framework			X		
Training & Development			X		
Data Collection & Analysis	X				

	Not Yet Started	Ready to Start	Launched	Well on the Way	Leading
Community Engagement				X	
Decisions		X			
Accountability Mechanisms		X			
Accessibility Inclusion			X		
Hiring Practices			X		

The group decided on the following four priority categories, which are reflected throughout the Plan’s action items:

1. Training & Development
2. Policies & Procedures
3. Accountability Mechanisms
4. Community Engagement & implementation

## E – Definition of Terms

**2SLGBTQIA+:** An acronym that the queer and trans community uses to represent many identities (2 spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and more).

**Bezhig miigwan/Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC):** A mandate meant to inform Canadians what happened to Indigenous Peoples in the Indian Residential School System. Bezhig miigwan is Anishinaabemowin for “one feather”. “The name’s a reminder that every Survivor needs to be shown the same respect and attention that an eagle feather deserves.”

**BIPoC:** Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.

**Discrimination:** When someone is treated unfairly because of something that makes them different.

**[Dismantling Racism and Hate Act](#) (“*the Act*”):** Legislation that aims to achieve equity and anti-racism and to eliminate disparities, hate, and inequities upon underrepresented and underserved communities.

**Diversity:** Everyone is different. Celebrating diversity is knowing that people’s differences make communities stronger.

**EDIA:** An acronym standing for equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

**The Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee (EDAC):** This committee of council (of the Municipality of Cumberland) was made to create and monitor this Plan. See Appendix C for a list of members.

**Etuaptmunk/Two-Eyed Seeing:** A term coined by Dr. Albert Marshall of Eskasoni First Nation, etuaptmunk is learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing - and seeing from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing. [5]

**Equitable:** Everyone is treated fairly, based on their needs and abilities.

**The Municipality:** The Municipality of the County of Cumberland.

**Peace & Friendship Treaties:** “Between 1725 and 1779, Britain signed a series of treaties with various Mi’kmaq, Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Abenaki, Penobscot, and

Passamaquoddy peoples.” [6] More information: [The Government of Canada](#), [L’nuëy](#), & the [Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre](#).

**Plain language:** Communication that most readers or listeners can easily understand.

**Prejudice:** an opinion against someone or a group of people that is not based on fact.

**Underserved populations:** People who have been historically ignored or silenced (e.g. racialized, disabled, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people) by people in power (e.g. governments, churches).

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