

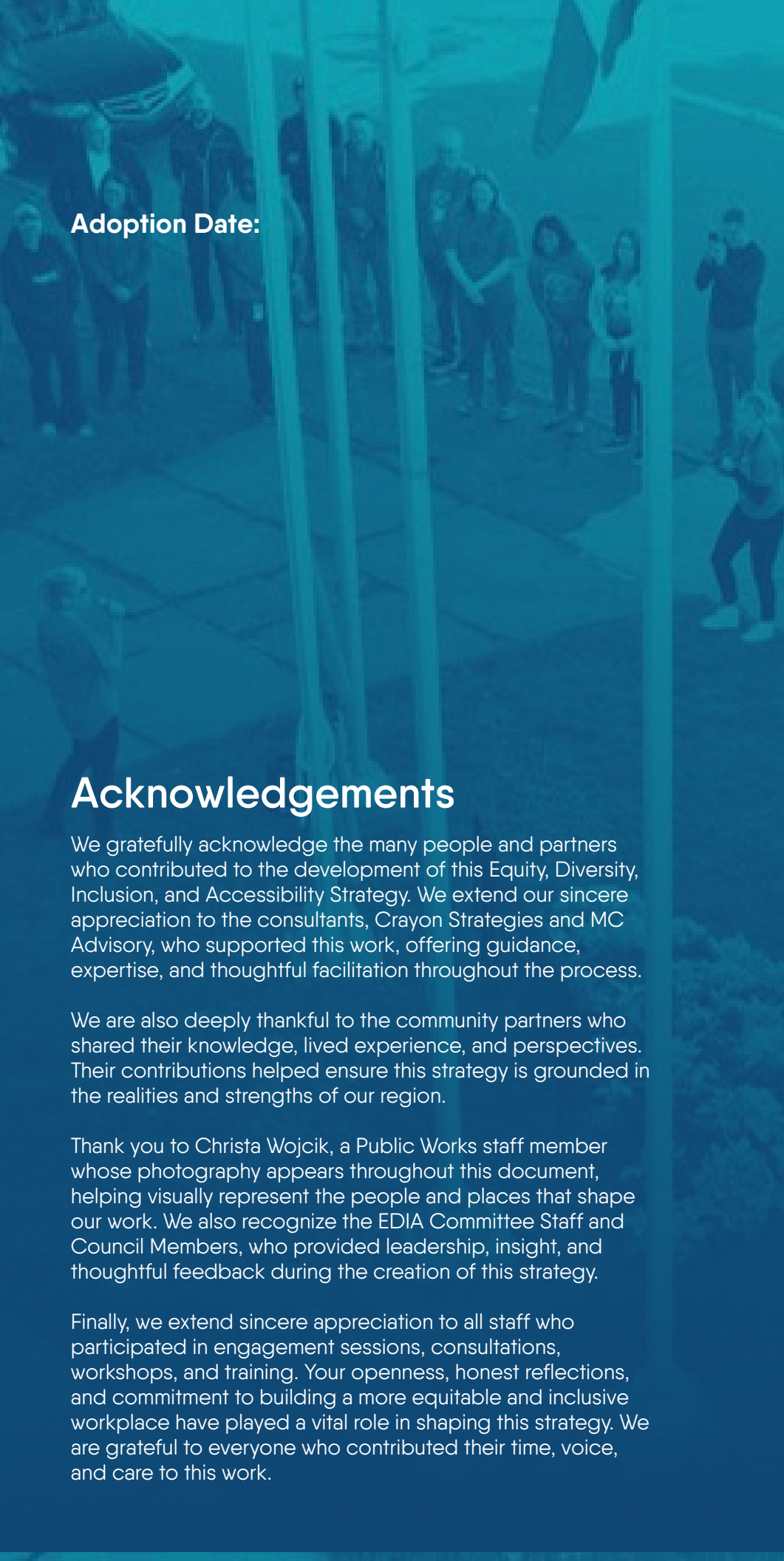
Municipality of Colchester

Growth lives here.

A Strategy for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility

JUNE 2026





Adoption Date:

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the many people and partners who contributed to the development of this Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategy. We extend our sincere appreciation to the consultants, Crayon Strategies and MC Advisory, who supported this work, offering guidance, expertise, and thoughtful facilitation throughout the process.

We are also deeply thankful to the community partners who shared their knowledge, lived experience, and perspectives. Their contributions helped ensure this strategy is grounded in the realities and strengths of our region.

Thank you to Christa Wojcik, a Public Works staff member whose photography appears throughout this document, helping visually represent the people and places that shape our work. We also recognize the EDIA Committee Staff and Council Members, who provided leadership, insight, and thoughtful feedback during the creation of this strategy.

Finally, we extend sincere appreciation to all staff who participated in engagement sessions, consultations, workshops, and training. Your openness, honest reflections, and commitment to building a more equitable and inclusive workplace have played a vital role in shaping this strategy. We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time, voice, and care to this work.

Land Acknowledgement

We begin by acknowledging and understanding the longstanding history that has brought us to reside on this land today. A history of **colonialism** and broken treaties. A history of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and stolen land. A history where children were stripped of their native languages and cultural traditions while being forced from their families, often never to be seen again. A history of sovereignty that was never ceded.

A history that is not so distant but rather continues today. We acknowledge the pervasive reality and lasting impact of colonialism as it manifests in today's society. We pay our respects to the elders of past, present, and future as well as all Indigenous Peoples coast to coast for the harm and loss endured, and the resilience and strength embodied. We stand with you as you mourn the loss of all the children that never made it home and we stand with you as you mourn the loss of your sisters, your daughters, your mothers, your nieces, your cousins, and all the women in your lives that are missing and murdered.

In peace and friendship, and in the spirit of truth and **reconciliation**, we acknowledge that the Municipality of Colchester is located in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional, ancestral, and **unceded** territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, which the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. These treaties recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations; they did not deal with surrender of lands and resources.

The Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik Peoples hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, with governance systems and traditions that predate the formation of Canada. These treaties are grounded in mutual respect and co-governance. Like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they place collective obligations on all of us within Mi'kma'ki.

We are grateful to Millbrook First Nation for their leadership and wisdom. On this journey towards reconciliation, we take responsibility for our role and look to Indigenous leaders for guidance on the teachings that will allow us to become stewards of this land and live in harmony with nature and with each other. We affirm our commitment to dismantling the systems that continue to oppress Indigenous people. We are all Treaty people.

Above: This acknowledgement was adapted from the [Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy](#), a partnership between the Municipality of Colchester, Village of Bible Hill, Town of Truro and Town of Stewiacke.

Photo: Millbrook Statue Of Glooscap



Photo: Tamara Tynes Powell (ANSA) and Kaitlyn Wesley (Colchester Recreation) raising the Pan African Flag in honour of African Heritage Month
February 2026

African Nova Scotian Legacy

We recognize and acknowledge the systematic mistreatment that **African Nova Scotians** have faced and continue to face. The suffering and sacrifice borne by this community has resulted in multi-generational trauma and harm. We commit to dismantling the systems of **discrimination** and working with the community to rebuild trust. We recognize and honour the knowledge and experience of these communities, and we are grateful for their leadership and guidance.

As a region, we will strive to recognize and eradicate **systemic racism**. We value and celebrate the history and richness of the African Nova Scotian people. Their resistance, resilience, creativity, spirituality, and leadership have profoundly shaped our families and communities within Nova Scotia and across Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years. African Nova Scotian contributions to Nova Scotia and Canada began over 150 years before Canada became a country.

The first known African Nova Scotian was Mathieu Da Costa, a Free African person from Portugal, who worked as a translator and spoke several languages, including Mi'kmaw. We recognize the sacrifices and mistreatment of the Black Loyalists. We recognize those that came to the province through enslavement or through fleeing enslavement elsewhere, and those that continue to experience structural, systemic, and individual discrimination.

Above: This acknowledgement was adapted from the [Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy](#), a partnership between the Municipality of Colchester, Village of Bible Hill, Town of Truro and Town of Stewiacke.

Document Structure

This strategy is designed to guide readers from building understanding, to taking action, and into ongoing learning and reflection. Each section builds on the last, offering clear direction alongside practical tools and approaches to support implementation across the organization. It is intended to be both a roadmap and a resource that can be revisited over time.

The appendix includes a range of supporting materials, tools, and resources that can be explored at any stage of the journey. Readers are encouraged to use these resources to deepen their understanding, strengthen their practice, and continue learning beyond the core sections of the strategy.

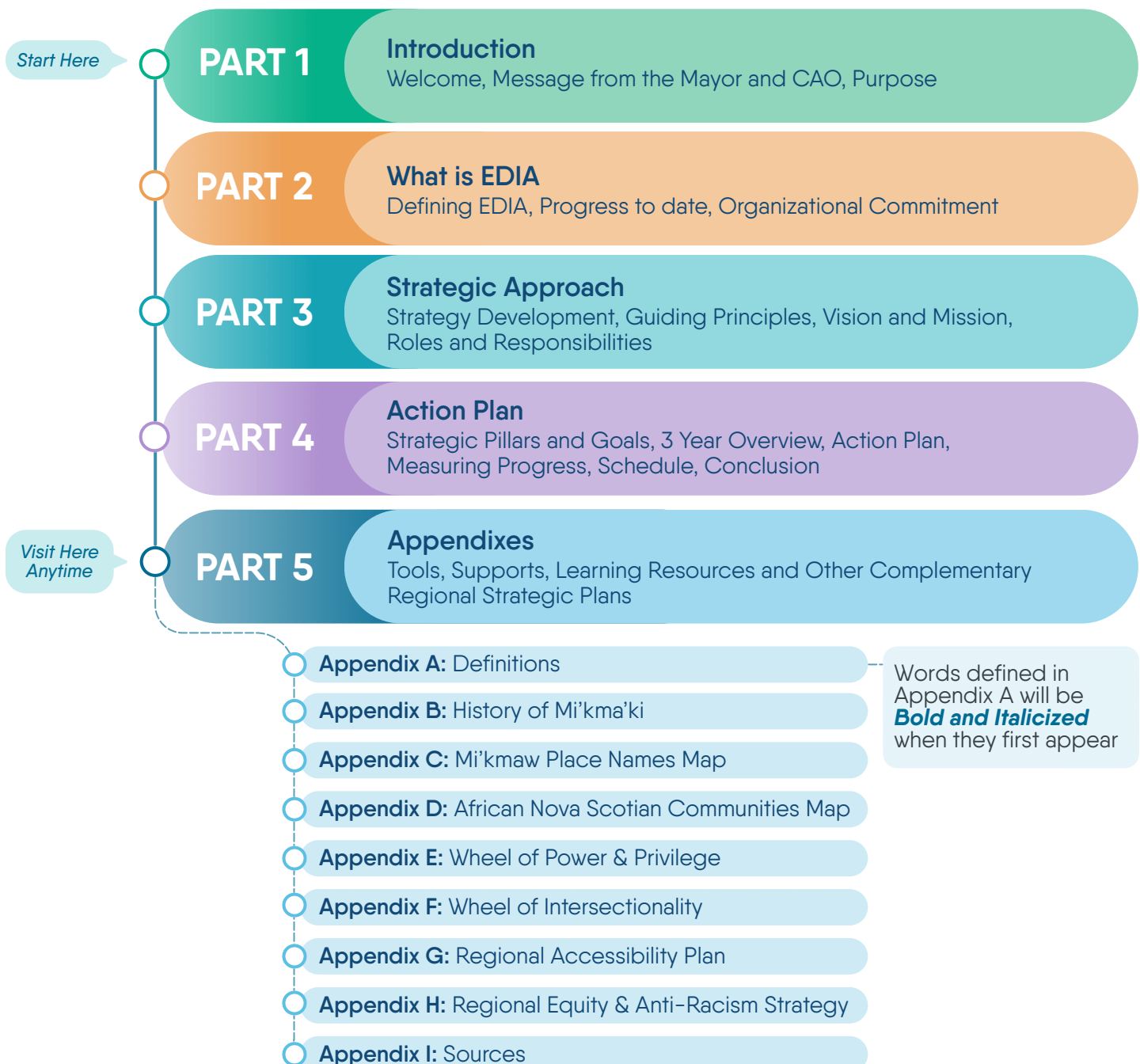


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Part 1

Introduction



Photo: Colchester Municipal Building

Pjila'si | Welcome | Bienvenue

The Municipality of Colchester recognizes that our community is growing and evolving. As **demographics** shift, we see an opportunity, and a responsibility, to become a more inclusive and welcoming place of work for everyone.

Although we have taken steps toward this, through ongoing workplace improvements, the efforts of our **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion** and **Accessibility** (EDIA) Committee, and leadership of our EDIA Coordinator, we acknowledge that we are still in the early stages of learning, listening, and strengthening our organizational practices.

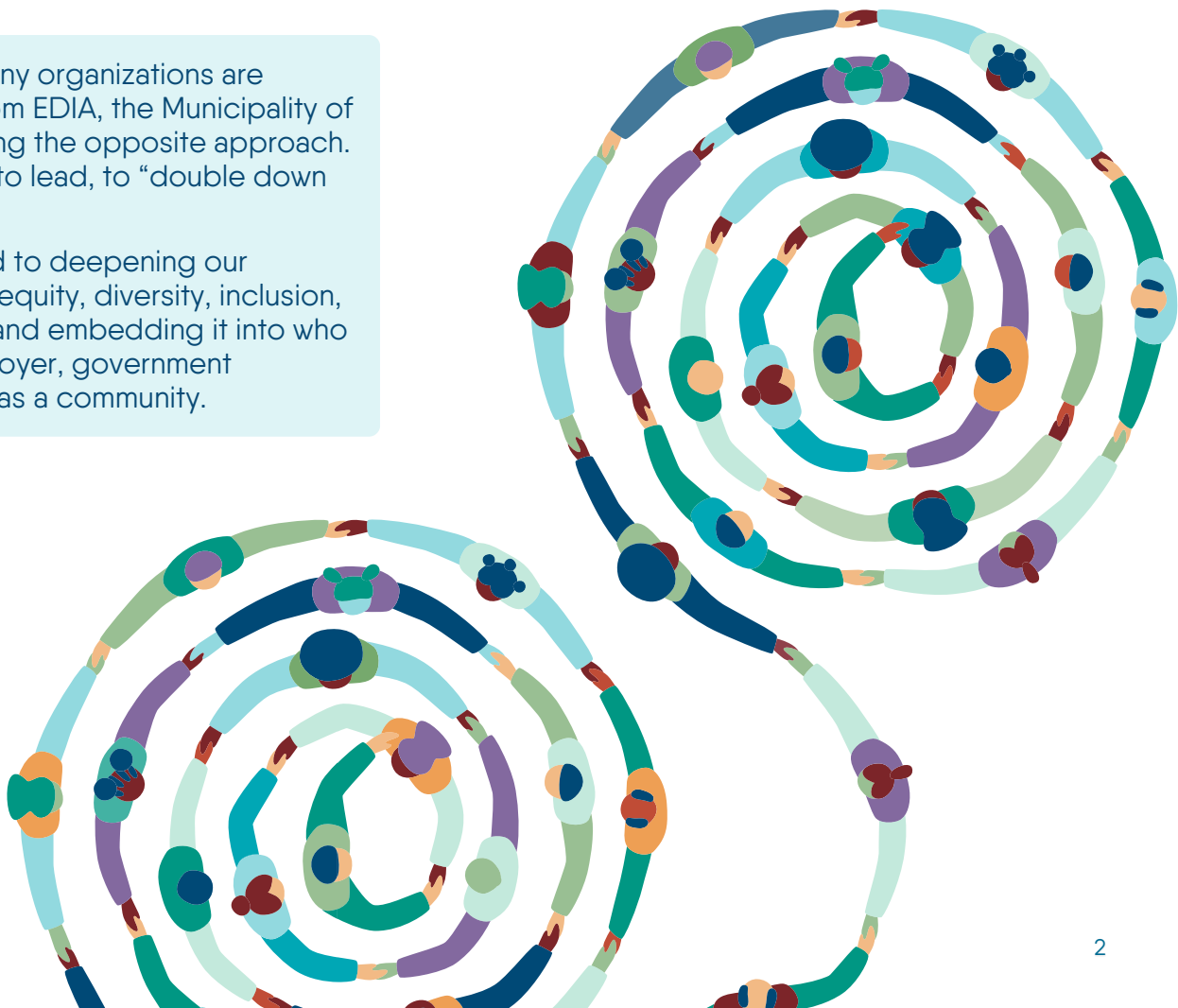
While this strategy is primarily focused on internal efforts within our organization, we also acknowledge the value in learning from our community partners and importance of ongoing community-based EDIA initiatives and remain committed to advancing those in parallel.

At a time when many organizations are stepping back from EDIA, the Municipality of Colchester is taking the opposite approach. We are choosing to lead, to “double down on our efforts”.

We are committed to deepening our understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and embedding it into who we are as an employer, government organization, and as a community.

Leaders at the Municipality of Colchester are committed to moving EDIA forward. A sample of our aspirations include becoming “A workplace, where everyone feels seen, heard, valued and safe, and that they belong”.

This strategy has also considered Colchester’s tagline, “be centred here”. Through the implementation of this strategy, we are confident that the Municipality of Colchester, moving forward, will centre EDIA in every aspect of municipal work, ensuring that “growth lives here.”



Message from the Mayor

Dear Colchester Residents,

It is my honour to present the Municipality of Colchester's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) Strategy—a meaningful step forward in our shared journey toward a more just and welcoming community.

"This strategy is more than a plan, it is a commitment to listen, to learn and to lead with compassion and courage."

In Colchester, we recognize that true progress comes from embracing the richness of our differences and building a future where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. This strategy is more than a plan, it is a commitment to listen, to learn and to lead with compassion and courage.

At a time when some are turning away from this important work, we are choosing to step up, to lead with purpose, to root our decisions in equity, and to remain centred in our shared values. Together, we will "make tomorrow better"—not just for some, but for all.

Let us move forward with open hearts, open minds, and the determination to build a community where everyone belongs.

With pride and optimism,

Christine Blair

Mayor

Photo: Mayor Christine Blair
participating in the Truro Pride Parade
June 2024



Message from the CAO

As Chief Administrative Officer for the Municipality of Colchester, I am proud to stand alongside our Council, leadership, and staff in support of our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) Strategy. This work is central to who we are and how we serve.

At the heart of municipal service is the commitment to provide quality, responsive, and respectful service to all residents. That commitment can only be fulfilled when we truly understand and reflect the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of the people who call Colchester home. This strategy marks a significant step in strengthening that understanding and embedding it into the core of our operations, policies, and workplace culture.

Our organization exists to serve people, and to serve them well. That means cultivating a workforce that mirrors the diversity of our community – not only to ensure fair **representation**, but to enrich our perspectives, deepen our empathy, and strengthen the quality of service we deliver. Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are not just ideals; they are practical tools that enhance decision-making, build trust, and help us meet the highest standard of public service.

We recognize that building an inclusive workplace is a continuous journey, and one that requires courage, openness, and accountability. It means examining where we are, challenging ourselves to grow, and ensuring every employee – regardless of background – feels safe, valued, and empowered to contribute fully.

To “be centred here” is to return to our shared values in every decision we make. It is to lead with integrity, to listen with intention, and to act with purpose. As we move forward with this strategy, our organization is committed to being a place where people thrive, where diverse voices are not only heard but sought, and where every member of our team plays a part in building the Colchester of tomorrow. Together, we will foster a culture where everyone belongs—and where the excellence of our service reflects the richness of the community we serve.

With commitment to progress,

Dan Troke

Chief Administrative Officer

Photo: Colchester Municipal Building on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
September 2025



Purpose

Recognizing Our Community & Shared Histories

The Municipality of Colchester recognizes that our community is growing and evolving. We acknowledge the deep and diverse histories that exist here in Mi'kma'ki, including the Mi'kmaq, Métis, and African Nova Scotians. While each community has a distinct history, many share experiences of inequitable treatment through colonization and discriminatory systems. These historical and ongoing harms have created **barriers** to:

- Access to opportunities and services
- Participation in decision-making
- Representation within organizations and leadership
- Equitable outcomes and success within our Municipality

Communities Impacted by Systemic Inequities

Systemic inequities have affected many groups within our community, including:

- Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (**BIPOC**)
- Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other sexually and gender-diverse people (**2SLGBTQIA+**)
- People with disabilities
- Underrepresented women
- Newcomers
- Religious and faith-based minorities
- Other **equity deserving groups**

These inequities are rooted in historical and ongoing policies, systems, and practices, not individual circumstances.

Why This Strategy Exists

The purpose of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) Strategy is to provide a clear framework for identifying and addressing systemic barriers within the Municipality of Colchester. It establishes a shared commitment to creating a workplace that is inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the diverse community we serve.

This strategy is intended to:

GUIDE the Municipality's efforts to remove barriers and improve accessibility

SUPPORT a workplace culture that is safe, respectful, and inclusive

EQUIP staff with the knowledge, tools, and supports needed to serve residents effectively and equitably

STRENGTHEN fairness, trust, and organizational effectiveness

Part 2

What is EDIA



Photo: Heather Stevens (Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre) on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
September 2025

Defining EDIA

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) is a framework that helps organizations create fair, respectful, and barrier-free environments. It recognizes that people have different experiences and needs, and that treating everyone the same does not always result in fair outcomes.

EDIA acknowledges the impacts of historical and ongoing **marginalization**, and emphasizes the importance of supporting equity-deserving groups, such as those who face systemic barriers due to race, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, or other identities, by addressing inequities and promoting meaningful participation and **belonging**.



Equity

Fair access by addressing unequal starting points



Diversity

Representation of different identities and experiences



Inclusion

Everyone is welcomed, respected, and valued



Accessibility

Removing barriers to full participation

EDIA in the Workplace

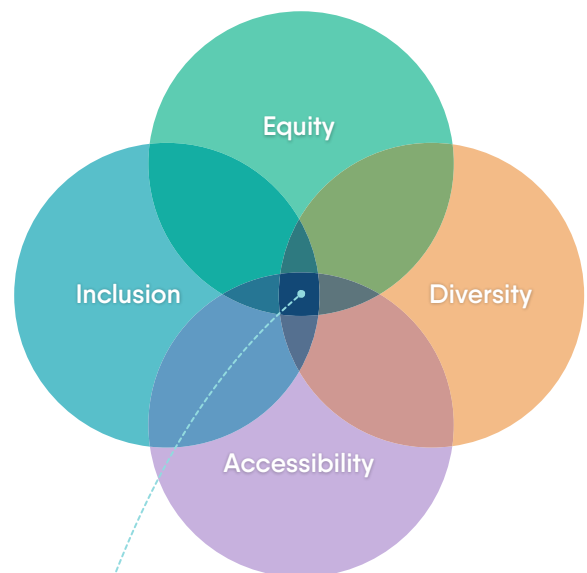
A strong EDIA approach supports a healthy and effective workplace. When employees feel respected and included, they are more engaged and better able to do their work.

- Promotes fairness, respect, and dignity
- Improves employee well-being, engagement, and retention
- Strengthens decision-making through diverse perspectives
- Reduces discrimination, harassment, and exclusion

EDIA in Government

Municipal governments have a responsibility to serve diverse communities fairly and effectively. EDIA helps ensure public services and decisions reflect the needs of the people they serve. Embedding EDIA into decision-making leads to more equitable outcomes for the community.

- Builds public trust and confidence in institutions
- Improves the quality and accessibility of public services
- Supports human rights and accessibility obligations
- Helps identify and address systemic barriers in policies and practices



Belonging

When equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility intersect, they create belonging. Belonging is the experience of **feeling accepted, valued, and safe to be one's authentic self**, where people are supported and able to contribute fully.

Progress to Date

Since the establishment of the first EDIA Committee, and through the early stages of this strategy developed alongside consultants, community partners, and internal staff, we have made meaningful progress. This work builds on years of commitment across many individuals and departments who have been advancing equity and inclusion in different ways. This strategy recognizes those efforts and brings them together, providing consistent, organization-wide direction as we move forward with shared purpose.

EDIA work requires more than plans or checklists. It calls for an ongoing commitment to learning and unlearning, engaging in social justice, and embedding reflection into every process, policy, and decision. It means ensuring that all individuals are represented and reflected in our work, and that diverse perspectives are not only acknowledged, but actively shape how we serve our community.

As we look ahead, we do so with intention. This strategy strengthens our foundation and guides us toward more coordinated, meaningful action, supporting a workplace where inclusion is practiced daily and where lasting, positive change can take root for everyone.



EDIA Committee

The Municipality of Colchester Council approved the establishment of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee on January 28, 2021. In recognition of our ongoing commitment to this work and the importance of adaptability, the committee's name was updated in 2025 to EDIA, reflecting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.

The EDIA Committee is made up of municipal staff representing each department, along with two appointed members of Council. Over the past five years, the committee has worked collaboratively to foster meaningful progress and drive real growth across the municipality.



Staff Training and Education Opportunities

In 2023, the EDIA Committee hired an external consultant to provide two, half day introductory EDIA training for staff. In 2025, the EDIA Committee partnered with Truro Pride to deliver 2SLGBTQIA+ specific training to staff.



Connecting with Community Partners

We have been working to strengthen relationships with community partners by inviting diverse voices to the table and learning from their lived experiences. This collaboration is an important part of our commitment to reconciliation and **decolonization**, helping us build more respectful, informed, and meaningful connections.

The work of the EDIA Coordinator is accelerating these efforts, supporting deeper engagement and more coordinated, ongoing partnerships.



Flag Flying Policy Change

In 2025, The Municipality of Colchester Council approved changes to the flag flying policy, committing to flying 7 different community flags throughout the year and allowing community groups to apply to fly a flag pending council approval.



Hire EDIA Coordinator

In 2025, the Municipality hired a full time EDIA Coordinator, recognizing the importance of this work and the need for dedicated staff capacity.

Our Commitment

The Municipality of Colchester acknowledges and celebrates the rich diversity of the people and communities who call this municipality home, including Mi'kmaq, Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and settler communities, as well as newcomers, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, **persons with disabilities**, and people of varied faiths, cultures, and lived experiences. Our collective strength lies in the unique contributions of individuals of all backgrounds, cultures, and identities, each helping to shape the social, cultural, and economic fabric of our municipality.

We are committed to fostering a community that is inclusive, equitable, and welcoming for all. This includes a commitment to upholding the rights of individuals and communities protected under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, while recognizing that many people experience overlapping forms of exclusion and discrimination based on intersecting identities.

We acknowledge that systemic, structural, and institutional barriers have created unequal opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, African Nova Scotians, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, persons with disabilities, newcomers, **racialized** communities, and other equity-deserving groups. We also recognize the unique status, histories, and rights of the Mi'kmaq people as the original custodians of this land, and we honour their right to self-determination.

We understand that inclusion is not a one-time goal but an ongoing and intentional process that requires us to challenge inequities in **power, privilege**, and representation. We do not all start from the same place, and it is our responsibility as a municipality to remove barriers, correct past wrongs, and build systems that are fair and accessible to everyone.

Through this commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility the Municipality of Colchester will work collaboratively with residents, staff, and community partners to build a future where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to fully participate in our community.



Photo: Heather Stevens (Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre) offering a smudge on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
September 2025



Part 3

Approach

Photo: Colchester Staff Participating
in the Truro Pride Parade
June 2024

Vision & Mission



VISION

Our dream for the future

To create an inclusive and supportive workplace and community where everyone feels valued, respected, safe, and empowered to contribute fully – where being centered here means being seen, heard, and valued.



MISSION

How we will achieve our vision

To embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility into every aspect of the Municipality's operations, leadership practices, and workplace culture – building a sustainable environment where everyone thrives and where Colchester's commitment to being centered here truly comes to life.

Photo: Fundy Discovery Site
Lower Truro



Guiding Principles

Successful culture change doesn't happen by accident. Culture change requires clear direction, shared values, and consistent action. These guiding principles provide the foundation for the Municipality's EDIA strategy by setting the tone for how to approach this important work.

1 Focused Efforts

By building on our existing strengths, we avoid starting from scratch and instead channel our energy into what already makes our workplace strong.

2 Grounded in Reality

Demographic change is a gradual process. Balancing aspiration with realism ensures our strategy is ambitious yet achievable, meeting people where they are today while preparing for tomorrow.

3 Organizational Persistence

Culture change is not a one-time initiative – it's a long-term journey. Celebrating effort and growth keeps momentum alive and acknowledges that progress is built step-by-step.

4 Make EDIA Real

Embedding EDIA into everyday processes and leadership practices ensures that inclusion isn't just a set of values on paper, but a lived experience for every employee.

5 Build Trust

Staying open and accountable shows that we are serious about learning, improving, and being honest about where we are and where we need to grow.

Photo: Five Islands Lighthouse Park
Lower Five Islands

Strategy Development

The Municipality of Colchester's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) Strategy was shaped through a thoughtful, data-driven, and consultative process that builds on the foundation already in place. Previous efforts, including the establishment of the EDIA Committee, staff education, policy updates, and ongoing awareness initiatives, created a strong starting point for this next phase of deeper, more coordinated work.

To move this work forward, a phased approach was used to better understand current realities and identify opportunities for growth. This began with establishing a baseline through staff engagement, document and policy reviews, and confidential feedback. From there, a comprehensive audit and analysis explored organizational culture, leadership, workplace practices, and communications, supported by demographic insights and leading practices.

These findings informed the development of a practical, action-oriented EDIA Strategy. By creating space for open dialogue, gathering honest input, and grounding decisions in evidence, this approach ensures the strategy reflects both the lived experiences within the organization and a clear, collective path forward.



Phase 1

Baseline Understanding & Engagement

Establishing a clear understanding of where the Municipality stood in its EDIA journey.

This involved:

- Offering confidential surveys to capture feedback from all staff.
- Reviewing existing documents, including the EDIA Committee's Terms of Reference and previous surveys. HR Policies were also reviewed including: Non-Discrimination, Code of Ethics, Harassment Free and Respectful Workplace, The Staffing Process, Recruitment Process, Selection Process, and Orientation Program.

Phase 2

Audit & Analysis

Using the information gathered, a detailed review assessed strengths, gaps, and opportunities across:

- Organizational culture
- Leadership practices
- Workplace practice
- Communications

The reviews were supplemented by demographic reviews and best-practice research to ensure recommendations were grounded in both internal realities and external benchmarks.

Phase 3

Strategic Framework Development

Insights from the engagement and audits informed the development of a practical, action-oriented EDIA Strategy, built around guiding principles reflecting staff experiences and organizational values.

The **Regional Accessibility Plan** (see pg. 39) and **Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy** (see pg. 41) were also considered, ensuring alignment with broader community priorities and best practices. This provides a clear, coordinated roadmap for advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across the Municipality.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following table outlines the roles and responsibilities of municipal staff and council in relation to the implementation of this strategy.

Role	Responsibilities	
Council	- Provide support for the EDIA Strategic Plan. - Receive annual updates from the CAO on the Municipality's progress toward its EDIA Strategic Plan, key priorities and objectives.	Ensure decision making is through an EDIA lens and tools and education gained in training is applied.
All Staff	- Make EDIA part of their everyday workplace practices. Support the work to advance EDIA. - Participate in mandatory training opportunities.	Uphold all human rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Nova Scotia Human Rights Act.
CAO	- Ensure decision making is through an EDIA lens and tools and education gained in training is applied. - Lead accountability for the EDIA Strategic Plan at the municipal level. - Receive and review quarterly reports on EDIA.	Ensure that EDIA related reports, statistics and content provided by the EDIA Coordinator, EDIA Committee and third party subject matter experts are prioritized as foundational in guiding progressive change within the Municipality.
Senior Leadership	- Develop, implement and support their department's EDIA key priorities and objectives. - Provide quarterly update on their EDIA goals to the CAO.	Ensure managers and supervisors are aware of responsibilities and obligation related to EDIA.
Managers & Supervisors	- Ensure that EDIA key priorities are reflected in their team's objectives and key results and are part of programs and services. - Work with employees in meeting EDIA goals in a variety of ways including annual performance plans.	- Make EDIA part of their everyday business operations including hiring, onboarding and day-to-day service delivery. - Address issues regarding EDIA in a fair, respectful and prompt manner.
EDIA Committee	- Champion and guide the implementation of the EDIA Strategic Plan across the organization. - Act as a collaborative advisory group that brings diverse perspectives and experiences to inform municipal practices, policies, and culture.	- Provide input on training, communications, and initiatives. - Serve as a conduit for feedback from across the organization and help foster awareness, accountability, and continuous learning related to EDIA.
Human Resources	- Provide expert advice on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act to management. - Champion EDIA initiatives within the workplace by upholding and advising on EDIA values throughout employee management processes and practices.	Lead employee policy development, hiring processes, accommodation and absenteeism management, retention initiatives, and all other Human Resources functions with a focus on EDIA values.
EDIA Coordinator	- Lead all equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives for the Municipality, both internally for staff and externally for the public. - Provide expert advice to the EDIA Committee - Ensure legislation compliance and project management of the Regional Accessibility Advisory Plan and Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy.	- Strategic leadership and innovation on the direction of EDIA initiatives including but not limited to education, policy, projects and learning. - Support to Staff - Lead relationship building with external community partners

Part 4 Action Plan



Photo: Colchester Vehicle
in the Truro Pride Parade
June 2025

Strategic Pillars and Goals

The four key pillars of the strategy emerged directly from recurring themes heard across staff consultations, leadership discussions, community demographic realities, and analysis of best practices. Each pillar responds to a specific need:

Commit to Learning: Focus group feedback highlighted varying levels of comfort and understanding around EDIA topics. Building a culture of continuous, accessible learning was seen as essential to meet people where they are and support ongoing growth.

Lead with Purpose: Staff and leaders expressed a strong desire for the Municipality to be recognized as a leader in inclusion, not just a participant. There was a clear appetite for visible, tangible leadership in EDIA that transcends policy updates to expressed values.

Build an Inclusive Culture: Survey findings revealed the need for more inclusive HR practices and daily workplace experiences. There was a clear signal that EDIA must be intentionally created, rather than assumed.

Sustain the Momentum: Employees and leaders shared concerns about initiatives losing energy over time. To address this, sustainability mechanisms—such as progress measurement, leadership accountability, and celebration of milestones—were built into the strategy to keep EDIA work active and evolving.



Commit to Learning

Goal: Establish the Municipality as a recognized leader in equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility by proactively shaping policies, practices, and community engagement initiatives that reflect our commitment to EDIA.



Lead with Purpose

Goal: Foster a culture of continuous learning by providing regular training, education, and opportunities for internal dialogue that deepen understanding of the experiences and needs of equity-deserving groups.



Build an Inclusive Culture

Goal: Create a workplace environment where every employee feels a strong sense of belonging, and where diverse identities, perspectives, and contributions are actively valued, respected, and celebrated.



Sustain the Momentum

Goal: Embed EDIA into our core operations and leadership practices, ensuring long-term commitment through dedicated resources, regular measurement of progress, and a willingness to adapt and grow over time.

3 Year Overview

This Strategy is designed for the 2026–2029 fiscal years, with a structured approach that allows for focused progress each year. Each year builds on the previous one, allowing the Municipality to track progress, adjust strategies, and ensure continuous improvement toward a more inclusive and accessible organization.

Year 1 April 2026 – March 2027

Year 2 April 2027 – March 2028

Year 3 April 2028 – March 2029

	Commit to Learning	Lead with Purpose	Build an Inclusive Culture	Sustain the Momentum
Year 1	Develop Ongoing EDIA Education for All Employees and Council Build Resource Library Provide Language Learning Opportunities	Identify Key Community Partners and Build Relationships Have a Public EDIA Presence Develop Flag Raising Guidelines Launch a Supportive EDIA Community Collective	Redevelop the EDIA Committee with Revised Terms of Reference (TORs) Develop Onboarding Plan Update HR Policies Through an EDIA Lens Develop EDIA Recognition Initiatives Develop an EDIA Internal Communications Strategy	Work Towards Meeting Requirements of the 2025 Regional Accessibility Plan Work Towards Meeting Requirements of the 2025 Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy
Year 2	Continue to Foster Opportunities for EDIA Related Professional Development for Employees Launch an Inclusive Leadership Learning Series for Managers	Integrate EDIA Values into Leadership Development and Competencies	Regularly Reflect on Inclusive Recruitment Processes Establish an EDIA informed Employee Support Plan Encourage EDIA Focused Groups for Peer Support, Social Justice Initiatives & Wellness	Develop and Publish First Annual EDIA Progress Report
Year 3	Establish Resources for EDIA-Focused Leadership Coaching	Establish an EDIA Growth Plan	Develop Municipal EDIA Lens Checklist	Publish Final EDIA Impact Report Begin Development of the Next EDIA Strategy with Staff and Community Input

Action Plan

Year 1



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
Commit to Learning			
Develop Ongoing EDIA Education for All Employees	1 Define key learning objectives relevant to municipal service and public engagement. 2 Select or create foundational training modules. 3 Roll out mandatory training sessions. 4 EDIA Coordinator to lead facilitated group discussions, giving staff the opportunity to reflect, ask questions, exchange thoughts on what they learned. 5 Track participation and gather feedback for continuous improvement.	Provide ongoing education to ensure that all employees understand EDIA and how it relates to serving the Municipality's growing and diversifying community.	• EDIA Coordinator • HR Specialist • Directors and Managers • Online Education Platform • Staff training time (2–3 hours per employee annually)
Provide Language Learning Opportunities	1 Ensure language & communication lessons are accessible for all interested employees including but not limited to; Mi'kmaq, French, ASL, English, etc. 2 Ensure visual aides and any other helpful language learning materials are accessible for supports. 3 Communicate and promote opportunities to all staff.	By providing municipal employees with access to language learning opportunities, we not only support their own personal and professional development but we more accurately represent the needs of our communities diverse language needs.	• EDIA Coordinator • Budget for Language Classes and learning support materials
Build Resource Library	1 Identify resources that align with the learning needs of the municipality. 2 Identify reputable resources such as the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, Indigenous Services Canada, Accessibility Standards Canada. 3 Create a user-friendly digital learning platform for easy access by all staff. Those without access should receive quarterly updates in hard copy. 4 Invite staff to contribute to the resource list to promote co-development.	Provides accessible support for staff to deepen their understanding and awareness. Encouraging ongoing learning and knowledge sharing among peers positively impacts organizational culture and sense of belonging.	• EDIA Coordinator to collect and oversee content • Cultural Advisors (Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, newcomer organizations) to support and validate resources • IT support for digital platform creation • Budget for resource purchases
Lead with Purpose			
Identify Key Community Partners and Build Relationships	1 Identify local organizations, Indigenous governments, cultural groups, accessibility advocates, and community leaders with an EDIA focus. 2 Prioritize building and strengthening relationships with Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. 3 Foster ongoing communities of practice for collaboration and knowledge sharing and establish partnerships to co-design events, training or initiatives. 4 Host listening sessions or community roundtables to understand priorities and explore collaboration opportunities. 5 Work with community partners to support cultural events through promotion, offering event space, and providing event grant information. 6 Gather teachings shared by community groups and integrate into internal learning opportunities, and share any feedback and insights on municipal services with appropriate departments.	Partnerships ensures the Municipality's strategies are informed by lived experience and local context while strengthening trust and collaboration between the Municipality and diverse community groups. Identify gaps and strengthen communication within communities.	• EDIA Coordinator to support ongoing coordination and follow up with partners • Connect with Municipal staff who work with community • Establish community EDIA micro funding



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
<i>Lead with Purpose</i>			
Develop Flag Raising Guidelines	1 Continue to host flag raising ceremonies, in front of the Municipal Building located at 1 Church Street, Truro, for designated community based flags identified in the Municipal Flag Flying Policy. 2 Create guidelines for flag raising planning, including community partners, a communication plan, application steps and actions, and a calendar. 3 Promote flag raising along with education externally and internally. 4 Review Flag Flying Policy annually to align with community feedback. 5 Explore ways to include staff working at other Municipal Buildings.	Flag ceremonies celebrate culture, identity and resilience, promote learning and awareness, acknowledge past and ongoing harms, and increase visibility for equity deserving Groups.	• EDIA Coordinator • Communications Lead • Council to approve applications • Flag Raising Working Group
Have a Public EDIA Presence	1 Ensure all EDIA materials are consistent, accessible and meet the branding established by the municipality. 2 Create a EDIA webpage on the municipal website. 3 Celebrate and promote flag raisings publicly. 4 Have a dedicated space in the municipal newsletter for EDIA news and updates. 5 Establish a trauma informed photo and video consent process for public engagement. 6 Develop a communications plan for social media, engagement content and EDIA information. 7 EDIA Committee members to work with department leads to explore opportunities to integrate EDIA into public facing department materials and services. 8 Establish a clear schedule and plan for Colchester representation at key EDIA related events within the region. 9 Council to champion and promote where appropriate.	Sharing Colchester's EDIA journey demonstrates transparency, celebrates success, and strengthens community pride in creating an inclusive municipality.	• Communication Lead • EDIA Coordinator • Budget for events and promotions • Council • Municipal Solicitor – Photo and Video Consent form
Launch a Supportive EDIA Community Collective	1 Establish working relationships with external EDIA champions and community partners. 2 Provide collaborative practice opportunities for knowledge sharing and connection. 3 Ensure pathways of communication are available for people with lived experience to inform initiatives.	Connection and collaboration among EDIA professionals ensures up to date information, legislation and processes are not only being followed but that communication and understanding are clear. Colchester to take the lead on initiating an EDIA collective for knowledge holders and EDIA champions as a way to support one another, establish connections and engage in wellness workshops.	• EDIA Coordinator • local EDIA organizations • People first knowledge holders • Indigenous governments • Cultural groups • Accessibility advocates • Community leaders with an EDIA focus • Communications Lead • Budget for event planning



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>			
Redevelop the EDIA Committee With Revised Terms of Reference (TORs)	1 Review the current committee structure. 2 Reassess the committee's mission, membership, and responsibilities. 3 Recruit diverse representatives from across departments and representative of different levels of the Municipality. 4 Relaunch the EDIA Committee with a clear work plan.	A strong EDIA Committee ensures municipal employee voices shape inclusion efforts, creating a living commitment to centering all people within the municipality.	• EDIA Committee • EDIA Coordinator • Council • Budget for training, meeting facilitation, and committee launch materials
Develop Onboarding Plan	1 Develop a short EDIA training module (online or facilitated session) to accompany the onboarding process and introduce the EDIA contact. 2 Include information on internal supports (EDIA Coordinator, EDIA Committee). 3 Review annually to keep information and language up to date and aligned with best practices.	Sets clear expectations of inclusive behaviour and supports retention by fostering a respectful workplace culture.	• EDIA Coordinator • HR Specialist • IT support • Senior Leadership
Update HR Policies Through an EDIA Lens	1 Establish a clear HR-led process for personnel policy development and review that incorporates consultation with the EDIA Coordinator and relevant subject matter experts when appropriate to support inclusive and effective workplace practices. 2 Consider EDIA principles and applicable subject matter expertise during the development or review of municipal personnel policies and procedures, where appropriate. 3 Provide opportunities for employee feedback on personnel policy changes through surveys, forms, or other engagement methods where appropriate and at the discretion of HR.	To support personnel policies and procedures that are fair, inclusive, legally compliant, operationally effective, and reflective of the Municipality's commitment to respectful workplace practices.	• HR Specialist • EDIA Coordinator • Senior Leadership • Subject Matter Experts (as required)
Develop EDIA Recognition Initiatives	1 Explore opportunities to recognize and celebrate EDIA in the workplace and contributions of staff that support respectful, inclusive, and accessible workplace practices. 2 Consult with staff and relevant internal groups to gather ideas for EDIA-related recognition initiatives or activities. 3 Develop clear and inclusive criteria for any EDIA recognition programs or awards. 4 Establish a fair and transparent nomination and selection process for EDIA-related recognition opportunities. 5 Promote EDIA recognition initiatives through internal communication channels and staff engagement activities. 6 Review recognition initiatives periodically to assess participation, effectiveness, and alignment with organizational values.	To encourage and recognize employee contributions that promote respectful, inclusive, and accessible workplace practices while supporting positive organizational culture and employee engagement.	• EDIA Coordinator • Communications Support • HR Specialist • Budget for recognition initiatives and promotion



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>			
Develop an EDIA Internal Communication Strategy	1 Take inventory of internal communication channels and explore opportunities for improvement with support from IT. 2 Ensure multiple communication channels are used to accommodate the needs of different departments and access to technology. 3 Work with the social committee to support EDIA communications through social indicatives. 4 Directors and Managers to support EDIA related information sharing to their staff.	To ensure that information is up to date and readily available in a consistent and clear format and in a timely manner. Regular communication keeps EDIA progress visible, maintains engagement, and reinforces a shared commitment to making the Municipality a place where everyone can “Be Centered Here.”	• Communications Lead • EDIA Coordinator • Managers and Directors • IT Support
<i>Sustain the Momentum</i>			
Work Towards Meeting Requirements of the 2025 Regional Accessibility Plan	1 Continue existing work related to the Regional Accessibility Plan 2 Build on relationships with community leaders in Accessibility 3 Receive updates and direction from the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee	The Municipality is committed to moving beyond legislative measures to implement accessibility because it is equitable, inclusive and the right thing to do. The more we accomplish in this space, the more inclusive we become. Improve accessibility of municipal services and create a work place	• EDIA Coordinator • Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee • Community Leaders in Accessibility • Municipal Departments
Work Towards Meeting Requirements of the Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy	1 Continue existing work related to the Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy. 2 Build on relationships with community leaders. 3 Continue to meet and work with Strategy Partners, (Town of Truro Village of Bible Hill, and Town of Stewiacke) to share updates, information share, and support each other.	The Municipality recognizes the importance in moving beyond legislative measures when actioning anti-racist because it is equitable, inclusive and the right thing to do. The more we accomplish in this space, the more inclusive we become.	• EDIA Coordinator • Strategy Partners • Community Leaders



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
<i>Commit to Learning</i>			
Continue to Foster Opportunities for EDIA Related Professional Development for Employees	1 Identify additional EDIA related professional development opportunities for employees to support the integration of equity work in Colchester. 2 Assess departmental equity gaps and target learning opportunities to meet long-term EDIA goals. 3 Communicate with staff when additional training, education, workshops, or events are available.	To ensure staff are provided ongoing learning to deepen their understanding and awareness on EDIA content. Prioritize the ongoing advancement of a healthy workplace culture to foster a sense belonging.	• EDIA Coordinator • Cultural Advisors and people first knowledge holders • Training Budget
Launch an Inclusive Leadership Learning Series for Managers	1 Develop a series focused on inclusive leadership competencies. 2 Pilot the series with senior managers. 3 Roll out training to all managers. 4 Set up reflection and discussion groups for ongoing learning.	Managers shape workplace culture. Building their inclusive leadership skills helps ensure respectful, equitable treatment of staff and strengthens community trust.	• External Leadership Development Firm (with expertise in municipal EDIA leadership) • Budget for workshops • Internal time release for managers (half-day per workshop) • EDIA Coordinator to co-facilitate reflections
<i>Lead with Purpose</i>			
Integrate EDIA Values into Leadership Development and Competencies	1 Audit leadership frameworks for gaps in inclusive leadership skills. 2 Define new EDIA-focused competencies (cultural humility, allyship, inclusive decision-making). 3 Update all leadership development programs accordingly. 4 Deliver training to all current managers and supervisors. 5 Embed competencies into leadership performance reviews. 6 Evaluate leadership practices annually and set new goals.	Inclusive leadership must become the standard of effective leadership. This ensures leadership excellence is tied to creating equitable, welcoming spaces for employees and residents.	• HR Specialist • EDIA Coordinator • External Inclusive Leadership Trainer



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>			
Regularly Reflect on Inclusive Recruitment Processes	1 Map current hiring processes. 2 Identify barriers or biases. 3 HR responsible for training hiring teams on hiring best practices.	Ensure hiring practices are inclusive in an attempt to widen the pool of talent, strengthen community relationships and ensure we are better meeting the needs of our community.	• EDIA Coordinator • HR Specialist
Establish an EDIA informed Employee Support Plan	1 Develop an EDIA employee support & reporting system whereby all employees can safely relay EDIA related concerns or barriers within the workplace or individual positions. 2 Develop EDIA focused employee feedback plan and toolkit that includes checklists, surveys, & access to non biased reporting for all employees. 3 Collect non identifying data from all EDIA initiatives and employee surveys. 4 Analyze results against goals set in the Strategic Plan.	A trauma-informed, EDIA-focused support system is essential to ensure unbiased reporting by removing power imbalances and systemic inequities, while maintaining confidential, privacy-protecting processes that still allow for proper documentation.	• EDIA Coordinator • OHS Coordinator • HR Specialist • IT Support
Encourage EDIA Focused Groups for Peer Support, Social Justice Initiatives & Wellness	1 Ensure employees are supported when initiating EDIA related peer support groups, supports & community. 2 Establish available spaces for gathering that fosters wellbeing, sharing and supports wellness.	Equity-deserving individuals often experience lower levels of belonging, psychological safety, and inclusion in the workplace. EDIA safe spaces provide marginalized employees with a place to connect, recharge, and build community, helping support a healthier, more inclusive workplace.	• EDIA Coordinator • Designated EDIA Support Lead • Upper Leadership • Employee group support program budget for wellness, belonging and social justice learning.
<i>Sustain the Momentum</i>			
Develop and Publish First Annual EDIA Progress Report	1 Collect data from all EDIA initiatives and employee surveys. 2 Analyze results against goals set in the Strategic Plan. 3 Draft the report in plain language with visual highlights. 4 Design and publish online and in print. 5 Host a presentation to share results with staff and community.	Transparent reporting demonstrates accountability to employees, residents, and community partners, showing that EDIA is a living commitment.	• EDIA Coordinator • Communications Lead • Event Planning Budget for launch



Action	Steps	Purpose	Resources
<i>Commit to Learning</i>			
Establish Resources for EDIA-focused Leadership Coaching	1 Develop a plan for reflective practices that include identifying learning gaps within departments and leadership. 2 Establish informal learning opportunities within the organization to provide mentorship, on the job training and knowledge sharing through collaborative practice. 3 Prioritize inclusion of staff from equity deserving groups and those who face barriers to career development. 4 Track participants' career development outcomes annually.	Program ensures that diverse talent is developed intentionally, creating a leadership pipeline that reflects the people staff and the wider community.	• EDIA Coordinator • Third Party consultants and facilitators • Budget for training and consulting • Budget for learning and development materials to enhance learning outcomes
<i>Lead with Purpose</i>			
Establish an EDIA Growth Plan	1 Begin cross departmental evaluation processes on the EDIA initiatives. Identify areas of strengths. 2 Review current methods and outcomes to further develop learning goals that are aligned with Colchester's long-term EDIA growth plan. 3 Continue public community engagement and further strengthen partnerships with EDIA champions and professionals.	Celebrate Colchester's cross departmental EDIA successes and identify challenges and gaps.	• EDIA Coordinator • Third party Subject matter experts (SME's) and consultants
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>			
Develop Municipal EDIA Lens Checklist	1 Draft a checklist for applying an EDIA lens to engagement, projects, and decisions. 2 Pilot the checklist with staff teams. 3 Revise based on real feedback. 4 Train employees to use the checklist in daily decision-making.	The EDIA Lens Checklist makes inclusion practical and actionable, ensuring decisions across the Municipality are equitable and community centred.	• EDIA Coordinator • Communications/Design Lead for easy-use templates • Pilot teams representing diverse departments • Facilitators to deliver checklist training • Printing and design budget for easy-use templates
<i>Sustain the Momentum</i>			
Publish Final EDIA Impact Report	1 Collect data from all EDIA initiatives and employee surveys. 2 Analyze results against goals set in the Strategic Plan. 3 Draft the report in plain language with visual highlights. 4 Design and publish online and in print. 5 Host a presentation to share results with staff and community.	Transparent reporting demonstrates accountability to employees, residents, and community partners – showing that EDIA is a living commitment.	• EDIA Coordinator • EDIA Committee • Communications Lead • Event Planning Budget for launch
Begin Development of the Next EDIA Strategy with Staff and Community Input	1 Launch internal engagement activities: employee surveys, listening sessions, workshops. 2 Open consultations with community members and local organizations. 3 Analyze feedback to identify future priorities. 4 Draft, revise, and finalize the next EDIA Strategic Plan (2029–2031). 5 Secure council endorsement and launch publicly.	Engaging the entire organization and community ensures the next EDIA strategy reflects the real needs and hopes of those who live and work in Colchester – ensuring that “Be Centered Here” remains more than a tagline.	• EDIA Coordinator • Strategic Planning Facilitator (external) • Budget for surveys, workshops, facilitation • EDIA Committee • Council Engagement and Presentation Support

Measuring Our Progress

The Municipality of Colchester's EDIA Strategy is built on the belief that real change requires consistent action, and consistent action needs to be measured.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) help us do exactly that. They translate our goals into tangible outcomes, allowing us to track progress, celebrate milestones, and stay accountable to the commitments we have made. Our KPIs are designed to be realistic, meaningful, and aligned with the natural pace of culture change.

Each year of the strategy is guided by clear metrics that will show how we are moving from intention to impact. These KPIs focus not just on what we do, but how we do it, ensuring that learning, inclusion, and leadership development are woven into our everyday practices. By committing to these KPIs, we are committing to action and to building a stronger, more inclusive future.

Our KPIs reflect three key principles:



Clarity

Each KPI is specific and easy to understand, giving everyone a clear picture of what success looks like.



Adaptability

KPIs are reviewed annually to respond to what we learn along the way.



Celebration

Achievements are recognized and shared as important milestones on our journey.

Photo: Flag Raising for Transgender
Day of Visibility
March 2026



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Year 1



Action	KPI Target
<i>Commit to Learning</i>	
Develop Ongoing EDIA Education for All Employees and Council	% of staff completing EDIA learning sessions
Provide Language Learning Opportunities	# of staff participating in opportunities
Build Resource Library	Track engagement stats through online learning platform
<i>Lead with Purpose</i>	
Identify Key Community Partners and Build Relationships	# community partnerships formally initiated and renewed year over year
Develop Flag Raising Guidelines	# of attendees at ceremonies Engagement from online promotion # of applications annually
Have a Public EDIA Presence	# of EDIA related updates shared publicly year over year Engagement insights – Social Media, website and other forms of data collection
Launch a Supportive EDIA Community Collective.	# of organizations participating % of participants who report benefit gained from project in follow up surveys
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>	
Redevelop the EDIA Committee with Revised Terms of Reference (TORs)	Representation from all departments on the committee. # of projects completed by committee
Develop Onboarding Plan	Staff feedback on onboarding
Update HR Policies Through an EDIA Lens	Completion of EDIA material for onboarding by end of Q1
Develop EDIA Recognition Initiatives	% of staff in support of new programs in followup survey
Develop an EDIA Internal Communications Strategy	% of staff who report increased EDIA awareness through a follow-up pulse survey
<i>Sustain the Momentum</i>	
Work towards Meeting Requirements of the 2025 Regional Accessibility Plan	# of commitments addressed and community and staff feedback
Work Towards Meeting Requirements of the Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy	Community feedback on implementation of the strategy priorities



Action	KPI Target
<i>Commit to Learning</i>	
Continue to Foster Opportunities for EDIA Related Professional Development for Employees	% of staff completing EDIA professional development opportunities
Launch an Inclusive Leadership Learning Series for Managers	Manager's self assessment of inclusive leadership behaviours (before and after)
<i>Lead with Purpose</i>	
Integrate EDIA Values into Leadership Development and Competencies	% of managers and supervisors displaying and self reporting EDIA leadership development competencies during performance evaluations
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>	
Establish an EDIA Informed Employee Support Plan	# of reports through reporting system and staff satisfaction of addressing reports
Regularly Reflect on Inclusive Recruitment Processes	# of reports through reporting system and staff satisfaction of addressing reports
Encourage EDIA Focused Groups for Peer Support, Social Justice Initiatives & Wellness	# of staff groups created and maintained annually
<i>Sustain the Momentum</i>	
Develop and Publish First Annual EDIA Progress Report	Feedback from staff, the public and council



Action	KPI Target
<i>Commit to Learning</i>	
Establish Resources for EDIA-Focused Leadership Coaching	% of project participants progressing into leadership opportunities in the organization.
<i>Lead with Purpose</i>	
Establish an EDIA Growth Plan	% of identified growth goals met
<i>Build an Inclusive Culture</i>	
Develop Municipal EDIA Lens Checklist	% of municipal projects reporting use of checklist and outcomes.
<i>Sustain the Momentum</i>	
Publish Final EDIA Impact Report	Feedback from staff, the public and council.
Begin Development of the Next EDIA Strategy with Staff and Community Input	# of community groups reached and involved in strategy development % of staff participation in Strategy development

Conclusion

Rooted in Purpose, Growing with Intention

The Municipality of Colchester's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategy for 2026– 2029 is not just a roadmap, it is a reflection of who we are and who we aspire to be. Built through deep engagement, thoughtful reflection, and a commitment to action, this strategy centres people at its heart. It weaves together our values, our responsibilities, and our vision for the future.

We recognize that real inclusion is not achieved through a single initiative, training, or checklist. It is cultivated through continuous learning, courageous conversations, accountable leadership, and sustained effort. This strategy sets the foundation for that long-term commitment, ensuring that equity and inclusion are embedded into every decision, policy, and interaction within our organization.

From hiring an EDIA Lead and launching leadership learning series, to hosting cultural celebrations and reporting transparently on our progress, each action we take moves us closer to our vision: a workplace and community where every person is seen, heard, and valued.

To “Be Centered Here” means to be centered in our humanity. It means creating space for everyone to belong, not by accident, but by design.

This is the beginning of a renewed journey, one where equity is expected, diversity is celebrated, and inclusion is how we lead.

Together, we will make a better tomorrow, because growth lives here.



Part 5

Appendices

Photo: Dance Presentation by Truro
Gidha Crew at the South Colchester
Connecting With Community Event

May 2026



Appendix A: Definitions

Ableism: The devaluing, exclusion, and aversion to disability, neurodivergence, and chronic health conditions. Ableism excludes disabled people, neurodiverse people, and people with chronic health conditions from full societal engagement and perpetuates inequitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and power.

Accessible/Accessibility: The design of environments, services, and information so that all people, including those with disabilities, can fully and independently use and benefit from them.

African Nova Scotians: African Nova Scotians are people of African descent who have lived in Nova Scotia for over 400 years and form the largest long-standing Indigenous Black community in Canada. Descended from enslaved individuals brought by early British and French settlers, Black Loyalists, Jamaican Maroons, and Refugees from the War of 1812, they established more than 52 historic communities including Shelburne, Africville, East Preston, and North Preston, the Marsh and continue to shape the province's cultural and social fabric today.

Allyship: Active, ongoing support for marginalized groups by those with privilege, including listening, learning, and leveraging influence to advocate.

Anti-Racism: A proactive stance that requires us to recognize and challenge racism in all its forms, from individual to institutional. It demands us to transform the systems, structures, policies and practices that perpetuate racial inequality and oppression. It also calls us to share and redistribute power in a fair and just manner.

Assimilation: The process of becoming similar to others by taking in and using their customs and culture.

Barrier: Obvious or subtle obstacle(s) that prevents or imposes restriction on members of society from accessing, using, or doing something that others can readily access, use, or do. Can be physical, economic, financial, informational, and/or organizational policies/practices.

Belonging: The feeling of security and acceptance within a group, where individuals can bring their full selves without fear of exclusion.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color – Highlights shared experiences of systemic racism while centring those most impacted by colonialism.

Colonization/Colonialism: Practice where a country or group takes control of another territory, often by force, and establishes settlements and political domination over it. It usually involves exploiting the land, resources, and people of the colonized area for the benefit of the colonizing power, often while suppressing local cultures and systems of governance. In North America, European powers settled the land, violently displaced and harmed Indigenous peoples, and established systems that imposed foreign control over Indigenous territories, cultures, and governance.

Cultural Competence: Awareness and understanding of different cultures and practices, and the ability to accept and bridge differences between cultures for effective communication. Cultural competence has become especially important as globalization increases and individuals must effectively interact with people from other cultures.

Decolonization: The process of undoing colonial social structures and practices that oppress groups of individuals based on the false belief that certain groups of people are more superior than others. Decolonizing refers to the dismantling of the systems, policies and processes that create these inequities and allow them to continue harms.

Demographics: Personal identifiers, characteristics or attributes of a person or group such as age, race, religion or gender.

Discrimination: Intentional or unintentional denial of equal treatment, civil liberties and opportunity to individuals or groups with respect to education, accommodation, health care, employment and access to services, goods and facilities. It can occur based on ancestry, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, record of offences, race, color, nationality, sex, age, religion, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, marital or family status, sexual orientation, and physical, developmental, or mental disability.

Diversity: The presence of differences within a given setting, including (but not limited to) race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background.

Equality: Treating everyone the same by giving them identical resources or opportunities. Equality does not account for different starting points or needs so even with equal treatment, outcomes can still be unfair.

Equity: Ensuring fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all while acknowledging and addressing systemic barriers that have disadvantaged certain groups. Equality gives everyone the same thing; equity gives people what they need to reach fair outcomes.

Equity-Deserving Groups: Groups of people who have been historically disadvantaged and underrepresented. These groups include but are not limited to; women, visible minorities, Aboriginal Peoples, and people with disabilities and people in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community/people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Equity-deserving groups identify barriers and unequal access, and actively seek social justice and reparation.

Identity: Identity refers to the qualities and attributes that make a person feel themselves, sometimes referred to as their personal identifiers. Their identity shapes who and how they show up in the world making them the unique individuals they are.

Inclusion: Creating environments where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and valued, with equal access to opportunities and resources.

Inequity: Inequity is a lack of fairness or justice, where differences between people or groups are unnecessary, avoidable, and unjust. It often results from systems or practices that disadvantage some groups while benefiting others.

Intersectionality: Explains how different parts of a person's identity such as age, race, gender, income, or ability combine to shape their experiences rather than affecting them separately.

Patriarchy: Patriarchy is a social system in which the primary positions of authority are held by men. This social structure of systems and practices afford men to more easily dominate, oppress, and exploit women in the areas of political leadership, moral authority and control of property.

Persons with Disabilities: Persons with disabilities 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.

Performative: An action done by someone (or a group or organization) with the intention to make themselves look or appear good. An act that intentionally improves their image or makes a positive impression on others but lacks authenticity.

Power: An individual's ability to act or produce an effect based on the socially accepted or perceived value of their authority. A person who is in power has the control, may have authority, or influence over others.

Privilege: An unearned advantage a person or group has based on or simply because of their social, economic, or cultural circumstances.

Race: A socially constructed classification system that puts humans into groups based on physical traits, and/or social relations.

Racialized: Describes people or groups who are socially categorized and treated differently based on perceived race, often leading to unequal treatment and systemic barriers.

Racism: Racism is rooted in socially constructed ideas shaped by colonial history. It shows up in beliefs, behaviours, and systems that treat people differently based on race, often giving some groups more power and opportunities than others. These ideas influence how power, opportunities, and resources are distributed in society.

Reconciliation: The ongoing process of acknowledging past and present harms, particularly toward Indigenous Peoples, and working to build respectful relationships, repair trust, and create equitable futures.

Representation: The presence and inclusion of diverse people, especially from equity-deserving groups, in decision-making spaces, media, and organizations, in ways that reflect the communities they serve.

Social Justice: Social justice is justice in relation to the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society where individuals' rights are recognized and protected.

Social Location: Sometimes called positionality, Social location is a way to describe how in which each person's intersecting social identities affect their position in the world, including the opportunities and challenges they face and the perspectives from which they perceive and experience reality. All of these parts of our identities contribute in some way to our social location, making it a complex and unique experience.

Systemic: Relating to patterns, policies, or practices that are built into and spread across an entire system, often shaping outcomes in ways that can advantage or disadvantage certain groups. This can show up as systemic racism, sexism, ableism, and many other forms of oppression.

Marginalization/Marginalized: Describes individuals or groups systematically excluded from power, resources, and opportunities due to social, economic, political, or cultural barriers beyond their control.

Microaggressions: A microaggression is a term used for common verbal, behavioural or environmental slight, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward members of marginalized groups.

Unceded: Refers to land that Indigenous Peoples have never formally surrendered or given up through treaties or agreements.

Unconscious Bias: A presumed quality or attribution of an individual or group based on pre-reflective assumptions on how an individual or group thinks, acts or their personal beliefs. These presumptions of particular qualities of an individual or group are often rooted in colonial values that are often referred to as implicit bias.

Universal Design: Universal design emerged from a desire to create buildings, products, or environments in a way that makes them accessible to all people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors from the beginning. This anti-discrimination measure seeks to create design for all abilities by addressing common barriers to participation by creating things with the intention that they can be used by the maximum number of people possible, regardless of abilities.

2SLGBTQIA+: An acronym for Two-Spirit (2S), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual with the "+" representing the diversity of ways people choose to self-identify their gender identity and sexual orientation. The placement of Two-Spirit (2S) first is to recognize that Indigenous Peoples are the first peoples of this land, and their understanding of gender and sexuality precedes colonization.

Appendix B: History of Mi'kma'ki

Who are the Mi'kmaq?

The Mi'kmaq are the Indigenous people of Mi'kma'ki who have resided on this land for **over 11,000 years**. Mi'kma'ki encompasses what is known as present-day Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec (Gaspé Peninsula), New Brunswick (north of the St. John watershed), parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and parts of Maine.

Peace and Friendship Treaties

This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, which the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. These treaties recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations; they did not deal with surrender of lands and resources.

The Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik Peoples hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, with governance systems and traditions that predate the formation of Canada. These treaties are grounded in mutual respect and co-governance. Like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they place collective obligations on all of us within Mi'kma'ki.

Millbrook

The Municipality of Colchester acknowledges our indigenous neighbours, Millbrook First Nation. Millbrook is home to Mi'kmaq families whose connection to this area goes back to time immemorial.

Before the establishment of modern day Millbrook First Nation, Mi'kmaq families lived at several sites around the Truro-Colchester region, including lands now occupied by the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus. In the mid-1800s, many families were moved to a site near the King Street railway crossing, an area known as Christmas Crossing, named after Chief Ben Christmas. This site was home to the community until the 1870s.

Through the advocacy of Chief Peter Wilmot, new land near Hilden was identified as better suited to the community. With the cooperation of Indian Act agents, this land became the foundation of the modern-day Millbrook First Nation. By 1886, most families had moved to Millbrook, where the community continues to thrive today.

Mi'kmawey Debert

The Debert area is one of the oldest known Indigenous occupation sites in North America, with evidence of Mi'kmaq presence dating back over 11,000 years. For millennia, Mi'kmaq ancestors lived, travelled, and cared for these lands, creating a rich cultural and spiritual legacy that continues to shape the community today.

Mi'kmawey Debert reflects the resilience, knowledge, and leadership of Mi'kmaq people, who have worked for decades to protect and interpret these sites. Through education, cultural programming, and intergenerational learning, Mi'kmawey Debert honours Mi'kmaw heritage while fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and shared understanding.

Shubenacadie Residential School

The Shubenacadie Residential School operated from 1930 to 1967 in Sipekne'katik (Shubenacadie), Nova Scotia, and was the only residential school in Atlantic Canada. Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) children were taken from their families and forced to attend, where many experienced abuse, neglect, and the loss of language, culture, and identity. These impacts continue to affect Survivors and communities today. The United Nations has recognized residential schools as a form of cultural genocide. Located just outside the Municipality's boundaries, this history remains close to home and underscores the importance of acknowledging the past while advancing equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.



Appendix D: African Nova Scotian Communities Map

The Truro-Colchester region has four historic African Nova Scotian communities: **Jollytown**, **The Marsh**, **The Island**, and **The Hill**.

Despite the historic and ongoing harms these communities have faced, they fostered strong family ties, built institutions, celebrated their culture, and continue to contribute significantly to the region's social, cultural, and civic life.

Jollytown – Upper Brookside Rd

Jollytown was an informal name given to the African Nova Scotian community in the North River/ Brookside /East Mountain vicinity. Approximately 24 individuals were living in the area in 1871. During the turn of the century, community members moved to Truro due to a decline in farming.

The Marsh – Ford St. and Cross St.

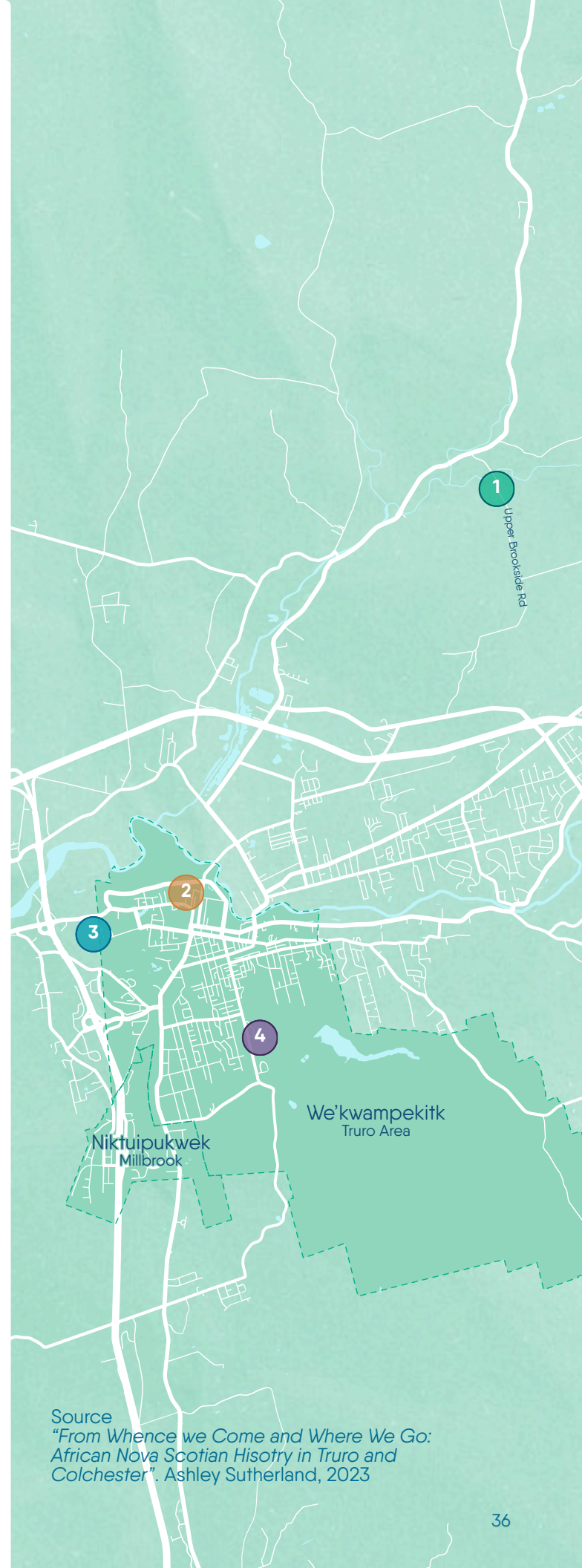
The Marsh was a farming community on the outskirts of Truro. Gentrification, local government neglect and frequent flooding led to displacement. Recent initiatives like the, “Down The Marsh Community Land Trust,” aim to preserve the community's history and provide affordable housing, ensuring future accessibility and honouring the Marsh's legacy.

The Island – West Prince St.

The Island, was a section of physically separated land located at the west end of Prince Street. It was prone to flooding and surrounded by low lying area. This community was subject to environmental racism, industrial activity and pollution due to nearby development and flood risk. The Island once had its own community hall and due to the advocacy efforts of community members, a new community hall will be constructed.

The Hill – Young St.

The Hill or *Foundry Hill*, stretched up Young St. and included side streets such as Douglas St., Slack St., Doyle St., and Melrose Terrace. The geography of *The Hill* presented many challenges for community members. Without transportation it was remote and too far to walk to church or school. Many newcomers of African descent settled here and the community became known for having people of diverse backgrounds and varied religious denominations. Today, the community consists of only a couple of families, as many have since relocated.



Source
“From Whence we Come and Where We Go:
African Nova Scotian History in Truro and
Colchester”. Ashley Sutherland, 2023

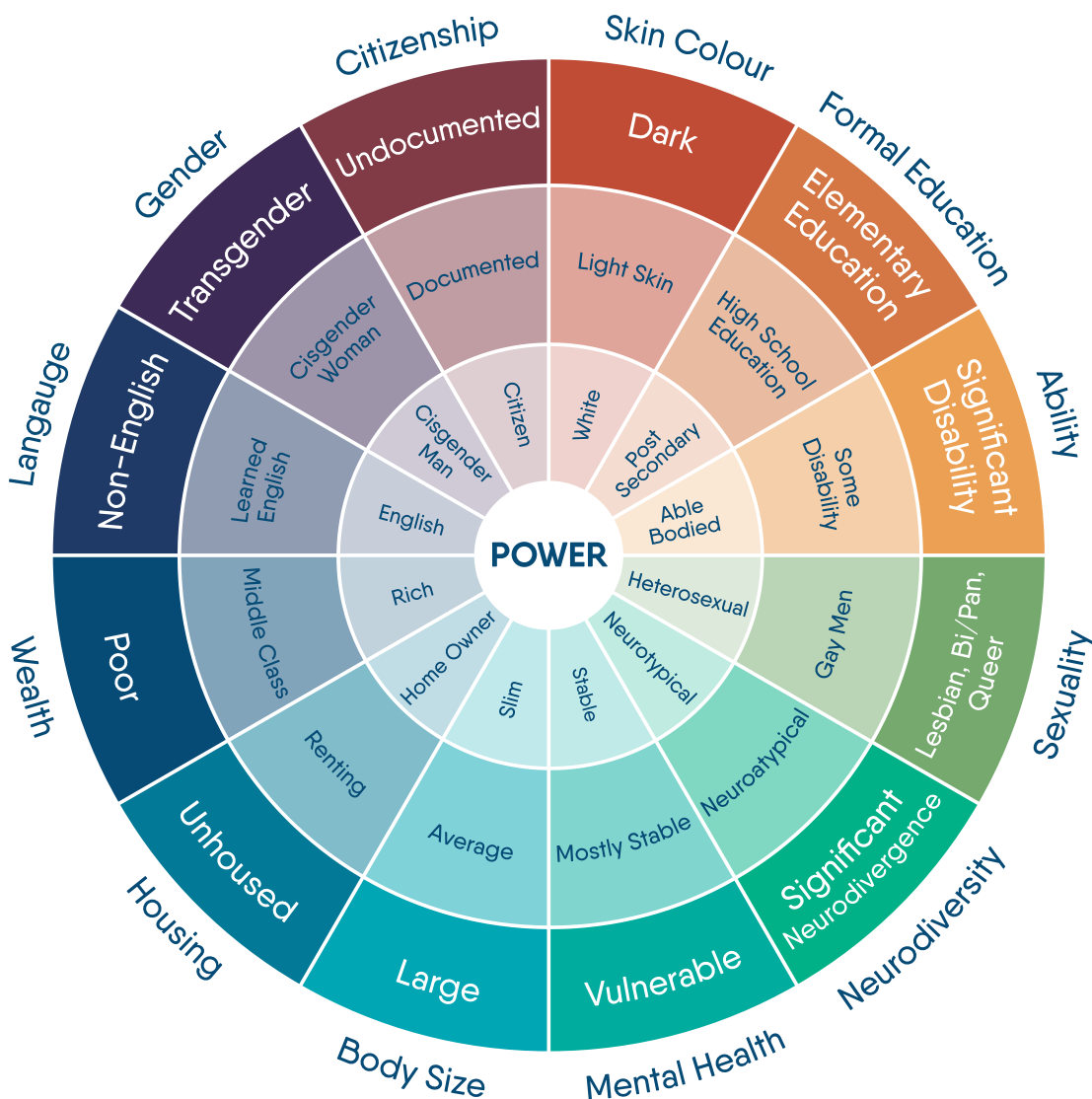
Appendix E: Wheel of Power & Privilege

The Wheel of Power and Privilege, first introduced by academic and psychologist Olivia Duckworth, is a tool that shows how a person's **social location**, or position in society, is shaped by different aspects of their identity. Power and privilege refer to how systems can make it easier for some people to access opportunities, safety, and influence based on characteristics like race, gender, ability, or income.

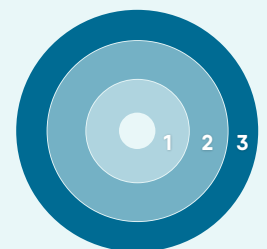
A person can experience both privilege and marginalization, having advantages in some areas of life and challenges in others. For example, a man with a disability may have gender-based advantages in some situations but still face barriers or discrimination because of his disability.

This tool is not about blame or guilt. Instead, it encourages personal reflection to help us better understand our own experiences and perspectives. By looking at where our identities may fall within the wheel, we can begin to understand our social location, and how it affects how we move through the world. It is also important to note that this tool is a simplified framework and does not capture all aspects or complexities of a person's identity.

As you review the wheel, reflect on where your own identities may fall. Consider which aspects of your identity may provide you with unearned advantages, and which may present challenges. This reflection can help build awareness of how power and privilege shape experiences, decisions, and interactions with others.



Guide



1 Inner Ring
Privileged identities
- closest to power

2 Middle Ring
Identities can
experience both
privilege and
marginalization

3 Outer Ring
Marginalized identities
- furthest from power

Appendix F: Wheel of Intersectionality

Intersectionality explains how different parts of a person's identity, such as age, race, gender, income, or ability, combine to shape their experiences, rather than affecting them separately. It is a term that was coined by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Intersectionality provides us a deeper understanding of the ways in which different forms of oppression (such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, etc.) can overlap, connect and interact to produce multifaceted systems of oppression and privilege that inform and shape the experiences of individuals.

"Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege" – Kimberlé Crenshaw.

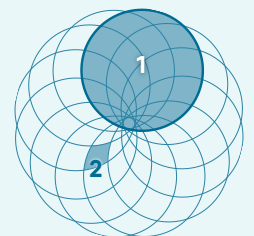
The Wheel of Intersectionality is a tool that visually displays how social identities intersect with one another and are wrapped in systems of power. This tool is a simplified framework and does not capture all aspects or complexities of a person's identity.

As you explore this wheel, consider the combination of identities you hold and how they shape your perspective. Reflect on how your experiences may differ from others based on these intersections.

Understanding intersectionality supports more inclusive thinking by recognizing that people's experiences are complex and cannot be defined by a single aspect of identity.



Guide



1 Circles

The wheel is made of 12 overlapping circles, each representing a different aspect of an individual's identity.

2 Intersection

Intersections identify where the circles overlap – representing the intersections in an individual's various identities.

Appendix G: 2025 Regional Accessibility Plan

The Regional Accessibility Plan was developed collaboratively by the Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, Village of Bible Hill, Town of Stewiacke, and Village of Tatamagouche as a coordinated effort to improve accessibility across the Truro–Colchester region. Built on the principle of “Nothing Without Us,” the plan was informed by direct input from people with disabilities, municipal staff, community organizations, and the Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee. It acknowledges that accessibility is an ongoing process and seeks to address both immediate barriers and long-term structural challenges across the region.

The plan identifies priority areas including public awareness and engagement, the accessibility of buildings and public spaces, transportation, information and communications, accessible service delivery, and employment. Community feedback highlighted recurring concerns such as barriers in aging infrastructure, inconsistent sidewalk and crosswalk safety, a lack of accessible washrooms and seating, limited accessible transportation options, and inconsistencies in signage and wayfinding. Alongside these challenges, the plan also recognizes progress made in newer or recently upgraded recreational spaces and municipal facilities.

A core feature of the plan is its emphasis on proactive, sustainable change, such as integrating accessibility early in planning processes, embedding accessible design into procurement, and expanding regional consistency in standards. Each commitment is supported by a prioritization framework that considers community benefit, the priorities of people with disabilities, and the complexity of implementation.

The Regional Accessibility Plan was formally adopted by Colchester Council on March 27, 2025.

INFLUENCE ON THIS STRATEGY

The Regional Accessibility Plan establishes a shared regional expectation that accessibility must be integrated into everyday operations, decision-making, and public service delivery. Its commitments directly inform internal EDIA planning by highlighting the importance of accessible communication practices, inclusive policy development, consistent facility standards, and strong accommodation processes.

The plan’s focus on consultation, proactive design, and capacity-building aligns with and strengthens internal expectations for staff training, planning processes, and equitable service delivery. These regional short term commitments are directly operationalized in the action plan of this strategy, ensuring that internal policies, procedures, and training efforts meaningfully advance the region’s broader accessibility goals.

Regional Accessibility Plan Commitments

Commitment	Action	
Public Awareness and Engagement	• Advance public education and awareness • Promote relationship-building	• Identify accessibility champions
Buildings, Infrastructure, and Public Spaces	• Prioritize planning for accessibility • Align heritage and accessibility • Incorporate accessibility into RFPs and vendors agreements • Improve accessibility of signage. • Identify opportunities to increase the number of public accessible washrooms. • Review currently available accessible public parking	• Investigate the possibility of increasing the availability of public seating(e.g. accessible benches) throughout the Region. • Align bylaws, where feasible. • Identify opportunities to improve accessibility of public parks and recreational spaces.
Transportation	• Investigate opportunities to improve transit access • Prioritize accessibility when planning transportation projects. • Consult people with disabilities	• Source expertise and include accessibility knowledge and experience • Leverage community programs • Work to improve sidewalk and safety access
Information and Communication	• Include accessibility as part of our communications practices. • Develop guidance or a checklist on accessibility best practices for social media communications • Incorporate accessibility into our websites and web tools. • Develop a feedback mechanism for web accessibility.	• Source training on accessible communications best practices and have relevant staff complete training. • Develop guidelines for meeting accessibility • Explore options for all-staff training on meeting accessibility • Leverage relationships with service provider and stakeholder organizations (e.g. Lemonaid Stand Society) to help disseminate relevant communications
Delivery of Services and Goods	• Explore opportunities for accessible recreational community programming, for example accessible programs and/or program designed specifically for people with disabilities through local libraries, community centres, and other recreation and leisure channels controlled by the entities. • Establish an in-person service (e.g. kiosk or service desk) to support residents accessing and navigating services.	• Consult with the public—including people with disabilities—about major or highly relevant planned changes. • Allocate budget that will allow the entities to address ad hoc accessibility requests/expenses • Develop and implement an accessible events checklist or a guidance document for regional events
Employment	• Promote knowledge and resource-sharing related to accessibility. • Improve accessibility of our recruitment and hiring processes. • Develop a comprehensive accommodations policy and process for municipal employees. • Source and deliver practical training on accessibility to all employees • Identify learning needs and deliver accessibility training specific to job requirements.	• Ensure that the policy and process, reflect best practices and legal requirements, have clear guidance on timelines for fulfillment of accommodations, expectations established for both employee and employer, clearly define process owners for the end-to-end (e.g. receiving request; evaluating and approving request; fulfilling request) accommodations process.
Other	• Explore funding opportunities	

Appendix H: Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy

The Regional Equity & Anti-Racism Strategy is a collaborative plan developed by the Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, Village of Bible Hill, and Town of Stewiacke. It outlines a shared commitment to dismantling racism, discrimination, and systemic inequities across the region. Grounded in the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*, the strategy was shaped through extensive engagement with Mi'kmaq community leaders, African Nova Scotian communities, racialized residents, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, persons with disabilities, newcomers, and other underrepresented groups.

It centers on three priority areas: community relationships, education, and organizational change, emphasizing trust-building, accessible communication, mandatory anti-racism and accessibility training, improved reporting pathways, and coordinated policy updates across municipalities.

The Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy was formally adopted by Colchester Council on Thursday, January 29, 2026.

INFLUENCE ON THIS STRATEGY

This regional strategy provides the foundation for aligning internal EDIA work with broader municipal obligations and community expectations. It reinforces the need for consistent staff education, equity-informed decision-making, transparent communication, and improved internal systems such as hiring processes, data collection, and discrimination-reporting pathways. It also highlights the importance of cross-department collaboration and sustained relationship-building within municipal organizations.

These regional commitments are directly addressed through the action plan in this strategy, ensuring that operational practices, staff training, and internal policies actively support and advance the region's equity and anti-racism goals.

Regional Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy Priorities and actions

Priority	Action
Community Relationships	- Ongoing community engagement to build trust and open conversation. - Identify gaps and develop process for equity, discrimination and anti-racism issue reporting and support.
Education	Work to heal and build relationships between those in the municipal government and underrepresented and underserved communities across the region.
Organizational Change	Promote free training, education, and development on the topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion for members of the public in our community.
	- Foundational mandated training for all employees in governance. - Organize support materials that are available for everyone in governance.
	- Data collection across all municipalities. - Review equity progress and identify areas for improvement. - Increase collaboration between equity-focused committees.
	- Improve internal reporting options for equity and discrimination concerns. - Improve outreach so opportunities reach diverse communities. - Support fair and inclusive internal policies and processes.

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