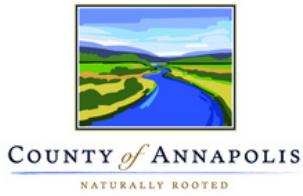




Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Plan 2026 - 2029



Acknowledgement

The Municipality of the County of Annapolis, the Town of Annapolis Royal, the Town of Middleton and the Village of Lawrencetown acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This land is governed by the treaties of Peace and Friendship, first signed by the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqey, Peskotomuhkatiyik, and the British Crown in 1726.

These treaties did not surrender or transfer land to the British but recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey title and established the rules for a long-standing relationship between nations, initially aimed at preventing war and facilitating trade. We recognize that we are all treaty people, with responsibilities to each other and to this land.

We also recognize the 400+ year history of communities of African descent and the 52 African Nova Scotian communities that exist throughout the region today.

Nova Scotia is home to many diverse communities that have enriched the province. We acknowledge that many residents of Nova Scotia hold intersecting identities, which may expose them to multiple forms of discrimination.

Collaboration

The Municipality of the County of Annapolis has partnered with the Village of Lawrencetown, Town of Annapolis Royal, and Town of Middleton, further referred to as “the Partners”, to develop and implement an Equity and Anti-Racism Plan, as well as an Accessibility Plan.

The first Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan was made possible through hard work and teamwork, dedication, and collaboration of community organizations, leaders, residents, and the Partners.



We express our gratitude for their contributions and input in developing this strategy. Special thanks to the many individuals and groups who took the time and had the courage to share their voices and experiences during community engagement sessions.

IDEA Committee

The Partners would also like to thank the Association of Municipal Administrators group and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) committee members for their support and advice in creating the plan.

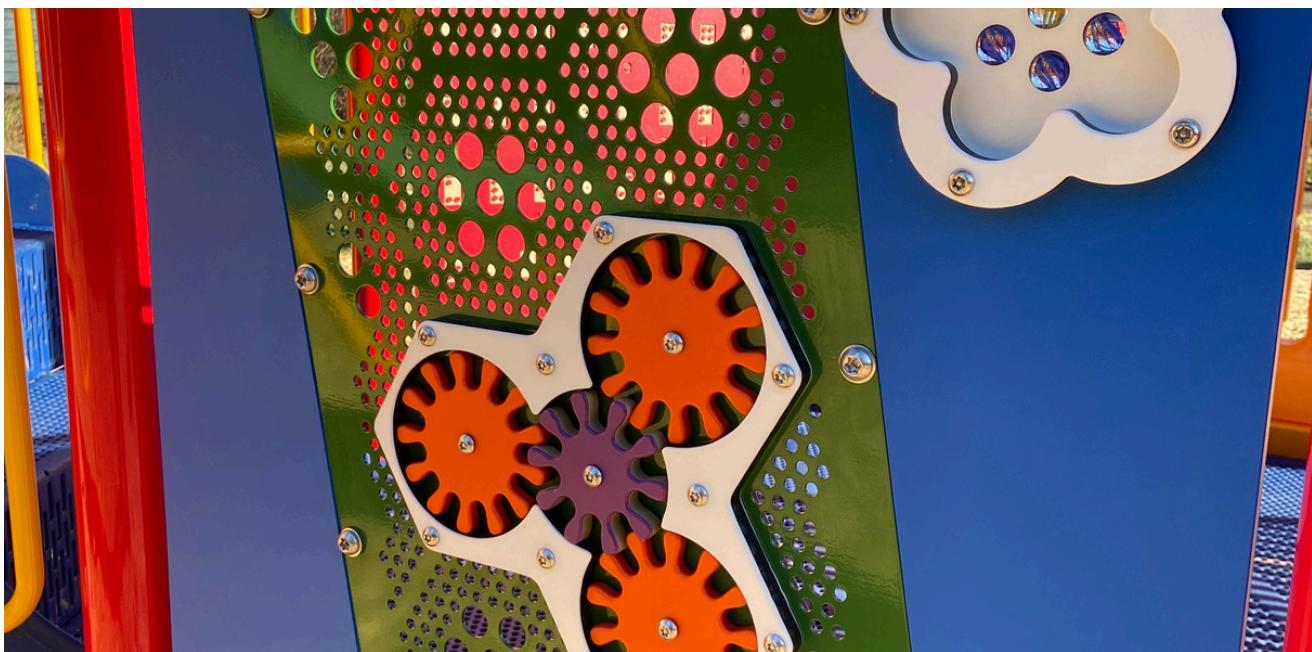
The IDEA members include:

- **Cameron Stiff, Vice Chair**
- **Elizabeth Mason-Squires, Member**
- **Larry Peters, Member**
- **Catherine Jean Voysey, Member**
- **Tina Hiltz, Member**
- **Brenda MacDonald, Member**

Background

Our province is on a journey to become more inclusive and equitable. In 2022, the Province of Nova Scotia passed the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act. The legislation explains how the government will deal with racism, hate, and unfair treatment.

The Act recognized that sometimes rules and policies that look fair can still hurt some groups of people.



Recognizing the important role municipalities play in addressing racism, hate and inequity, the Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy identified municipalities as the first public sector bodies required to develop equity and anti-racism plans.

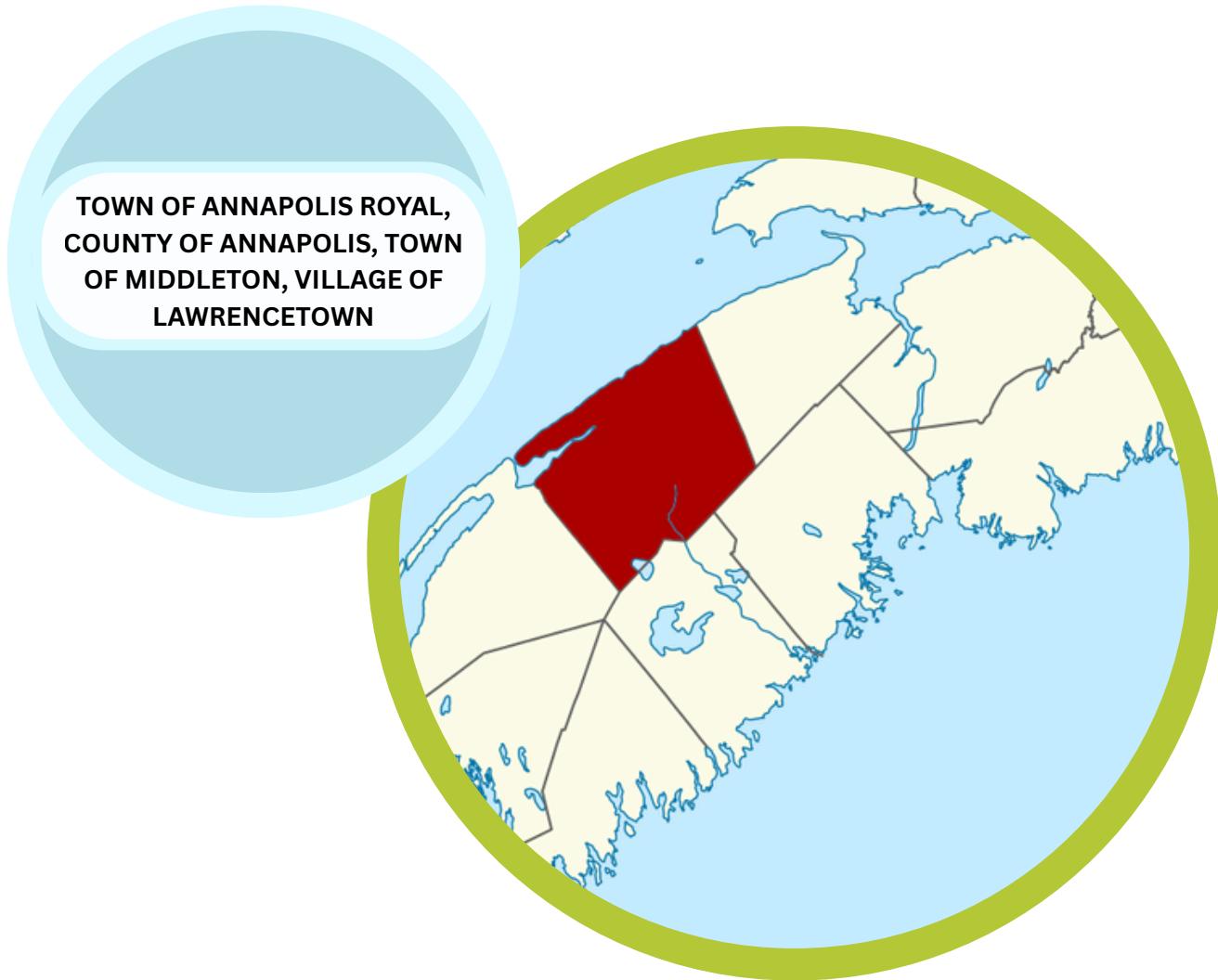
Municipalities' Role in Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives

It requires municipalities to undergo a process to identify actions that advance inclusion by considering the needs of underrepresented and underserved communities. The IDEA committee will play a role in helping the region become an accessible community to meet its obligations under Nova Scotia's Act, Bill 59 and to update Accessibility plans in 2025. In addition, the committee will also support the development of equity and anti-racism plan in accordance with the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act.

The Partners acknowledge and recognize the value of diversity and the importance of fostering a community where everyone feels valued, heard, included, and at home. This plan shows the start of our commitment to removing barriers, promoting equitable opportunities, and supporting underserved communities in Annapolis County and beyond.

About the Region

This area is located between the Bay of Fundy and the Annapolis Basin to the north and the South Mountain to the south, with the fertile Annapolis Valley in the center. It has a rich mix of cultures, including Mi'kmaq, Acadian, Scottish, British, 2SLGBTQIA+ and African-Nova Scotian influences. The Bear River First Nation community, known as L'sitkuk, is located here at the beginning of the tidal Bear River, which marks the boundary between Annapolis and Digby counties.





This region is known for its natural beauty and strong agricultural output, producing apples, berries, and a variety of other crops thanks to its fertile soil. It also supports forestry, fishing, and tourism related to its heritage and coastline.

One notable spot is Delaps Cove, a remote community in Annapolis County on the Bay of Fundy, famous for its rugged shoreline, stunning bay views, tidal changes, and beautiful natural scenery which has a history of early Black settlement and Medabankeajetc (Little Red Bank).

EDI Plan

The EDI (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Plan is about fairness, respect, and making sure everyone feels they belong. Our goal is a community where no one is left out or held back because of racism or exclusion.

Through this work, we promise to:

- Take action in our policies, leadership, workplaces, and community services.
- Listen to people's experiences, especially from groups who often face unfair treatment, including Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, Acadian, and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and use those voices in our decisions.
- Make our county more accessible in our buildings, transportation, and the way we share information.
- Celebrate and respect cultural diversity, honouring the many backgrounds and identities of our residents.

How the Plan was Developed

This plan was created with guidance from community voices, our IDEA Committee, and staff. Building an equitable community takes time. It begins with listening to people who are often left out and developing trust. This plan is just the start of our journey together.



To guide the plan, we went out into the community to hear directly from residents. We met people in familiar and accessible places like community centres and our local firehalls. We asked questions about inclusion, belonging, and fairness, and heard many stories and ideas.

Let's Talk Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility!

We also held five public consultations, one community survey, smaller focus groups, and one-on-one conversations. This gave us a broad picture of people's needs, wants, and experiences.

We also looked inward. Through the IDEA Check-In, staff shared their perspectives on what Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility mean in the workplace, what helps them feel included, and what changes could make our workplace better. We also spoke with council members and municipal departments. These conversations helped us identify possible action items and focus areas for the plan.

By bringing together community voices and municipal input, we are building a plan rooted in lived experience, reflection, and a shared commitment to making Annapolis County more inclusive, fair, and welcoming for all.

Our Commitment

We understand that achieving meaningful inclusion and reconciliation requires time, trust, and continuous dialogue. This EDI Plan represents the beginning of a collective journey across the County of Annapolis, towards creating a more equitable and welcoming community.

We recognize the importance of listening, particularly to Mi'kmaw communities, African Nova Scotians, and other equity-deserving groups, before moving towards solutions. Therefore, this plan commits us to learn, build relationships, and take initial actions together.

The plan will undergo an annual review and will be updated based on the insights we gain from our partners and within our organizations.



Building Relationships

Strong relationships are essential for fostering trust, collaboration, and reconciliation. Our aim is to establish lasting and respectful connections with Indigenous, African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities, ensuring that these relationships guide all municipal decisions.

Objectives

- Engage in ongoing and respectful communication with First Nations, African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQIA+, and other equity-deserving communities.
- Create clear pathways for collaboration and shared decision-making.
- Treat relationship-building as a core municipal responsibility, not a one-time project.

Building Relationships

Listening and Engagement

- Hold regular meetings with representatives from the Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian, and other equity-deserving communities to identify suggested Municipal actions.
- Support, promote, and attend cultural and community events when invited, fostering relationships through active participation and learning.
- Develop municipal engagement guidelines that emphasize early and ongoing dialogue with these communities.

Building Relationships

Co-Development and Collaboration

- Invite representatives from Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian, and other equity-deserving communities to co-develop policies and initiatives focused on culture, heritage, planning, and naming.
- Establish partnerships to create recreation, youth, and arts programming that is culturally relevant.
- Collaborate on an annual calendar of cultural and commemorative events, such as Treaty Day, African Heritage Month, Mi'kmaq History Month, Pride Month, and promote awareness and education related to these special events.

Building Relationships

Representation and Recognition

- Strive to create more inclusive municipal committees and advisory bodies, by developing designated seats.
- Review public names and symbols to ensure they reflect a shared history and show respect for Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian and other equity-deserving communities and their heritage.
- Support visual representation using flags, art, and signage, developed in partnership rather than through assumption.



Education & Awareness

Education serves as the cornerstone for meaningful change. It is essential that we educate ourselves, staff, Council members, and partners, to ensure our policies, programs, and decisions are guided by principles of equity and cultural understanding.

Objectives

- Foster a deeper understanding of equity, diversity, and anti-racism principles within our organization.
- Integrate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) training into the professional development framework for staff and Council, with annual budget allocations to ensure consistent delivery and participation.

Education & Awareness

Internal Education and Capacity Building

- Dedicate a portion of the annual HR training budget to EDI and accessibility training.
- Offer mandatory annual sessions on inclusion, anti-racism, cultural awareness, and accessibility.
- Develop internal learning resources (plain language guides, accessibility checklists, inclusive communication tools).
- Integrate EDI principles into all municipal policies, planning, and communications.

Education & Awareness

Learning Through Action

- Conduct regular accessibility and inclusion audits of municipal spaces and programs.



Cross-Cutting Commitments

Our initiatives focus on two main themes: Building Relationships and Education, with overarching commitments applicable to all municipal work. We understand that meaningful change can only occur once we have taken the time to learn and build relationships within our communities.

We aim to create Safe and Welcoming Spaces, where safety, respect, and a sense of belonging are paramount.



Additionally, we are committed to Continuous Learning. This plan will evolve each year, reflecting our progress, lessons learned, and renewed commitments.



The IDEA Committee will conduct an Annual Review to assess progress and update our plan as necessary.

Transparency will be a guiding principle; our municipal partners will publicly share progress reports, celebrating milestones and achievements.

Success will be measured not just by completed tasks, but also by the strength of our relationships, community feedback, participation levels, and staff adaptability. This comprehensive evaluation reflects our commitment to our values and the well-being of our community.