



Town of Oxford Equity and Anti-Racism Plan 2025

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Index

	Page #
Message from the Mayor	3
Glossary	4 - 5
About Oxford Nova Scotia	6
Purpose of the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan	7
How the Plan was Developed	7 - 8
The Committee	8
Progress on Equity and Anti-Racism	9 - 10
Priority Areas	11-12
Objective 1: Communication, Training, and Education	11
Objective 2: Policy Review	11
Objective 3: Service Delivery	11
Objective 4: Community Engagement	12
Summary	13 - 14
Sources Cited	15

Message from Mayor Henley

The Town of Oxford in Nova Scotia has a long history, built on the traditional unceded lands of the Mi'kma'ki people.

Recently, Oxford has seen many changes with newcomers from around the world. Now, you can hear 15 different languages spoken in the town.

For Oxford to keep growing, the Town Council and staff need to show a commitment to embracing and including all residents. By discussing and learning from our differences, we can create a unified culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion for everyone's benefit.

The Equity and Anti-Racism plan was created to meet the requirements of the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act Regulations, which require municipalities to have a plan to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism by April 1, 2025

Mayor Greg Henley

Town of Oxford.

February 23, 2025

Glossary

AMANS: Association of Municipal Administrators

Anti-Racism: A belief or doctrine that rejects the supremacy of one racial group over another and promotes racial equality in society. A belief or practice that recognizes pervasive racism in society, and actively combats racial prejudice and discrimination in order to promote racial justice and equality.

Bias: A bias may be favorable or unfavorable: bias in favor of or against an idea. Prejudice implies a preformed judgment even more unreasoning than bias, and usually implies an unfavorable opinion: prejudice against people of another religion. A particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned.

Diversity: The spectrum of individual differences and the corresponding group memberships and identities that human beings have in society. The inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, etc. A point of difference.

EDI: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Equity: Equity recognizes that everyone doesn't begin in the same place in society. Some people face adverse conditions and circumstances making it more challenging with the same effort to achieve the same goals. Equity advocates for those who may have been historically disadvantaged, making it difficult for them to be successful. What is "fair" as it relates to equity isn't a question of what is the same but rather the point from which a person begins. Equity considers historical and other factors in determining what is fair.

Fairness: The state, condition, or quality of being fair, or free from bias or injustice; evenhandedness.

Inclusion: The act of Including. The state of being included. Something that is included. The practice or policy of including and integrating all people and groups in activities, organizations, political processes, etc., especially those who are disadvantaged, have suffered discrimination, or are living with disabilities: Our company is committed to addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Prejudice: An unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason. Any preconceived opinion or feeling, either favourable or unfavourable. Unreasonable feelings, opinions, or attitudes, especially of a hostile nature, regarding an ethnic, racial, social, or religious group.

Underrepresented: An underrepresented community refers to a group of people who are not adequately represented or have limited presence or visibility in certain domains or contexts, such as social, political, economic, educational, or cultural spheres. These communities typically experience marginalization, discrimination, or exclusion due to various factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics.

Underserved: The term “underserved” implies that the community is not receiving/has not received an adequate level of support or attention from institutions, organizations, or government agencies. This lack of access can manifest in various areas, including health care, education, employment, housing, transportation, and social services.

About Oxford, Nova Scotia

The Town of Oxford is a diverse community settled in 1791 and became a town in 1904. It's named after the oxen that crossed the river. In 2021, the population was 1,170, with that number increasing with seasonal newcomers from all over the world for work and to find home.

Oxford is famous for its link to the wild blueberry industry in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia. One of the biggest employers in the area is Oxford Frozen Foods, with its main office and processing plants located in the town. Oxford is known as the 'Wild Blueberry Capital of Canada.'

The Town of Oxford is dedicated to promoting fairness, diversity, and anti-racism. Work continues to improve processes removing obstacles that prevent equal access for everyone in the community.

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee is leading this process by developing and evolving the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan.

The Town of Oxford and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee are committed to:

- Evolve the Equity and Anti-Racism plan as a living document.
- Provide educational resources to staff, Council and residents of the Town of Oxford.
- Inspire Equity and Anti-Racism practices for all people, business, and industry in the Town of Oxford.

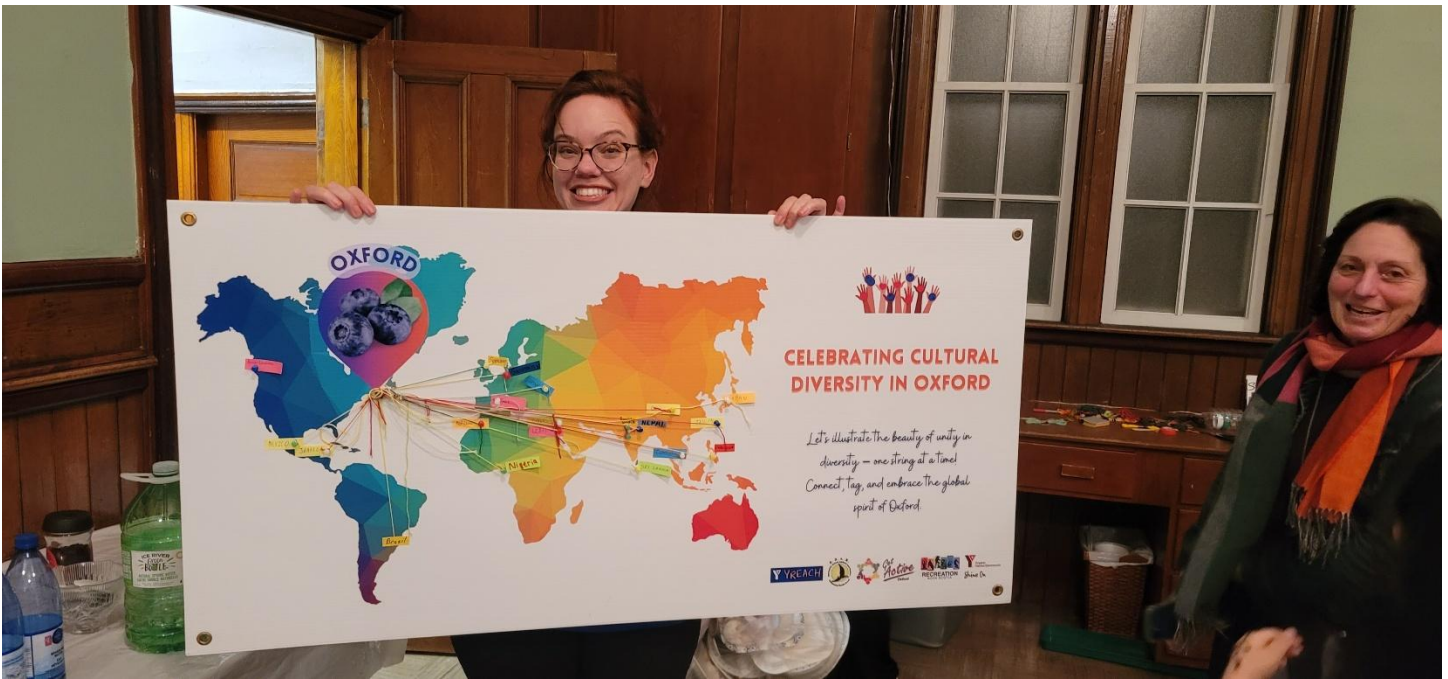


Figure 1 - Picture of a Poster created at the Connecting Cultures Event Y-Reach celebrating cultural diversity in Oxford.

Purpose of the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan

The purpose of the Equity and Anti-Racism plan is to look closely at and improve how the town makes decisions about budgeting, hiring, creating policies, and delivering programs, all with a focus on fairness, fighting racism and all forms of discrimination.

How The Plan Was Developed

The Equity and Anti-Racism plan was created to meet the requirements of the [Dismantling Racism and Hate Act Regulations 2022](#), which require municipalities to have a plan to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism by April 1, 2025. The Town of Oxford knew that work and training were needed to achieve this. Staff attended an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Summit in the fall of 2024 and worked with the Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia to self-assess and identify priorities for change and improvement in Equity and Anti-Racism. They incorporated resources, training, feedback, and support from the summit, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and local organizations such

as the Y-Reach, and Nova Scotia Health into this plan.

How the Progress of the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan is Tracked

Progress of the Equity and Anti-Racism plan will be tracked via a report card that will be presented to the Council of the Town of Oxford in a timeframe to be determined by the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

The Committee

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee was started on December 2, 2024. It includes members from the Oxford Town Council, Town Staff, Y-Reach, and residents of Oxford and area with diverse cultural backgrounds. Current members include:

Members of Council: Councillor Olivia Canning-Sweet, Councillor Padraic Moore and Deputy Mayor Carla Black.

Oxford and area residents: Millisa Ellis, Jaggot Singh, Anas Alawar (Y-Reach), Emma Brown, Chris King-Tower, and Virginia King-Tower.

Staff Members: Linda Cloney (CAO), Stan McDougall (Administrative Assistant) and Marion Abbott (Municipal Physical Activity Leader).



Figure 2 - Member of the Equity, Diversity and Anti-Racism Committee of the Town of Oxford. Missing from the photo: Chris King-Tower, Virginia King-Tower, Millissa Ellis and Jaggot Singh. Stan McDougall took the photo.

Progress on Equity and Anti-Racism

The Town of Oxford is special because of its cultural diversity. Our biggest employer, Oxford Frozen Foods, promotes economic diversity and inclusivity. The town has made progress in Equity and Anti-Racism, not just in policies but also in parks, amenities, facilities, and activities. Some of the highlights in recent and past years include:

- **Construction of the Oxford Community Centre** – under construction fall 2024
- **Flag Days:** ongoing for cultural and equity, diversity and inclusion awareness often in relation to proclamations.
- **Celebration Events:**
 - Diwali (Hindu festival of lights)
 - Holi (Festival of Colours)
 - Welcoming Week activities
 - Connecting Cultures
- **Mayoral Proclamations:**
 - Pride Week
 - International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
 - Welcoming Week
 - Gaelic Nova Scotia Month
 - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
 - Right to Know Week
 - African Heritage Month
 - Indigenous Survivors Day
 - National Aboriginal Day
 - International Women’s Day - #EmbraceEquity – 2023
- **Walk and Wheel Oxford** - report and video on walk and wheel-ability in the Town of Oxford
- **Construction of sidewalks** - for inclusive and accessible activities on Water Street in 2024 and ongoing improvements to existing sidewalks

- Oxford Public Library
- Oxford Medical Centre
- Communities in Bloom
- Capitol Theatre
- Oxford Bunny Trail and Trans Canada Trails – Shared Trails Strategy (STS) through Nova Scotia Trails and the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group (TSCG) – collaboration of provincial trail users, government departments, municipal staff, Mi'kmaq and persons of indigenous descent, and members from the community
- ATV Friendly Community – 2024
- Recreation Department Activities, Events and Amenities:
 - Oxford Baseball field
 - Oxford Horse Pull
 - Fishing from the three rivers
 - Black River Park and Skateboard facilities
 - Oxford Arena – 2022 – selected as a recipient of the Rink Revitalization Program, hosted by the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to help create an efficient, multi-use facility providing an inclusive space
 - Movie nights in Black River Park
 - Family/Heritage Day activities at the Arena
 - Nova Scotia Walks – Nova Scotia Walk Day
 - Access Awareness Week – silent discos, education sessions, film screenings “Communities for All: Taking Action on Access Awareness” – 2024 event
 - Various family and children’s activities at the Oxford Fire Department
- Oxford Christmas Parade – dedicated portion of the parade route as a sensory friendly area in partnership with Autism NS

Priority Areas

Objective 1: Communication, Training and Education

- Develop EDI webpage (for minutes, agendas, and EDI resources from the EDI Committee)
- Develop social media content and community engagement strategies (potential or collaboration with HelloOxford.ca)
- EDI training for Oxford Staff, Council, and volunteers working with yearly budget allocation review for programming scope

Objective 2: Policy Review

- Review and create policies, by-laws, forms and publications in digital and print with an EDI lens
- Review and create policies, by-laws, forms and publications in digital and print with a plain language lens
- Human Resources to address biases and barriers to hiring processes through EDI training for those hiring staff and volunteer recruitment

Objective 3: Service Delivery

- Review municipal signage with an EDI lens.
- Review municipal street and building naming conventions with an EDI lens.
- Revise the Town of Oxford Vision Statement with an EDI lens.
- Develop a global welcoming statement for public meetings with an EDI lens to combine with a possible land acknowledgment.

Objective 4: Community Engagement

- Installation of community flagpole to promote awareness of equity for groups and events
- Develop potential relationships with groups, organizations and committees active in EDI and plain language work in Oxford, Cumberland County, Amherst and surrounding areas. Examples of these include: Cumberland African Nova Scotia Association (CANSAs), Cumberland Pride, Cumberland Community Homes (CCH), Sexual Health Centre Cumberland County (SHCCC), Sunset Industries, Y-REACH, Oxford Seniors Club, Oxford Legion, etc. These groups are important for feedback and support in the evolution of the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan
- Share opportunities for local training and awareness programs, workshops and activities for community groups, local businesses and organizations
- Investigate, assemble and share opportunities for local and regional guest-speakers to speak to Council, committees, local businesses, organizations, and groups at public consultation meetings
- Promote local businesses, organizations and groups to participate or collaboratively host EDI and accessibility training sessions

Summary

The Town of Oxford is committed to educating, raising awareness, and breaking down barriers related to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

In November 2024, staff attended the AMANS Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Conference for three days of training sessions and heard from various groups and individuals from across Nova Scotia. This reinforced the commitment of both the Town of Oxford and the Province of Nova Scotia to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Their goal is to inspire ongoing engagement with underserved, underrepresented, and underrecognized communities, including but not limited to: Mi'kmaq and persons of indigenous descent, African Nova Scotian communities and persons of African descent, persons of colour/racialized persons, newcomers (immigrants and refugees), 2SLGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, minority faith-based groups, persons who are neurodivergent, and women.

A formal process was started on December 2, 2024, by creating the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee and developing the Equity and Anti-Racism plan.

The Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Action plan will keep evolving and updating over the years as a living document.

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee will use a report card to track and show the progress of the Equity and Anti-Racism plan to the Town of Oxford's Council.

The Town of Oxford and the Equity, Diversity, and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee is building relationships with local organizations, groups, businesses,

committees, and municipalities. Their aim is to improve and expand EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) resources, training, and opportunities for community involvement, training, and support for EDI programs and events for everyone in the Town of Oxford.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback regarding this plan, please contact our office. You can reach us by email: info@oxfordns.ca. For feedback through our website, visit: <https://oxfordns.ca/how-do-i-report-a-complaint>. While this may not be a complaint, it is our universal form for suggestions, feedback and town-related issues.

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