

THE VISION

2025-28

THE STRATEGY

municipality
of chester

village of
chester

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



THE MUNICIPALITY OF
CHESTER

Kespukwikt Land Acknowledgement

The Municipality of the District of Chester is located in the Kespukwikt* (Lands End) district of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people. The Municipality acknowledges the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed and recognizes that we are all Treaty People. We acknowledge the responsibility to deeply engage and move forward with the work of truth, reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Kes-pahk-wikt

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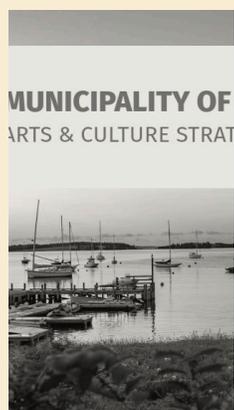
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Executive Summary

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan represents the commitment that the Municipality of the District of Chester and Village of Chester have to combatting discrimination and racism. We are working together with community partners to realize a vision where:

- Equity, diversity, and inclusion are recognized as core values that help inform decision-making, resource allocation, and the development of by-laws, policies, and practices.
- Diverse staff, committee members, and volunteers are recruited, retained, and supported.
- Collaborative internal and external partnerships support the emerging needs of Council and administration, residents, businesses, and organizations, to ensure a respectful and equitable community for all to live and work.

We have been undertaking this work over the last several years – internally, locally, and regionally. We want to model open and honest governance, allyship, and effectual change to a system that has not always been accessible. To do that, we need to learn, listen, and act.

Key initiatives for this coming year include learning, policy and service review, and relationship.

The actions that will support these initiatives are outlined and developed with input from our citizens, businesses and non-profit organizations, partners, and staff. This document is not intended to be a complete and finite strategy as there is always room to grow and change.

Allen Webber, Warden
Municipality of the District of Chester

Geraldine Pauley, Chairperson
Village of Chester Commission

Overview

In July 2020, the Municipality of Chester was shown a significant gap in public policy. The experience revealed how policy can exclude people just by how it's worded. It also revealed that there is such a thing as corporate conscience. It was the following week that work began on correcting our course.

Since that summer, Council committed to developing an action plan for diversity and inclusion; began reviewing policies and priorities; committed to improving equity, diversity, and reduce discrimination within the organization and the community by endorsing initiatives in a preliminary Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan; established an advisory committee; and revised its Action Plan for the second time. The Municipality of Chester also partnered with the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Town of Bridgewater, Town of Lunenburg, and Town of Mahone Bay to develop regional anti-racism and inclusion goals and initiatives serving Lunenburg County with a Regional Coordinator.

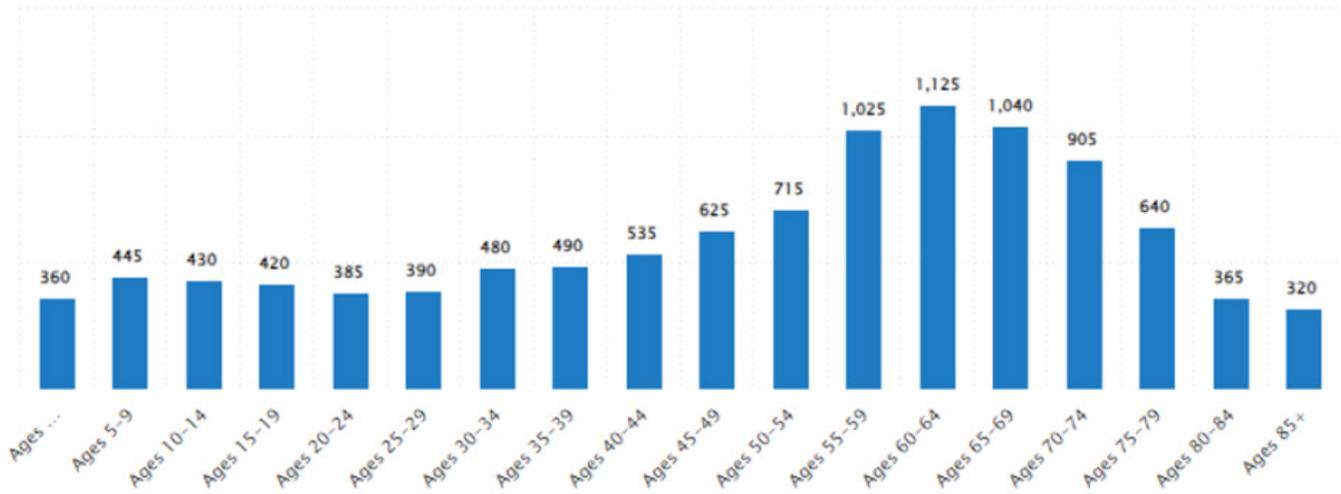
In partnership with the Village of Chester, we want residents, visitors, businesses, and organizations to feel heard, safe, and a sense of belonging. We want to do what we can within our respective roles of public service to support our communities. This joint EDI Action Plan is our guide.



**THE MUNICIPALITY OF
CHESTER**

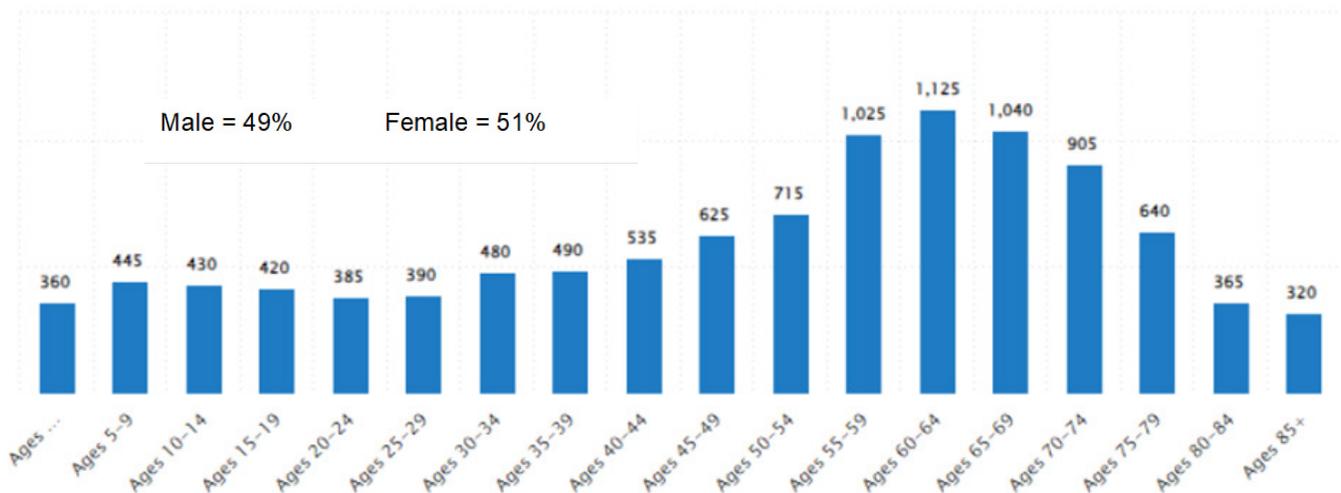
Who we are serving

Ages



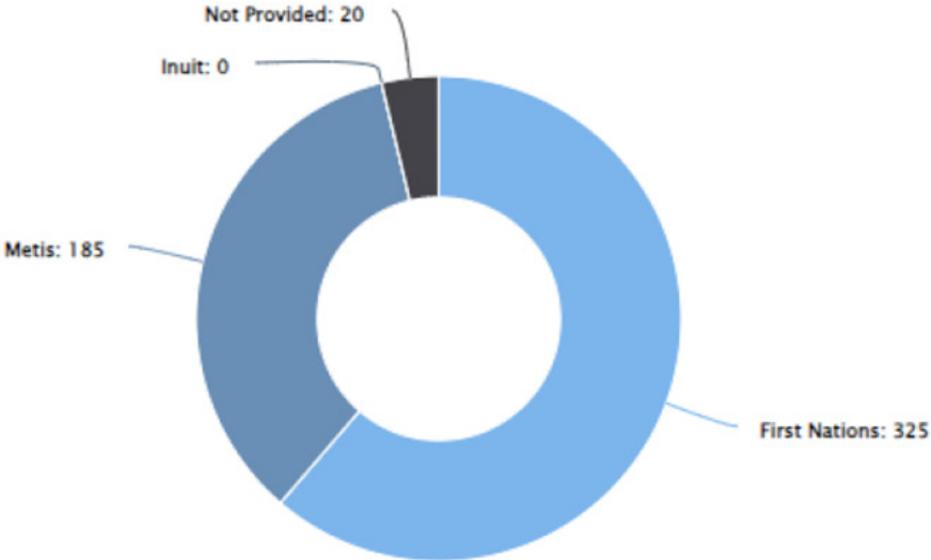
30.6% of our population is 65 years or older

Ages



30.6% of our population is 65 years or older

Indigenous Identification



Visible Minorities



Arab = 0.5% of population

Filipino = 0.3% of population

Black = 0.2% of population and South Asian = 0.2% of population

According to data from the 2019 to 2021 Canadian Community Health Survey, approximately 1.3 million people, or 4.4% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older, reported being 2SLGBTQIA+.

Among the 2SLGBTQIA+ population, 52.7% were cisgender women, 39.2% were cisgender men, 3.9% were transgender women or transgender men, and 4.2% were non-binary people.

Among all age groups, youth made up the largest share of the 2SLGBTQIA+ population from 2019 to 2021. Overall, 1 in 10 youth aged 15 to 24 years (10.5%) reported being 2SLGBTQIA+. By comparison, 4.1% of adults aged 25 to 64 years and 1.3% of adults aged 65 years and older reported being 2SLGBTQ+.

According to data released in April 2022 by Statistics Canada, one in every 200 people in Nova Scotia identify as trans or non-binary. This increases to one in every 100 for people aged 15 to 34 in Nova Scotia.

While we don't have data specific to the Municipality of Chester, we can use these statistics to get a broad idea of representation.



Who we consulted

We opened engagement through drop-in public sessions, an online survey, and individual meetings with industry-focused organizations, non-profit groups, and municipal staff. We didn't meet with all of the community partners we approached but will have more opportunities as the work progresses.

A sample of some of the specific groups we met with to inform our initial and/or revised plan:

- +Chester Art Centre
- +Chester Municipal Heritage Society
- +Lunenburg County Pride
- +Lunenburg County Seniors Safety
- +Our Health Centre
- +small and medium business sector
- +developers, retail, industrial

The feedback received - along with continuing actions from the previous Action Plan and priorities flagged by Council and our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee - was incorporated into this Action Plan. Actions advanced to the regional level are still included as the work will be supported by the five municipal units within Lunenburg County and will be flagged as "regional".



Implementation and progress

Implementation

Primarily, the Municipality of Chester and the Village of Chester will implement the plan through collaboration and partnerships with community, equity-seeking groups, local organizations, and regional support from the Lunenburg County Regional Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Coordinator and Advisory Committee. Human and financial resources have been dedicated to the internal implementation of this Plan as well as support for the external-facing actions.

Tracking Progress

This Action Plan will be consulted frequently with regular check-ins with our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee. Items will be brought forward for discussion and recommendation by the Committee at each meeting. We will continue to meet with community members and partners.

We will measure progress by:

- Completing action items;
- Providing regular status reports through our EDI Advisory Committee to Municipal Council and Village of Chester Commission that will include individual measures noted in each action item;
- Receiving positive and corrective feedback from partners;
- Recording high engagement online and in person; and
- Recording public participation in programs/workshops.



The Municipality of Chester and the Village of Chester are working together to continue existing initiatives and advance new projects under a five-tier framework, laid out on the following page

We engage local organizations as well as national resources to help guide us in our journey. We are members of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (Canadian Commission for UNESCO), accredited under the Rainbow Registered Program, and commit to reconciliation using the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples..

**EQUITY
DIVERSITY
INCLUSION**

**ACTION
PLAN**

OBJECTIVES



Action Plan Objectives

The Municipality and Village, in collaboration with our EDI Advisory Committee and the Regional Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Coordinator for Lunenburg County, have agreed on these areas of focus:

ENGAGEMENT

Develop, where relevant, communications plans, social media content, and community engagement strategies that feature our communities as respectful and equitable places for all to live and work.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Work to eliminate barriers to public-facing programs, services, and facilities.

GOVERNANCE

Continue to develop internal governance and

administrative capacity, practices, and tools that proactively counter, and enable immediate reaction against, all forms of discrimination, exclusion, and racism in our communities.

RELATIONSHIP

Develop a network of agencies and organizations active in equity, diversity, and inclusion work in order to share information, opportunities, and resources with community organizations and businesses that will advance and support their EDI initiatives in our communities.

COMMUNITY

Provide advice and recommendations to

Council concerning opportunities to create welcoming and inclusive cultural and social spaces ensuring a respectful and equitable community for all to live and work.

The Municipality and Village, through community partners and staffing resources, will work to complete actions under each of the areas as outlined in the following work plan according to assignments with regular check-ins with Committee, Community, Council, and Commission. A full review will be completed by March 31, 2028.

Each action item in the Work Plan includes suggested benchmarks. These benchmarks will be used to measure qualitative and quantitative outcomes and serve as a baseline for future reviews. Regional initiatives will be measured on a regional level.



Objective #1 Engagement

Develop, where relevant, communications plans, social media content, and community engagement strategies that feature our communities as respectful and equitable places for all to live and work.*

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
Present the EDI Advisory Committee revised Action Plan to Council for adoption and submit approved Plan to the Province of Nova Scotia. BENCHMARK: Approval of the Action Plan.	Communications Officer	March 2025 April 2025	This is a 'living document' to be revisited and updated often. Specific actions will be brought before Council, as required.
Continue to share the Action Plan, initiatives, and efforts in community, including public information meetings, pop-up meetings, engagement sessions, etc. BENCHMARK: Share information in six locations per year.	Municipal and Village staff.	2025-28	Range of outcomes include communication and awareness; cultivating champions; feedback; more actionable ideas. Prepare a pop-up meeting display to use in various locations.
Continue to raise public awareness by sharing local stories of interest. BENCHMARK: Feature at least one story in each municipal newsletter.	Economic Development, Accessibility Coordinator, and Communications Officer, Village staff	2025-28	Continue to a) profile local business EDI stories in municipal newsletter; b) share stories about employers' experience removing accessibility barriers; c) profile recreational experiences in recreation guide; and d) local historical/cultural information.
<i>Develop anti-stigma campaigns for social media channels, public engagement website, and municipal newsletter.</i>	<i>Communications Officer and Regional Coordinators for Accessibility and Anti-Racism</i>	<i>2025-28</i>	<i>Work with regional staff to develop campaigns around gender-based discrimination, 2SLGBTQIA+, racism, different abilities, social biases, and intersectionality.</i>

* Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.

Objective #1 Engagement (*con't*)

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
<p>Present the EDI Advisory Committee revised Action Plan to Council for adoption and submit approved Plan to the Province of Nova Scotia. BENCHMARK: Approval of the Action Plan.</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p>	<p>March 2025 April 2025</p>	<p>This is a 'living document' to be revisited and updated often. Specific actions will be brought before Council, as required.</p>
<p>Continue to share the Action Plan, initiatives, and efforts in community, including public information meetings, pop-up meetings, engagement sessions, etc. BENCHMARK: Share information in six locations per year.</p>	<p>Municipal and Village staff.</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<p>Range of outcomes include communication and awareness; cultivating champions; feedback; more actionable ideas. Prepare a pop-up meeting display to use in various locations.</p>
<p>Continue to raise public awareness by sharing local stories of interest. BENCHMARK: Feature at least one story in each municipal newsletter.</p>	<p>Economic Development, Accessibility Coordinator, and Communications Officer, Village staff</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<p>Continue to a) profile local business EDI stories in municipal newsletter; b) share stories about employers' experience removing accessibility barriers; c) profile recreational experiences in recreation guide; and d) local historical/cultural information.</p>
<p>Encourage Council, Commission, and staff to promote awareness of EDI by participating in campaigns, events, etc. BENCHMARK: Coordinate at least four campaigns per year.</p>		<p>2025-28</p>	<p>Develop a social media campaign around observances (group photos), participate in awareness events (Moosehide Day, Pink Shirt Day, etc.), offer microlearning opportunities, develop alternate temporary municipal logos to demonstrate support.</p>

* *Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.*

Objective #2

Service Delivery

Work to eliminate barriers to public-facing programs, services, and facilities*

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
<p>Complete a review of programs and services to remove barriers and apply best practices in delivery.</p> <p>BENCHMARK: 2025 - Meet with all department heads and Council to introduce guidelines and develop scope of work.</p>	<p>Municipal and Village staff (identify) and EDI Advisory Committee (recommend)</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<p>Will be carried out by department and will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income • Age • Language • Culture • Different abilities • Access to technology • Transportation
<p>Work with organizations to contribute to a welcome program for new Canadians moving to the Municipality.</p> <p>BENCHMARK: Request an initial meeting to discuss municipal role.</p>	<p>Community Economic Development, Communications, and Recreation</p>	<p>Summer 2025</p>	<p>Assemble a package of information to share with newcomers that is in a format easy to understand.</p> <p>Purchase translation devices to have on hand and/or lend.</p>
<p>Review Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and identify municipal actions.</p> <p>BENCHMARK: Review 10 Calls to Action.</p>	<p>Sub-Committee of municipal staff, EDI Committee members, and First Nations</p>	<p>Spring 2025</p>	<p>A sub-committee will review the Calls to Action and select items for larger committee review and potential recommendations to Council.</p>
<p>Consider a subsidy program for reduced fees for users experiencing income challenges.</p>	<p>Recreation & Parks</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>Research opportunities to implement a pay-what-you-can model for recreation programs.</p>
<p>Provide equipment in municipal office spaces to accommodate differently abled persons.</p>	<p>Municipal and Village staff</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<p>Examples: accessible and universal technology, hand toggles, vision and hearing accommodations, raised desks.</p>
<p>Ensure 5-10% of smoke detectors given away during Fire Prevention week are visual smoke detectors.</p>	<p>Fire Services</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	

* Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.

Objective #3 Governance

Continue to develop internal governance and administrative capacity, practices, and tools that proactively counter, and enable immediate reaction against, all forms of discrimination, exclusion, and racism in our communities.*

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
<p><i>Review By-Laws, Policies, and Forms.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop process for triggering review.</i> • <i>Develop a guide for municipal units on how to review and update policies, by-laws, procedures, and practices with an equitable best practices lens.</i> 	<p><i>Regional Coordinators with support from Councils, staff, and EDI Advisory Committee</i></p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<p><i>Municipal units will work with regional staff to flag and revise forms, policies, and by-laws to remove gendered language, apply plain language principles, and implement best practices for equity.</i></p>
<p>Review human resources framework to address explicit and implicit biases and barriers. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to those hiring staff and recruiting volunteers • Broaden definition of relevant background, training, experience • Broaden representation on committees • Directly promote staff and volunteer opportunities to equity-seeking groups <p>BENCHMARK: Ensure 100% of all employment ads are sent to employment organizations serving underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Council, CAO, HR Director, and Communications Officer</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>This effort will also be a high-level focus of the Regional Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Advisory Committee. Once developed, regional can be incorporated into local frameworks.</p>
<p>Provide an inclusive language resource to staff, especially those developing external-facing and HR documents.</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p>	<p>April 2025</p>	

* Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.

Objective #3

Governance (con't)

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
<i>Continue to provide training for elected officials, staff, and appropriate committee members.</i>	<i>Regional Coordinators with support from Councils and staff</i>	2025-28	<i>Schedule foundational EDI training and follow-up with workshops, lunch & learns, etc. Establish budget on regional and municipal levels. Training needs include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Crisis intervention</i> <i>• Dealing with discrimination from customers</i> <i>• Management and HR</i>
<i>Provide a complaint process for people experiencing discrimination.</i>	<i>Regional Coordinators</i>		
Collect data from grant recipients, economic development engagements, hiring, Quality of Life Survey. BENCHMARK: Meet with AMANS to discuss further (Fall 2025)	All departments	2025-28	Data will be used to adjust programs and amend policies as needed.
Develop a Renewal of Commitment statement to demonstrate support for EDI initiatives. BENCHMARK: Have statement prepared for review and approval by Fall of 2025.	Communications Officer and EDI Advisory Committee	2025	
Research procurement best practices as they relate to equity. Provide information report and guidelines to Council for consideration.	Corporate and Strategic Management staff	2025-28	

* Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.

Objective #4 Relationship

Develop a network of agencies and organizations active in equity, diversity, and inclusion work in order to share information, opportunities, and resources with community organizations and businesses that will advance and support their EDI initiatives in our communities.*

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
<p>Continue to develop and cultivate relationships with groups, agencies, and organizations active in EDI work. BENCHMARK: Provide a monthly progress report to the EDI Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>All partners</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly contact local and regional agencies and groups committed to the same work. • Share resources, such as training and funding opportunities. • Facilitate guest speaking engagements. • Facilitate programming for newcomers and elders. • Facilitate training/awareness sessions for local businesses. • Sponsor or facilitate welcoming spaces or events for newcomers. • Support mentorship and cooperative programs.
<p>Explore a program scope to connect businesses with equity-seeking groups and possible partnerships.</p>	<p>Community Economic Development Officer</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<p>Continue promotion of Rainbow Registered program with tourism businesses. Establish list of local venues as hosts for training and workshop events.</p>
<p>Share and create opportunities for community partners to flourish in their own EDI efforts and initiatives. BENCHMARK: Share monthly online and bimonthly in newsletter.</p>	<p>Various staff</p>	<p>2025-28</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and promote funding and training opportunities. • Provide independent learning opportunities through programming. • Create subscriber list to receive updates.

* Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.

Objective #5 Community

Provide advice and recommendations to elected officials concerning opportunities to create welcoming and inclusive cultural and social spaces ensuring a respectful and equitable community for all to live and work.*

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	NOTES
<i>Facilitate cultural experiences with BIPOC artists.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Art installations in community spaces</i> • <i>Identify grant opportunities for a program that could be modelled on the MOC's Trail Art program</i> 	<i>Recreation & Parks and Community Economic Development Officer</i>	<i>2025-26</i>	<i>A region-wide program/project will be brought forward.</i>
**Embed EDI in Arts & Culture Sector Planning.	Community Economic Development Officer, Policy Analyst, Director of Community Development		Implement Priority #4 from the Municipality of Chester Arts & Culture Strategy (attached as Appendix A).
Review naming of municipal assets, infrastructure, facilities, and roads.		2025	Review municipal open spaces and consider honouring community members by commemorating spaces in their names. Consider amending road/place naming policies to exclude harmful names.
Create more opportunities for elder residents to contribute to their communities.	Various staff members	2025-28	Identify opportunities for partnership between community groups, mentorships, and programming.
<i>Be present in community to foster engagement and invite shared experiences.</i>	<i>Regional Coordinator with support from municipal staff</i>	<i>2025-28</i>	<i>Dialogue with community members will inform how local government can meet the needs of our residents without exclusion.</i>

* Actions in italics are identified as being elevated to the regional level and supported by MOC and VOC.

Conclusion

The Municipality of Chester and the Village of Chester want our residents and visitors to feel like they belong in our communities; to feel secure and welcome.

Our joint approach reflects our desire to create systemic change by embedding specific human rights and examples into our policies, services, and programs. Specific because broad, high-level policy and one-stroke service delivery doesn't represent all aspects of our lives here.

Our Action Plan outlines objectives, measurable benchmarks, and ongoing evaluations to track progress. From raising public awareness to reviewing policies with an equity lens, we are determined to improve. Regular engagement with our EDI Advisory Committee, Council, Commission, and community members will help us meet the needs of our population.

This is a work-in-progress that will guide us and ensure accountability. Our journey will sometimes seem slow, but taking the steps is important.

The background of the page features a network of orange human figures, each connected to several others by thin, light-colored lines. The figures are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some in sharp focus and others blurred in the foreground and background. The overall color palette is dominated by blue and orange.

APPENDIX A

Arts & Culture Strategy

Priority 4

MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER

ARTS & CULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030



THE MUNICIPALITY OF
CHESTER
NOVA SCOTIA'S TREASURE



PRIORITY 4

EMBED EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR PLANNING

Embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) in MOC's arts and culture strategy is essential to creating a welcoming environment that uplifts all voices, especially those of marginalized communities. The municipality can foster equity by working with partners to address pay disparities in the arts, where marginalized artists are often compensated even less. By prioritizing EDIA, MOC can work on relationship building with underserved communities, building trust, ensuring fair representation, and access. Arts and culture provides a powerful avenue for this transformation, offering creative spaces where healing, connection, and collaboration can flourish.

GOAL

Meaningfully include, amplify and collaborate with underrepresented voices to create safe, fair, accessible, and barrier-free cultural opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Respectfully engage with local First Nations (Wasoqopa'q and Sipekne'katik) on cultural planning and policy development to reflect Indigenous knowledge, heritage, and advance decolonization and reconciliation efforts.

MOC Role:

- Collaborate and learn
- Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and reconciliation into planning and policy

ACTIONS

PHASE 1

1. In relation to Arts & Culture planning - review the Municipality's outreach and engagement with local First Nation Communities (including Wasoqopa'q and Sipekne'katik). Identify communication improvements needed, focussing on relationship and trust building.
2. Ensure MOC grant applications and criteria address cultural appropriation.

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Build a healthy arts and culture ecosystem by emphasizing fair, equitable pay for all artists and cultural workers.

MOC Role:

- Support capacity building of the Arts & Culture Sector by incorporating fair pay into Municipal planning and projects.

ACTIONS

PHASE 1

2. Research national pay models (CARFAC, Canada Council for the Arts, Writers Guild, PACT) and incorporate a baseline pay framework for artists into Municipal projects, services and policy. Share as best practice for the sector and business community. See Arts Nova Scotia for resources.

OBJECTIVE 4.3

Actively engage marginalized groups in decision-making processes to rebuild trust and build relationships.

MOC Role:

- In partnership with the EDI committee, Accessibility Coordinator and Anti-Racism & Diversity Coordinator, collaborate with marginalized groups.

ACTIONS

PHASE 2

3. Develop recommendations outlining tangible opportunities to partner with marginalized communities to formally celebrate their work, history, and heritage.

4. Collaborate with and support Indigenous-led, culturally sensitive frameworks and projects to ensure their perspectives and priorities guide decolonization and reconciliation efforts within the municipality's cultural planning, policies, and community programs.
5. Collaborate with local First Nations (Wasoqopa'q and Sipekne'katik), marginalized communities and cultural partners to decolonize public spaces, identifying key concerns and priorities. Incorporate storytelling, signage, renaming of spaces, acknowledgement of accurate history to reflect diverse histories in public spaces.

OBJECTIVE 4.4

Align the arts and culture strategy with accessibility, EDI, and anti-racism goals by collaborating with staff, Municipal Arts Organization and community partners.

MOC Role:

- Collaborative partner

ACTIONS

PHASE 2

5. Set up regular meetings with key staff and partners to review progress on goals, share updates, and to adjust the arts and culture strategy as needed depending on emerging issues and community needs.
6. Develop and incorporate grant evaluation criteria for anti-racism, EDI, and accessibility impact of arts & culture projects and programming. Ensure goals are applied in community proposals.