



Town of Wolfville Equity and Anti-Racism Plan

February 2025

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Wolfville is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

This Land is governed by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, first signed in 1726.

We recognize that we are all Treaty People, with responsibilities to each other, and to this land, so we will work to conduct our business with the seven sacred teachings in mind: truth, honesty, love, courage, respect, wisdom, and humility.

Focus

This plan and the recommendations contained within it focus on recognizing, reviewing and rewriting the policy, practices and procedures that appear neutral but have the effect of disadvantaging underrepresented and underserved groups.

Welcome from the Chairperson

It is a great honour to be part of the first Equity and Anti-Racism Committee for the Town of Wolfville. I have always said, “Wolfville picked me to live here,” because since growing up in Kentville, I wanted to settle in Wolfville and use my energy to create a welcoming community.

I come from a place of privilege, and I have had very few struggles as a gay man living in Wolfville, and in the Valley. I do not take this privilege for granted but instead, I make sure I am a welcoming person, present for those that need me.

For over twenty years now, I have watched Wolfville grow, change, and make countless strides forward, to a more welcoming community for all through accessibility and equity initiatives. This has been a long process, along a winding road that never ends, but through communication (open ears and open hearts), dedicated work from elected members, visitors, business owners and residents, who share the WANT for a more inclusive community, the road can be a bit easier to travel.

Wolfville has such a wonderfully diverse population, ever-changing with Acadia University and the increase in developments. An Equity and Anti-racism Plan is the roadmap for us to make our community a welcoming and inclusive place for everyone to thrive.

We can all say, “Everyone is welcome here”, but now it’s time to make sure that it is a way of life in our town!

Thank you,
Councillor Mike Butler

A welcome from the Mayor

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I introduce Wolfville's Anti-Hate and Equity Policy. This policy is a clear commitment to fostering an environment where every individual, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or background, feels valued, respected, and safe.

Our Wolfville community is united by our diversity and shared values of respect, kindness, and fairness. The implementation of this plan is an essential step toward ensuring that Wolfville remains a place where hate has no home, and equity is not just a goal but a lived reality for everyone.

This plan will guide us in addressing discrimination, preventing hate, and advancing opportunities for all, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. By standing together in this work, we will strengthen our community and ensure that all individuals have the ability to thrive, without fear of prejudice or inequality.

Wolfville is committed to creating a future where every person is empowered to live with dignity and equality. I look forward to the work the committee and residents will do to make Wolfville a model of inclusivity, and compassion for all.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to making our community stronger and more united.

Sincerely,
Mayor Jodi MacKay

Background

The Dismantling Racism and Hate Act recognizes that systemic hate, inequity, and racism can be caused by government and public bodies through policies, practices, and procedures that appear neutral but have the effect of disadvantaging underrepresented and underserved groups.

The Act further provided authority to prescribe public sector bodies through regulations to require them to develop plans to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism.

Regulations were approved in the Spring of 2024 to prescribe municipalities and villages as public bodies under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*.

Wolfville's first Equity and Anti-Racism Plan has been informed by engagement with underrepresented and underserved communities within the Town of Wolfville, inclusive of Acadia University.

This plan will be updated every three years.

Language

Equity recognizes that not everyone begins in the same place in society. Some people face harmful conditions and circumstances making it more challenging with the same effort to achieve the same goals. Equity is about advocating for those who 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 the same but rather the point from which a person begins. Equity considers historical and other factors in determining what is fair.

Inequity refers to a state of unfairness or lack of justice. Individuals or groups are treated differently and unequally, often resulting in systematic and patterned disparities in opportunities, resources, rights, or outcomes.

Racism is the unfair treatment, prejudice, or hatred by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people based on their actual or perceived membership in a racial or ethnic group. Racism is having the power and carrying out that discrimination (unfair treatment), hatred or prejudice through institutional policies and practices.

Anti-Racism is the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. It is achieved through the identification and elimination of racism by changing oppressive systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes.

Engagement for Wolfville's Equity and Anti-Racism Plan

The Town of Wolfville started working on the foundation of this plan in January of 2023 with an equity, diversity and inclusion lens in mind. As a first effort, the Town, during a ten-week engagement cycle, worked to determine who was living in Wolfville, what barriers people were facing, and the actions that the community wanted the Town to take to make Wolfville a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Staff reports that outline this work include:

- IR 008-2023
- RFD 041-2023
- IR 008-2024

Engagement completed as part of the Town's Policing Services Review in October 2022 also informs this plan. Engagement for Wolfville's Parks and Open Spaces Master Planning Process, completed in the summer of 2023, has also provided valuable ideas and insights that are reflected in this work.

Engagement with 70 Acadia students in their first and fourth years was completed on September 18, 2024. These sessions focused on the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and the Town's Equity and Anti-Racism Plan.

On the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, September 30, 2024, engagement happened with 120 community members from the Town of Wolfville, Glooscap First Nations and Acadia University as part of our Soups and Sides programming.

Engagement has started with the African Nova Scotian Affairs and through Lerato Chondoma, Acadia's Associate Vice-President, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism.

While not a formal process, letters to Council and other forms of community and partner feedback have been considered in the development of this plan.

The policy recommendations in this plan come from staff review and analysis, based on guidelines and workshops provided by the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism.

Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee

In July 2024, after reviewing RFD 044-2024, Council agreed to establish an Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised of a majority of community members from underrepresented and underserved communities who live, work or study in the Town of Wolfville.

Underrepresented and underserved groups include Mi'kmaq and/or people of Indigenous descent, African Nova Scotians, people of African descent, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, newcomers, and minority faith-based groups.

The Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee met for the first time in January 2025 and will work to provide advice to Council to assist in the identification, prevention and elimination of systemic hate, inequity, and racism in the Town of Wolfville.

The Equity and Anti-Racism Committee will work to deliver this advice through an Equity and Anti-Racism Plan that will support policy review, policy development, program development, service review and budgetary decision-making.

The Equity and Anti-Racism Plan will be reviewed and updated every three years.

Action Plan Items

The action plan items contained within the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan have been informed by engagement with community, Council, staff and experts across the Province. These represent a starting point, and each one has been reviewed with Wolfville's Equity and Anti-Racism Committee.

Policies to be reviewed, revised or drafted within the three years of the plan include:

- **610-004 Street naming policy**
- **120-007 Municipal lands and facilities naming**
- **710-003 Grants to organization**
- **Strategic partnerships program**
- **Land acknowledgement (no current policy)**
- **Recognition of the contributions of Black Nova Scotians (no current policy)**
- **Hate speech guidelines (no current policy)**

Strategic Projects include:

Vision statement

Town Council will be invited to revisit their vision statement, with input and recommendations from the Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee.

Soups and Sides

Soups and Sides is a program that represents the Town's commitment to building a more inclusive community. This barrier-free community meal welcomes all people to share soup and a side of community-building activities on Monday evenings, from September to April, at the Wolfville Farmers' Market.

Restorative Communities – Circles NS Project

The Town has been invited to participate along with Acadia University in a living lab that will empower staff and volunteers to facilitate restorative circles, helping to resolve concerns and disputes within the community. This process can be used to support the acknowledgement and resolution of situations and conflicts that do not require police involvement.

Wolfville International Student Supports Program

International students may require additional support to feel secure, supported and connected within the Town of Wolfville. Through this program, international students will be paired with volunteer community support people to share recreational activities and informal support to newcomers as they navigate life in Wolfville.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #57

One of the most impactful ways that municipal governments can support reconciliation is to develop internal training programs to educate staff about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This includes education on the history and legacy of the residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Indigenous rights, Indigenous law, and Indigenous-Crown relations. This training may include a focus on intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.

In line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 57, the Town of Wolfville will be working with facilitators to provide the KAIROS blanket exercise to staff and Council. The Blanket exercise is a powerful teaching tool developed by *Kairos Canada*, a non-governmental organisation that aims to foster reconciliation and present historic and contemporary relationships between Crown and Indigenous peoples.

Internal training and support

To build a culture of inclusion, staff and Council will receive training in *white allyship*. This training will equip staff and Council with the tools required to be active allies for racial justice through methods of naming white privilege, so we are equipped to work towards upholding the principles of equality, respect and dignity for all.

Shared staff resource with Acadia University

In recognition of the important relationship between the Town and Acadia, consideration will be given to the creation of a shared staff position. This position would support the work of the Equity and Anti-Racism Plan and remove barriers between the campus community and the Town.

Non-Market Housing Strategy

The Government of Canada and the Town of Wolfville have reached an agreement to fast-track 45 housing units over the next three years, and to support the construction of 280 homes over the next decade with financial support through the Housing Accelerator Fund.

As part of the Town's efforts, a Non-Market Housing Strategy will be created to support the retention of existing units and encourage the development of more non-market dwelling units.

Key aspects of this work will include a Land Bank of Town owned land to be considered for non-market housing use, and a Non-Market Grant program to provide financial support to non-market housing providers.

The creation of the Non-Market Housing Strategy is being supported by the Non-Market Housing Working Group.

Practice and procedure to be reviewed include:

- Recruitment
- Hiring

Community Events to Support Equity, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility

Events will be identified over the next years through our community development department and funded through the Town's recreation budget.

Additional items

At any time during the period covered by this plan, additional policies, practices, procedures, strategic projects or events may be identified by community and presented to the Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee for consideration.

Progress, reporting and accountability

Staff will report on progress to the Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee each year, by December 31. The Committee will then report to Council by March 31, the end of the fiscal year.